

Critical Phronesis
From Paul Ricoeur's and the CTM's philosophies

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Abstract

In this dissertation I wonder how to understand critical thinking taking into account the CTM's concept of critical thinking and the Ricoeurian concept of phronesis. Thus, this research has as its first purpose to examine the concept of critical thinking, especially CTM's, to find its gaps, and grounds. Subsequently, it proposes a philosophy that could foster it: Paul Ricoeur's philosophy, especially his concepts of practical reason and phronesis. Finally, this work proposes a new concept of critical thinking: critical phronesis. This is *the capacity, made up of thinking abilities and the ethos of the person, to assess reasons, according to the orthos logos in every situation, in order to decide what to believe and do aiming at a good life with and for others.*

Critical Phronesis
From Paul Ricoeur's *Phronesis* and the Critical Thinking Concept

	Page.
INTRODUCTION	6
CHAPTER I Concept of Critical Thinking	10
1.1 CTM's Concept of Critical Thinking	10
1.1.1 Skills or Abilities and Criteria	11
1.1.2 Dispositions: more than Reason	14
1.1.3 Self-knowledge and Critical Thinking	18
1. 2. Philosophical grounds: Theoretical and Practical Rationality	21
1.2.1 The Concept of Rationality	21
1.2.2 Theoretical Rationality and logicity	23
1.2.3 Practical Rationality and action	25
CHAPTER II Paul Ricoeur's concepts of Practical Reason and Phronesis	31
2.1 Practical Reason	31
2.1.1 Reasons for acting and Practical Reasoning	32
2.1.2 Sociological view about Practical Reason	36
2.1.3 The concept of Freedom: from Kant and Hegel	41
2.1.4 Self-knowledge and Identity	44
2.2 Phronesis within practical reason and ethics	49
2.2.1 Embedded in Practical Reason	50
2.2.2 From Ethics	52
CHAPTER III Critical Phronesis: from CTM and Paul Ricoeur	56
3.1 CTM and Ricoeur: shared philosophical traits	56

3.2 Critical Phronesis	63
IV FINAL COMMENTS	67
V REFERENCES	73

Introduction

Currently, in most contemporary democratic societies the ability to «think critically» is considered a key individual attribute of a worthwhile life, being itself a necessary condition for the exercise of autonomy. It follows that the development of critical thinkers is thought to be a central aim of contemporary education (Winch, 2006; Lay, 2011). In order to educate pupils in autonomy and critical thinking, plenty of schools, including universities and even nowadays Colombian policies in education, have included in their labor a training of critical thinking.

One of the concepts of critical thinking seems to imply an idea too rational of human beings. Thus, reason is the main human capacity that can control him. Under this idea critical thinking seems to leave aside some human dimensions, for instance sentiments, emotion, intuition, etc., whose influence on thinking could go further and deeper than reason. A consequence of this reduction in the concept of critical thinking might be the abandonment of a truly integral education, where people just learn to think logically without considering dimensions like desires, social ideals and demands, etc.

One of the movements that has worked considerably on this particular concept of critical thinking is the *Critical Thinking Movement* (henceforth CTM). These philosophers aim at fostering critical thinking abilities in schools, so they create the concepts, but also tests, manuals, videos, conferences, and short courses. The most acknowledged thinkers are Paul Fischer, Harvey Siegel, Sharon Bailin, Peter Facione, Robert Ennis, Richard Paul and Stephen Norris.

They seem to limit critical thinking to the development of logical abilities, strengthened by some dispositions. Then, I consider we need a broader way to understand critical thinking as a goal for education, and this takes me to Paul Ricoeur's philosophy, especially to his concept of phronesis. This concept, grounded on the concept of practical reason, does not focus on rationality, for it also counts on human affections, such as desires, emotions, ideals of happiness, etc. Although CTM does not exclude these, when making decisions they seem not to place them along with reason but under it, as if people could ignore these human affections and decide based only on reason. Of course, the problem here is about the relation between motivation and

justification, which is treated by the CTM within the normative reasons, whose assessment would imply a motivation to act. Nevertheless, this is not the main topic in this dissertation.

How could the Ricoeurian concepts of practical reason and phronesis and the CTM concept of critical thinking be integrated? Thus, this research aims at integrating Ricoeurian and CTM philosophies into a concept of critical thinking. This goal is pursued by: 1) examining the CTM's concept of critical thinking to identify its main features and gaps. 2) Analyze the Ricoeurian concept of phronesis and its similarities and differences to the CTM's concept of critical thinking. 3) Propose a way of understanding critical thinking taking into account the CTM's concept and Ricoeurian concepts.

Although this research is theoretical, I think it could take schools to organize their education based on a more comprehensive human image, which actually could train pupils in a wider anthropology, taking them to think critically, not just from reason but from their integral being. Thus, this dissertation agrees with general trust on critical thinking. Indeed,

For Critical Thinking advocates, all of us need to be better critical thinkers, and there is often an implicit hope that enhanced critical thinking could have a general humanizing effect, across all social groups and classes. (...) critical education can increase freedom and enlarge the scope of human possibilities (Burbules and Berk, 1999, p. 2).

This, seems to me, is the same hope of both Ricoeurian and CTM philosophies. These strive for understanding and proposing a concept to achieve good decisions and actions. On the one side, CTM elaborates and proposes critical thinking, which main objective is to ground beliefs and actions in sound reasons, that is, objective and universal. On the other side, Paul Ricoeur proposes the concept of phronesis, which tries to get an adequate decision to conflicts, according to the *orthos logos*, that is according to arguments, rules, and context. To be sure, "the plane of practical wisdom (...) is that of phronesis, of prudence as the art of a fair decision in situations of uncertainty and conflict, hence in the tragic setting of action" (Ricoeur, 2007, p. 60).

Thus, both philosophies share the objective of improving decision making process and action through good thinking practices. Both philosophies look for wise action!

Their final end is to promote a better life for people in society and not individually. The CTM philosophers propose critical thinking to help people think and act in society. For instance, Harvey Siegel says that the educational ideal of critical thinking “erects those features [thinking abilities and dispositions] of persons as the fundamental guidelines for the evaluation and transformation of society” (1988, p. 55). Likely, Paul Ricoeur thinks of phronesis as an aptitude that guides people to take decisions pursuing “the good life with and for others in just institutions” (Ricoeur, 1992, 180). So, through these (critical thinking and phronesis) both philosophies have confidence in the possibility of changing or improving the social world. Even if the CTM do not think of the happiness or the good life as a content or end in thinking critically, it is a common intention of both Ricoeurian and CTM’s philosophical proposals (phronesis and critical thinking) to aim at a social and not only a personal-individual state of well-being. Both strive for a thinking that can improve life in society.

The most striking divergences are about their respective concepts of reason and its powers; then, the general structure of their philosophy: analytical and phenomenological-hermeneutics. Besides, CTM’s philosophy is rather formal and abstract, but the Ricoeurian is more substantive (ethical-political). Finally, a conflict point is the relation between reasons and human affections (emotions, feelings, intuitions, desire, etc.). CTM states that these should be carefully monitored and controlled in order to avoid inappropriate interferences in the assessment of reasons. In the Ricoeurian perspective, they are complementary and necessary in the decision making process.

Now, in order to develop this research the first chapter deals with the CTM’s concept of critical thinking. To begin with, I present this concept from its general components: the assessment and the dispositional. Then, I study the philosophical grounds, especially the concept of rationality, theoretical and practical. This section is based mainly in Harvey Sigel’s books *Rationality Redeemed?* (1997) and *Educating Reason* (1988), along with many other thinkers contributions, such as Robert Ennis, Sharon Bailin, Richard Paul and the thinkers. Here the point is to examine the concept emphasis on logic; furthermore, it is presented a critic, as CTM does

not present explicitly a convenient concept of the practical dimension of reason that states the relations among logical reasons, feelings, intuition and action.

In the second chapter I put forward the Ricoeurian concept of phronesis, so the general context of the ‘Little ethics’ and the practical reason come to show phronesis from its components. Thus, phronesis is presented from the philosophical concepts of reason for acting and practical reasoning; after that, from a sociological¹ view through the concepts of rule of action and symbolic mediations; at the end of the chapter I expound the Kantian and Hegelian treatments of freedom and *sittlichkeit*. To do this, I follow mainly the Ricoeurian essay titled *Practical Reason* (1992) and *Oneself as Another* (1991).

In the third and last chapter I make a ‘synthesis’. First, I present the shared and different philosophical points between CTM and Ricoeurian philosophies. After that, the concept of *critical phronesis* is proposed as an improved concept of critical thinking. It is made of the most important traits of the CTM’s and Ricoeurian phronesis and practical reason.

¹ In this dissertation, the term *sociological* is taken from the Ricoeurian theory, so it does not mean to imply any scientific sociological question about how social institutions interfere in any human deed. Rather, it highlights the ricoeurian reflection of the sociological theories of Max Weber.

Chapter I

Concept of Critical Thinking

Here I present the central points of the CTM's concept of critical thinking, which is usually criticized for being too or even exclusively logical (Popkewitz, 1999a; Walters, 1994a, 1994b), its epistemology is too narrow (Warren, 1994) and does not consider the real political and sociological contexts, therefore it assumes ideologies that maintain the status quo (Burbules and Berk, 1999). It is accused also for leaving aside important human dimensions like emotions and intuition (Gallo, 1994; Thayer-Bacon, 1999, 2000; Missimer, 1994).

The question that guide this section is: how do the philosophers of this movement define critical thinking? The chapter is divided in three sections: 1) thinking abilities; 2) dispositions; 3) self-knowlege.

1.1 CTM's Concept of Critical Thinking

The *Critical Thinking Movement's* theory about critical thinking² was mainly developed in North America. This movement was born in the 1960's in the USA before the low scores shown by pupils in tests of high level thought (Difabio, 2005, p. 168). Therefore, the main objective of this movement is to foster the way in which critical thinking is developed in school. Nowadays, this conception of *critical thinking* has gained popularity not only in North America, but in Hispanic countries as well (Difabio, 2005)³.

This concept of critical thinking is made up of three theories: psychology, pedagogy and philosophy of education, which distinguishes it from other philosophical views of critical

² It is important to note that this movement is not one of a group of philosophers or thinkers gathered and working together as a team, therefore it is not a school of philosophers or anything similar. They are just a group of people interested in this topic of critical thinking who read and criticize themselves without trying to reach any agreement as a team.

³ In Colombia there seems to be a growing interest in CTM's concept of critical thinking, since there are some university teachers and students interested in researching and writing about this topic (For example: Andres Mejía, Hipólito González, Javier Ignacio Montoya, etc.).

thinking, like Dewey's and Freire's. To be sure, philosophers of the CTM do not focus only on philosophical thought about critical thinking, but they also take care of creating didactic materials and strategies to foster thinking at school⁴, and even create tools to test⁵ it in pupils. They also propose to understand critical thinking from a psychological view, for they include a list of thinking cognitive abilities necessary to be critical.

1.1.1 Skills or Abilities and Criteria

The authors of the CTM consider that critical thinking is made up of a set of abilities and dispositions (Fisher, 2001; Siegel, 2010; Norris & Ennis, 1989), or in Harvey Siegel's words, a 'reason assessment' component and a 'critical spirit' component (1997, pp. 2-3). Regarding the first element, these philosophers give some lists of thinking abilities. For instance, a group of thinkers under the Delphi⁶ method propose: "interpretation, analysis, evaluation, inference, explanation, and self-regulation" (Facione, 2013, p. 5). But this list is too general. Another list is that of Robert Ennis' and Stephen Norris':

Topics for evaluating Critical Thinking Abilities

(Abbreviated version)

Elementary classification

1. Focusing on a question

⁴ Some materials created by these thinkers to be followed in courses of critical thinking are books, like that of Alec Fischer (2004); the annual conference, workshops and other events organized by Richard Paul and Linda Elder (<http://www.criticalthinking.org/>); and, the tests to evaluate critical thinking created by Robert Ennis.

⁵ See *The Watson-Glaser Critical Thinking Appraisal* (WGCTA) (Watson & Glaser, 1980); Ennis-Weir Critical Thinking Essay Test (EWCTET).

⁶ The American Philosophical Association organized a search for two years (from 1987 to 1989), under the Delphi method, through an interactive panel of 46 experts from EEUU and Canada. It was identified that central aspects of critical thinking can be reasonably expected in university first and second years (Cf. Difabio, 181, footnote # 14. Own translation). "In all forty-six persons, widely recognized by their professional colleagues to have special experience and expertise in CT [critical thinking] instruction, assessment or theory, made the commitment to participate in this Delphi Project" (Facione, 1990, p. 2). Among them there were philosophers, psychologists, teachers, and others.

2. Analyzing arguments
3. Asking and answering questions that clarify and challenge

Basic support

4. Judging the credibility of a source
5. Making and judging observations

Inference

6. Making and judging deductions
7. Making and judging inductions
8. Making and judging value judgments

Advanced clarification

9. Defining terms and judging definitions
10. Identifying assumptions

Strategies and tactics

11. Deciding on an action
12. Interacting with others. (Ennis and Norris, 1989, p. 14)

These lists reveal the psychological perspective mentioned above. Nonetheless, CTM's philosophers think that skills could be unfolded in a careless, superficial or unreflective way, so Sharon Bailin clears up that the assessment component should include certain criteria:

It is the quality of the thinking which distinguishes critical from uncritical thinking, and this quality is determined by the degree to which the thinking meets the relevant standards and criteria. It is, then, the adherence to certain criteria which is the defining characteristic of critical thinking (Bailin, 2002, pp. 363-364).

Therefore, critical thinking is not centered in thinking abilities or mental processes, which are the focus of the psychological perspective, but it takes into account the fulfillment of the principles, normative criteria, which mainly come from formal and informal logic (Siegel, 1997,

p. 16). This is an application of theoretical reason⁷, the rules of understanding, in Kantian words. However, what needs to be assessed? And, what are those criteria? Harvey Siegel says:

at least, to evaluate the evidential or probative force of reasons. That is, the critical thinker must be able to tell 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, and whether she ought, on the basis of the reason under consideration, to accept the claim or perform the action in question (1997, p. 14).

To determine if a reason is genuine or strong enough to support an idea or action, it is necessary to look for fallacies, contradictions, assumptions, etc. Therefore, the criteria for these specific cases are given by logic (formal and informal). For instance, if people hear a politician saying that they should avoid voting for another candidate because he has cheated on his wife, knowing the fallacy *ad hominem*, they could conclude that this reason is not valid, or do not have the *probative force* to accept the thesis, neither the *normative impact* to do what the politician demands. The final point of doing such a logical exam is to decide what beliefs and actions to follow.

The *probative force* and the *normative impact* are the traits of reasons that Harvey Siegel tends to value the most. The first one has to do with the quality of the argument and the second with the impact over the will to take a person to execute an action. In Stefaan Cuypers' words, "the first component takes care of the epistemic property of reasons while the second capture the motivational one" (2004, p. 76). Thus, the normative impact is what takes inside the relation to concrete action, as it is what 'pushes' will to move the person in one way or another.

Thus, critical thinking is not only related to the quality of reasons, but also with the coherent action that the person should develop. In Harvey Siegel's words, "students (and people generally) are rational, or reasonable, or critical thinkers, to the extent that they believe, judge,

⁷ When the term *theoretical reason* is used in this paper, it is meant the dimension of reason whose main objective is to know natural phenomena under understanding (whose grounds are mainly laws of logic). Therefore it is about the epistemic component of reason. On the other hand, practical reason has to do with freedom and will as grounds that make possible for humans to unfold their own actions from human *nature* and its influences in will, such as natural inclinations, reasons, desires, etc. Nevertheless, it is important to clarify that there is only one reason with several dimensions, included theoretical and practical.

and act on the basis of (competently evaluated) reasons” (2010, p. 141. Italics mine). Hence, a critical thinker has to evaluate reasons, decide and act in coherence to the results of that assessment. Here it is evident that the point of critical thinking is not just thinking well, but acting accordingly.

So far, the focus on logicity is obvious, but this emphasis on action takes the concept to another dimension apart from rationality. Since a person can develop all critical thinking abilities and meet the relevant criteria, but he does not apply them habitually nor act accordingly, most philosophers of the CTM (For example: Siegel 2010, Bailin, 2002, Ennis, 1993, Norris & Ennis, 1989) think that this kind of behavior cannot be named critical thinking. In Harvey Siegel words, it “is not enough that a person be able to assess reasons properly; to be critical thinkers she must *actually engage* in competent reason assessment, and be generally disposed to do so” (1997, p. 3. Italics in the original).

The weight of this concept of critical thinking seems to move towards dispositions, since it is not enough to have the rational skills without having the willing to perform them. Thus, a critical thinker should have the skills, meet the criteria and have the dispositions to apply abilities willingly and regularly. But, what are these dispositions and how to define the relation between them, rational skills and criteria?

1.1.2 Dispositions: more than Reason

Along with the skills and criteria critical thinking includes a cluster of dispositions, habits of mind, and character traits, generally referred to as the dispositional component or critical spirit. “This extends the ideal beyond the bounds of the cognitive, for, so understood, the ideal is one a certain sort of person” (Siegel, 2010, pp. 142-143). The critical spirit widens the narrow logical concept of critical thinking that characterizes it above. The critical spirit involves human dimensions like freedom, will, tendencies, habits, etc. One list of these dispositions is expounded by Robert Ennis and Stephen Norris:

Critical Thinking Dispositions

Ideal critical thinkers are disposed to

1. Care 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
 - e. Use their critical thinking abilities
2. Care to understand and present a position honestly and clearly, theirs as well as others'; including to
 - a. Discover and listen to others' view and reasons
 - b. Be clear about the intended meaning of what is said, written, or otherwise communicated, seeking as much precision as the situation requires
 - c. Determine, and maintain focus on, the conclusion or question
 - d. Seek and offer reasons
 - e. Take into account the total situation
 - f. Be reflectively aware of their own basic beliefs
3. 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)

All of these dispositions show a strong link with the logic included in the assessment component. In one word, a critical thinker has the adequate dispositions to reason properly, not just from a logical, but also a dispositional perspective. A critical thinker applies habitually his reason, because he is a certain sort of person, one that acts in certain ways, under some dispositions. Critical thinking is about "actually believing and acting; that is, of being, (appropriately) *moved* to belief or action by reasons" (Siegel, 1988, p. 142. Footnote 14). This

emphasis on the whole person as a critical thinker and not just on certain characteristics should be regarded carefully, as it takes all human dimensions in the comprehension of critical thinking.

To be a critical thinker is to be a person with a certain character, rather than a person that has some abilities and dispositions. This is clear, at least for Harvey Siegel when he criticizes Robert Ennis' theory. The latter thinker defines critical thinking as "reasonable reflective thinking that is focused on deciding what to believe and do" (2011, p. 1). Harvey Siegel states that this definition

fails to capture the dispositional nature of critical thinking, for I might reasonably reflectively go about deciding (and on that basis decide) what to believe or do, yet fail to believe or do it. Unless deciding to do A automatically results in the doing of A—a dubious proposition, which has been largely discredited since Aristotle's criticism of Plato's articulation of it—the dispositional character of critical thinking cannot be analyzed as a matter of deciding, however reasonable the decision. I believe that the 'reasons' conception (...) handles this problem, by making critical thinking a function, not of deciding to believe or act, but rather actually believing or acting, that is, of being (appropriately) *moved* to belief or action by reasons (Siegel, 1988, pp. 141-142. Footnote 14).

It seems clear that critical thinking for the CTM is not just about processes of deciding, nor acting, which is the focus of a psychological perspective. The critical thinking is above all about *being* a certain type of person. A critical thinker is a free person that willingly decides and acts after a careful examination of arguments according to relevant criteria.

The 'critical spirit' is not simply a list of dispositions, usually pointed out by thinkers and psychologists, but the very character of the person. Deciding to believe or to act is not enough to actually believe and act. Consider smokers who decide to give up the vice, but never accomplish their decision. The last aim of critical thinking is not thinking itself, but acting (bodily-action). According to Harvey Siegel (1988, 2010), critical thinking is actually being a well-defined sort of person, one that is *moved* by reasons. However, what does it mean? What is to be *moved by reasons*? Maybe leaving aside all what humans are and just pay attention to arguments? What is the role of dispositions or critical spirit and what its relation to reason?

Harvey Siegel splits critical spirit into three: dispositions, attitudes and character traits. Here some examples of each category:

The critical spirit, as I am using the term, refers to a complex of dispositions, attitudes, and character traits. It includes dispositions, for example the dispositions to seek reasons and evidence in making judgments and to evaluate such reasons carefully in accordance with relevant principles of reason assessment; attitudes, including a respect for the importance of reasoned judgment and for truth, and a rejection of partiality, arbitrariness, special pleading, wishful thinking, and other obstacles to the proper exercise of reason assessment and reasoned judgment; habits of mind constant with these dispositions and attitudes, such as habits of reason seeking and evaluating, of engaging in due consideration of principles of reason assessment, of subjecting proffered reasons to critical scrutiny, and engaging in the fair-minded and non-self-interested consideration of such reasons; and character traits consonant with all of this. People who possess the critical spirit *value* good reasoning, and are disposed to believe, judge and act on its basis (Siegel, 1997, pp. 33-34).

In general terms, all of these components of the critical spirit, although they are not clearly differentiated, show that the critical thinking is more than just a list of qualities. It is about the person as a whole and not only some particular episodes or characteristics. At first sight, it seems that the critical spirit only moves reason to do its job. It seems as if their value would be in their power to make reason to perform its abilities. For instance, as to attitudes, maybe nearer to a moral meaning, make people to obey reason or execute what reason proposes in certain ways: impartially, respectfully, rightly.

But careful! The CTM does not claim that dispositions *cause* reason to develop or execute its abilities: they only offer a conception of critical thinking and “causal worries are simply irrelevant” although, it “may well be right that the cause of particular episodes of critical thinking is «the habit of critical thought»” (Siegel, 1988, p. 68). Dispositions are better understood as guides for reason to do its job, that is to assess the arguments. The important matter is not if the critical spirit pushes, cause or make reason to execute its skills, but that they guide reason to do it in a certain way, and above all that they guide the person according to the reasons found: they move *appropriately* the critical thinker.

All the elements that constitutes the critical thinker (character traits, attitudes, dispositions, habits, and the assessment component) go together and form a kind of system, in which they require one another to achieve a critical thought and a critical thinker. What if someone evaluates reasons, but he is not fair and independent-minded? That could result in a biased evaluation, so it would not be really critical. In respect of habits of mind, how would one seek reasons if do not have an inquiring attitude, that is habits of reason seeking and evaluating? By lacking these dispositions, one only would grasp the first idea that come to the mind.

These considerations make to think that the most important component of critical thinking so far is the critical spirit and not the reason assessment component, but actually both of them are equally necessary to be a critical thinker⁸. Dispositions, attitudes and character traits could be the human dimensions that ground judging and acting critically, but if they are not complemented by rational skills and criteria to meet, the final outcome would be certain ill-critical thinking.

So, critical thinkers are not just well trained people in thinking abilities. Rather, they are moved by their own critical spirit to value good reasons and act consequently. A critical thinker acts according to the evaluated reasons because he considers the reasons strong enough and the actions convenient. But this consideration of the force of reasons and its normative impact requires one more condition or characteristic of the critical thinker: an appropriate self-knowledge.

1.1.3 Self-knowledge and Critical Thinking

Among all the abilities and dispositions, self-knowledge is a touchstone characteristic of a critical thinker. Harvey Siegel contends that

– we should be rational– without our becoming “rational automata”, moved solely and slavishly by devotion to reasons, with no critical insight into our relationship to reasons at various

⁸ As a consequence of this conclusion, in the field of teaching critical thinking would be a must to help pupils to develop skills and dispositions to think critically. Nevertheless, the first component seems to be more valued that the critical spirit and schools focus its efforts on it. In Peter Facione’s words, “some aspects of CT, particularly features within its skill dimension, are more readily targeted by existing educational assessment strategies should not distort the conceptualization of CT nor truncate full-blown CT instruction” (1990, p. 5).

levels. Such insight is not only possible and desirable; we should strive to make it a part of the equipment of the critical thinker/rational person. The critical thinker should, that is, be critical about being critical (1988, p. 133).

So, a critical thinker is not an automata being, one mechanically guided by reason. A critical thinker should be critical about his own critical thought; he should be able to acknowledge when he is acting too rational and decide about it. That is, a person can identify some situations where acting rationally is not appropriate, like playing a musical instrument where the rational technic could be let aside and playing 'by feel'. In a more common instance, sometimes it is better to act according to an intuition, such as making a favor to a person not known at all, without clear reasons to do it, but the intuition that it would create good atmosphere. Here the philosopher demands people to examine the limits of their own reason. Thanks to a capacity of knowing his own mental states (beliefs, desires, prejudices, biases, motives, etc.), the critical thinker could check his reasons, his general dispositions, and determine whether he is too rational at a specific situation, where there are no logical reasons.

This point about self-knowledge is about a capacity of knowing beliefs, desires, prejudices, biases, motives, etc., hence a critical thinker can trust in his self-knowledge to judge his own reasons and decisions. He trusts in his self-knowledge to be autonomous. If this is right, to develop rational abilities, criteria and dispositions would require some kind of access to his own mental states. Some of the CTM's thinkers call this capacity metacognition, that is "to reflect on the thinking you went through in arriving at some decision"; then, "the way to improve it [decision making] is to thinking about how you usually do it" (Fischer, 2004, p. 241). Indeed, if a person cannot access to his own mental states to think about them, he would not be able to identify the mistakes committed, and obviously, he could not correct them.

Hence, metacognition is a requirement to be a critical thinker. Indeed, how to assess and correct one's reasons or abilities and even dispositions if one does not know them? The philosophers of the CTM think that everyone can effectively enter in his own mind and detect how they thought and acted at any point in time, identify what influenced the final action and correct it, if this is the case: "You can examine and correct an inference you have drawn. You can review and reformulate one of your own explanations. You can even examine and correct your ability to examine and correct yourself!" (Facione, 2013, p. 7).

In the assessment component self-knowledge is necessary to know and examine the arguments adduced to hold any view or action. Also, it is necessary to know what prejudices, tendencies, biases, etc., one has in order to eradicate them and carry out a good assessment. For those thinkers who accept that skills or abilities could be examined, self-knowledge would be required to identify the development of the rational abilities to make a good evaluation. The Delphi report states that it is necessary

self-consciously to monitor one's cognitive activities, the elements used in those activities, and the results deduced, particularly by applying skills in analysis and evaluation to one's own inferential judgments with a view toward questioning, confirming, validating, or correcting either one's reasoning or one's results (Facione, 1990, p. 9).

Regarding the critical spirit, self-knowledge is required to know if one has those dispositions or has to develop them. In Facione words, it is indispensable

to reflect on one's motivations, values, attitudes and interests with a view toward determining that one has endeavored to be unbiased, fair-minded, thorough, objective, respectful of the truth, reasonable, and rational in coming to one's analyses, interpretations, evaluations, inferences, or expressions (1990, p. 9-10).

This self-knowledge is not only about one's own reasons or beliefs, but about the character traits, since it is also a necessary element to be a critical thinker. Self-knowledge is necessary due to the possibility that lacking such knowledge could "present practical obstacles to the execution of critical thinking" (Siegel, 1988, p. 41). For example, how to be fair if one does not know a personal tendency to devalue black people or women? As to the critical spirit, for instance, the willingness is included to reconsider and revise views; honesty to face biases and prejudices, etc. These dispositions are grounded on the self-knowledge that the critical thinker has of himself.

1. 2. Philosophical grounds: Theoretical and Practical Rationality

Now this exposition will show that the grounds of the concept of critical thinking are not exclusively logical. Besides, its concept of practical reason seems to be not fully developed (main criticism of this text) or it is not clear, which is problematic in a theory that deals with action. So the questions that guide this section are: how has been understood the concept of rationality by the CTM? What does it include and exclude?

1.2.1 The Concept of Rationality

Usually rationality is thought to be related to the power to know and to deal with knowledge, but also with decision and action. These rational functions have been established since the ancient philosophers, such as Plato or Aristotle, but was Immanuel Kant who spoke for the first time of a theoretical and a practical reason as two different, though closely related, dimensions of reason: one reason with several dimensions or functions.

Regarding the proper meaning of rationality in the field of education Harvey Siegel thinks that it should not be understood as a mere formal analysis of propositions or arguments. “To do so would be to regard our educational ideal as realized to the extent that students approximate «logical machines»”, which is both psychologically and educationally dubious (Siegel, 1997, p. 103). Obviously, if being critical is to apply logical criteria, the critical thinker would need to learn those criteria and apply them all the time; so he will become a machine of applying logical criteria. Nevertheless, this conception ignores that people are much more than logical beings.

Such educational vision completely ignores the human dimension of education. It takes no account of the sort of *person* we think education should strive to help create; it pays no attention to the personal qualities we value and think to be necessary to foster. Neither cares it about the moral dimensions of educational interaction. In particular, it pays no attention to the attitudes, dispositions, and habits of mind or character traits which (...) are fundamental to the educational ideal of rationality (Siegel, 1997, p. 104).

Therefore, it is clear that the CTM ideal of rationality as an educational goal is far from only a logical reason, since it is conceived according to certain sort of person with personal qualities and moral dimension: the *ethos* of the critical thinker. It is made up of an assessment component and the critical spirit as two dimensions of rationality, both of them necessary and complementary, since there would not be good thinking without the attitudes, dispositions, and habits of mind or character traits that guide reason to apply well its thinking abilities. And there would not be good thinking without logical reason either.

In Harvey Siegel's words, "rationality must be conceived substantively, and must be understood as involving dispositions, attitudes, and character traits as well as reasoning ability" (1997, p. 101). In other words, rationality is not limited to the epistemological underpinnings of criticality, but it is widened to include some well-defined anthropological dimensions, such as character and attitudes.

As Harvey Siegel asserts "to defend (...) the enlightenment ideal of rationality" (1997, p. 2), these aspects of rationality (the critical spirit and the epistemic dimension) are chapped by some ideals from the XIX century. According to this, the ideal of rationality is based on a set of

theses concerning the role of reason in human life, the importance of individual autonomy, the centrality of considerations of justice to the evaluation of actual and possible social arrangements and relationships, the value of knowledge, the importance of believing responsibly, i.e. *in such a way that beliefs are informed by and based upon relevant evidence and so on* (Siegel, 1997, p. 2. Italics mine).

This quotation shows clearly the width of the concept of rationality taken from an enlightenment perspective: it includes theses about knowledge, autonomy, responsibility, justice, social arrangements and relationships, etc. All of these cannot be achieved with a rationality limited to logic, for these ideals go beyond formal relations among propositions. The philosophical epistemology and the anthropological, ethical and political dimensions of the critical spirit are explicit in the concept of rationality.

This concept of rationality clearly shows a wide and pertinent anthropology, for it does not reduce rationality to logic, nor epistemology, as if people were just thinking machines. Rationality, at least for Harvey Siegel, integrates more than epistemology: character, attitudes, dispositions, etc. Nevertheless, this concept of rationality also shows its bias towards theoretical reason as it demands that any belief and action be based upon *relevant evidence*, which is assessed mainly according to logical (formal and informal) criteria.

1.2.2 Theoretical Rationality and logicity

According to Harvey Siegel (1997), the usual concept of rationality includes a logical component, but also a set of well-established beliefs or principles about knowledge. Therefore, this concept of rationality deals with some problems about truth and reality. As to the logical aspect, the formal and informal logic are included, but this formalistic comprehension of rationality is inadequate, not only for an epistemological view, but as well as for an educational one.

Firstly, according to the epistemological perspective, rationality includes relationships examined by formal logic, which refers to structural relations without any reference to the content of the item studied. For instance, saying that Q is a logical consequence of P means that if there is P , then Q would be a necessary consequence. Here the content of P and Q is not required to infer the validity of its relation. Rationality or critical thinking does demand the analysis and reflection upon several aspects beyond its logical form, since the support that one sentence gives to another one is defined according to the content of every proposition, and also according to the context and circumstances that surround the problem or fact in mind (Siegel, 1997). This indeed demands an analysis and reflection upon those aspects, which go far beyond formal and informal logic. Therefore rationality includes the test of sentences according to formal relations studied by logic, but this exam is not enough. So, due to the fact that the concept of rationality entails more than just formal relations, it is “fundamentally an epistemological, rather than (...) logical” (Siegel, 1997, p. 102).

Hence, formal logic is not the whole content included in the concept of rationality nor in the concept of critical thinking. It includes also an epistemology, which is “the general theory of

knowledge, truth, reasons, justification and evidence” (Siegel, 1997, p. 35). The contents of logic are only one aspect of this epistemology: the principles within justification of reasons.

For Harvey Siegel, there are at least three theses very clear within this epistemology: 1) truth is independent of rational justification, so the critical thinker might justifiably believe something which is false and the opposite. In practical terms the quest in critical thinking is for rational justification, rather than truth; 2) relativism must be rejected; therefore the justification of beliefs is absolute and depends only on relevant criteria and evidence, that is, in reasons or arguments; 3) there is a connection between rational justification and truth, though it is fallible. In general, “this epistemology requires an ‘absolutism’ with respect to reasons and justification, a radically ‘nonepistemic’ conception of truth, and an embrace of fallibilism” (Siegel, 1997, 34). These three points are, of course, the epistemic underpinnings under the ideal of critical thinking.

The most important point about the relevance of evidence is that it is defined according to the criteria that come from formal and informal logic. This is exactly the point where some of critics (Walters, 1994a; Warren, 1994, Burbles and Berk, 1999, etc.) of the CTM base their criticisms: the evidence or the reasons to accept a belief or an action is logical. Even though the CTM makes up the concept of rationality from the dispositional and the assessment components, they focus in the assessment component and here is where the criteria only admits the evidence that approves the tests of logic. This is why neither emotions nor intuitions are valid reasons or evidence, because formal and informal logic rules cannot assess them accurately. They would not be universal nor objective, as the CTM pretends reasons or arguments to be.

1.2.3 Practical Rationality and action

Indeed, the aim of rationality or critical thinking is to decide what beliefs *and actions* to follow, since “critical thinking involves actions which are not just acts of thinking” (Siegel, 1988, p. 41), or in Robert Ennis’ words, critical thinking “focus on deciding what to believe or do” (2011, p. 1). Nevertheless, within the theory of the critical thinking is not present, at least explicitly and fully developed, a theory that explains this relation between thinking and action.

According to the CTM’s thinkers, to be, to act as a rational person/critical thinker demands certain *commitment* to the rational exam, that is, to be coherent to the results of the

reason assessment component, *to act according* to the valid conclusion reached in the examination of reasons. In Harvey Siegel's words: "once we have examined the relative strengths and weaknesses of reasons relevant to possible beliefs and actions, we should believe and *act accordingly*" (Siegel, 1997, p. 50. Italics mine). But how does this agreement between beliefs and actions occur? In other words, how to pass from thinking into bodily-action?

This is the problem of justification and motivation of action. Indeed, most contemporary philosophers start by distinguishing two types of reasons for action: 1) *normative reasons*, that is, reasons that justify an action; and 2) *motivating reasons*, for which the 'agent' develops her action (Alvarez, 2006)⁹. The CTM takes mainly the normative reasons, which once they have approved the rational test, they seem to become motivating reasons. In the end, the CTM seems to remain in the field of justification and leaves the topic of motivation in the dispositional component.

In words of Robert Audi, "on any plausible view of practical reason, it is a rational capacity, specifically the kind in virtue of which agents respond to (normative) reasons for action" (2004, p. 123). Of course, if there are reasons for action (commonly normative ones), the agent has to respond to them, that is, to act, or not, according to them, and this response is given by the practical capacity of reason. So, it is important for the CTM to give an account of practical reason since they pretend to set up a theory of critical thinking for bodily-actions and not just thinking-actions.

For Stefan Cuypers, in his criticism towards this point, the concept of practical reason for the CTM is contained in the theory of rationality:

his [Siegel] reasons conception of critical thinking is not limited to the sphere of theoretical reason but equally applies to that of practical reason. So, although Siegel's conception applies first and foremost to the epistemological domain, it also pertains to the ethical domain. Given Siegel's generalist view and the perspective of rationalist ethics, the assessment of moral reasons in the light of ethical criteria is entirely analogous to that of non moral reasons according to epistemic criteria. Like epistemic criteria, ethical ones also warrant the impartiality and universality of reasons, exposing the arbitrariness of self-interested reason (2004, p. 77).

⁹ Nevertheless, "there are, in addition, "explanatory" reasons, reasons that explain an action without necessarily justifying it and without being the reasons that motivated the agent." (Alvarez, 2016)

So, for the CTM practical reasoning is entirely analogous to theoretical reasoning, not only in the formal procedures but in the criteria applied as well: that of logic. In response to that criticism Harvey Siegel asserts: “my account of rationality is meant to apply to both sides of the theoretical/practical reason divide” (2005, p. 54. Endnote # 1). So he rejects, along with Robert Ennis, “a sharp separation between theoretical and practical reason” (1988, p. 140. Endnote 7). At this point the CTM’s philosophers coincide with general philosophical views:

It is also widely agreed [practical reason] to be in some way parallel to theoretical reason, conceived as a rational capacity to respond to (normative) reasons for belief. Theoretical reason is not only analogous to practical reason but also essential to its operation. Beliefs are needed to guide action: desires represent a destination to be reached, but by themselves indicate no routing. An agent will be practically rational, then, at least in good part on the basis of having certain desires and beliefs (Audi, 2004, p. 123).

Practical and theoretical reasons are just two functions of rationality but not two different reasons. They complement each other in order to fulfill their objectives. Nevertheless, there is a remaining question about the similarities and differences between them: the same type of reasons and procedures of reasoning that supports a thesis in a theoretical field can serve as grounds for a specific (body)-action?

Reasons are central to understand both practical reason and theoretical reason. But there are many kinds of reasons. Partly because of this, philosophical writing is often unclear about what counts as a reason and about how reasons are connected with various closely related elements (Audi, 2004, p. 119).

The relation between practical and theoretical reason rests uncertain in the CTM. Certainly, they accept (Siegel, 1988, 1997) that there are several types of reasons, but they do not specify them and do not explain the elements that go along with the practical reason. For

instance, the difference among reasons (normative, motivational, explanatory), practical reasoning, rationality, and other aspects like desires and motivations.

In the case of Harvey Siegel, he proposes that the relation between reasons and bodily action is found in the critical spirit:

On my account the critical spirit is a necessary component of a full account of critical thinking because the reason assessment component (...) does not *guarantee* being appropriately moved by reasons. But that the reason assessment component does not guarantee, or ‘imply’, appropriate movement, does not render reason motivationally inert or powerless. ‘Reason’ *can* motivate, on my account, but it is not necessary that it does. That is why the critical spirit component is necessary for a full account of critical thinking, i.e. an account encompassing not just proper reason assessment but appropriate movement as well (Siegel, 2005, p. 538).

Indeed, nothing guarantees totally the movement of the body according to the reasons, as we are not machines that blindly obey reasons. For Harvey Siegel reason has the power to motivate bodily movement, but it is not sure it always do. That is the main argument for which the critical spirit is a necessary component of the critical thinking conception. Thus, it could be seen that this theory about practical reason, (and the field of motivation rather than only justification) is nearer to the ‘critical spirit’ rather than to the reason assessment component.

Critical spirit has to guide assessment component to develop its abilities and to meet soundly the criteria. In a word, it moves reason to do well its job. And if this job includes moving the body, executing the adequate action to follow, therefore the critical spirit has to guide and develop action as well: it has to move the body. Critical spirit is the one that can *guarantee*, or at least, to get close to be appropriately moved by reasons.

Hence, critical spirit is the clue to understand the relation from thinking to action: “critical thinker must have a willingness to conform judgment and action to principle, not simply an ability to so conform” (Siegel, 1988, p. 39). This willingness is part of the set of dispositions of the critical spirit, and it is the link between reason and action. Reason has to assess the reasons that would determine the will towards action; this is the role of the practical function of reason, but the human dimension that moves the body is the will.

This seems perfectly related to the reality of human behavior, as can be seen in people that have several reasons for doing or avoid doing something but never do it, for example smokers, except if they have the willingness, the will. So the theory of critical thinking is not a naïve account of human actions and ‘nature’. If we, as humans, were beings guided only by our rationality, for the normative force of reasons, we would be like perfect rational machines, leaving aside intuitions or emotions. Insofar as one is a perfect critical thinker, i.e. in full possession of the reason assessment and the critical spirit components, one will perform actions in accordance with the normative force of relevant reasons.

But no one is in fact perfect in this regard; being a critical thinking, and possessing the components, are matters of degree (Siegel, 2005, p. 546. Endnote # 7). That is, the degree in which a person is moved by reasons to believe and act according to the normative force of reasons. This means, of course, that a critical thinker does not necessarily meet all the rational abilities nor all the dispositions pointed out in the accounts of critical thinking. Maybe the best concept to characterize the critical thinking is the *Ethos* of the critical thinker: someone whose will is usually moved to (bodily) action according to the results of the evaluation of reasons considered¹⁰. In Harvey Siegel’s words:

the normative force of reasons is determined wholly by their epistemic quality. But their motivating force is dependent on a wide range of considerations, including the degree to which the person whose reasons they are disposed to act in accordance with them (Siegel, 2005, p. 545).

Here it is important to highlight the epistemic quality, and not only the logical quality, determines the normative force of reasons. It determines what critical thinking is and what it is not. But the normative force of reasons by itself could not be sufficient to move the person towards action, so the critical spirit is needed to do it. The motivating part is left on the side of dispositions. It seems, for the last quote, that it depends on the ‘nature’ of everyone, that is, on the degree to which a person is disposed to act in accordance to reason.

¹⁰ But this does not exclude the possibility of being moved by other human dimensions, like desire or emotions, in some specific situations. In the third chapter the concept of reason will be widened.

Being a critical thinker involves valuing reasons and caring about their evidential power; it comprises a willingness and desire objectively to evaluate reasons and their evidence according to impartial and non-arbitrary standards. The critical spirit gives life to reasons. That is to say, a critical thinker does not idly assess reasons; he is also *moved* by them due to his critical spirit. To be appropriately moved by reasons is to be motivated and guided by good reasons in belief-formation and action. On account of the critical spirit, reasons have normative impact on believing and acting. So, on Siegel's view, having the reason assessment ability and having the critical spirit disposition are individually necessary and jointly sufficient conditions for being a critical thinker (Cuypers, 2004, p. 77).

This long quotation shows clearly, from Steefan Cuypers' perspective, the integration between the assessment and the critical spirit components in Harvey Siegel's conception of critical thinking. It is clear that the critical spirit takes the role of the practical reason and contains the relation between thinking and action. It seems that the critical spirit guides reason to do the assessment of reasons and once the exam has reached a conclusion, it has to execute the convenient action. Thus, the critical spirit is under the service of the reasons assessment component. Practical reason has been replaced by the critical spirit. This result is but a contradiction since above we read that CTM philosophers do not accept a sharp division between theoretical and practical reason, but it turns out that practical reason seems to be confined to the critical spirit. In the end, there is no a clear comprehension of practical reason in the CTM concept of critical thinking.

To conclude this chapter, it is clear that the critics' denounce is right and the concept of the CTM's highlights the role of logic to the point of reducing the critical thinking to think and act on the basis of logical reasons. Indeed, the most important point about the relevance of evidence is that it is defined according to the criteria that come from formal and informal logic. Even though the CTM makes up the concept of rationality from the dispositional and the assessment components, they focus in the assessment component and dispositions are only included to guide the person towards an appropriate assessment of reasons.

This is why neither feelings nor intuitions are valid reasons or evidence, because logic rules cannot assess them. This limitation could easily be accepted if critical thinking were aiming only at examining theories and not decisions and actions in the real life, that is, if critical thinking

looked just well-established scientific knowledge and not well-thought actions. But, as it has been evident, so far, this critical thinking aims at beliefs and actions. This is the point where a clear concept of the practical dimension of reason would avoid or solve these criticisms. Nevertheless, the philosophers of the CTM do not develop a theory of practical reason that explains, among other topics, the relation between motivation, intentionality, action, reason and will. This is a major fault taking into account that these philosophers demand certain rational passions where ethical and anthropological dimensions are clearly included.

But if the CTM's philosophers have not developed a complete theory about practical reason and the relation between thinking and action, they have included self-knowledge among the abilities and dispositions of a critical thinker. Self-knowledge plays a necessary role into the exercise of critical thinking: it identifies the limits of critical thinking, the influence of emotions and other human dimensions in assessment of reasons and bodily-action. Without self-knowledge would be carelessly the assessment of reasons and the decisions about the bodily actions to follow. Since emotions and other human dimensions seem to be a danger to critical thinking, and as they cannot be objective, impartial, they are not accepted to be strong reasons to belief and act.

Chapter II

Paul Ricoeur's Concepts of Practical Reason and Phronesis¹¹

In the last chapter I concluded that the CTM lacks a clear concept of practical reason, even though their concept of rationality is wide enough to include the assessment component and the critical spirit. This chapter expounds the Ricoeurian's concept of practical reason and the concept of phronesis in order to demonstrate in the next chapter that this theory and that of the CTM have several points in common that allow to integrate them into a new concept of critical thinking.

2.1 Practical Reason

For Paul Ricoeur practical reason is not a concept to explain everything related to action, but it is embedded in a particular human ability: *phronesis*. Certainly, "practical reason is never without practical wisdom" (Ricoeur, 1991, p. 207). Ricoeurian phronesis, according to Ephrem-Ndungu Khonde, is "a general theory of action, of decision and judgment" (2005, p. 66. Own translation). As a theory, practical reason explains action, and how some human dimensions relate to it, such as desires, will, social rules and symbols, etc. As *praxis*, phronesis creates and performs decisions according to particular situations and laws (moral, social, religious, etc.).

In his essay called *Practical Reason* Paul Ricoeur explains this capacity gradually and through several philosophies: he begins by the analytical concepts of *reason for acting* and *practical reasoning*. Then, he moves on to the Weberian Sociology with the concepts of *rule of action* and *orientation toward others*. After that, he takes Kantian and Hegelian concepts of *meaningful action* and *Sittlichkeit*. Finally, he pretends to bring back practical reason to its critical function in relation to the ideological representations of action.

Paul Ricoeur's intention is to construct a concept of practical reason "that satisfies two requirements: it must deserve the name of reason, but it must maintain features irreducible to

¹¹ Paul Ricoeur uses the terms *practical wisdom* and *prudence* in the same sense as translation for *phronesis*, but he prefers *practical wisdom*.

scientifico-technical rationality” (Ricoeur, 1991, p. 188). Thus, he strives for building a concept according to human traits that are not limited to that kind of rationality of science, as if human behaviour were to be explained by an exact knowledge, which is only not possible, but even not desirable.

2.1.1 Reasons for acting and Practical Reasoning

The French thinker starts by the concept of *reason for acting*:

On the level of theory of action [from analytical philosophy], the concept of practical reason is identified with the conditions of intelligibility of meaningful action, understanding by “meaningful action” that action which an agent can account for *–logon didonai–* to someone else or to himself in such a way that the one who receives this account accepts it as intelligible. The action can therefore be “irrational” in accordance with other criteria (...); it nevertheless, remains *meaningful* to the extent that it meets conditions of acceptability established within a community of language and of values (Ricoeur, 1991, p. 189).

Here the philosopher identifies the concept of practical reason with a certain type of action: meaningful action (*l’action sensée*) which is produced having in mind the reasons or grounds that motivate its execution. These reasons make action intelligible, so an agent can explain why he did it, and based on those reasons the community can accept the action or not. Thus, the concept of practical reason is first defined according to intelligibility and acceptability of action in the community where the agent acts.

The important notion here is *reason for acting*, which has three traits: firstly, it “extends as far as the field of motivation” (Ricoeur, 1991, p. 190), without telling apart rational or emotional motives. Even an ‘irrational’ desire figures as a reason for acting, implicating a character of desirability; this means that a person should be able to say as what he desires something, he should be able to say why he did something and the reasons presented could be assessed. The character of desirability is what makes to think of a possible hierarchy of preferred actions. To say that one action is preferable to another is to consider the reasons that ground it

and make it more or less desirable. So, if a man begins a political career, he does it perhaps due to his financial profit or maybe because he thinks it is necessary to reform policies according to the new time. Despite their difference, both reasons seem to justify the action (although they might not be equally accepted by a community). In the end the action, according to its grounds, is more or less desirable.

The second trait of the reason for acting is its *character of generality*, which can be explained as belonging to a class, to a generality: motives, desires, reasons, etc. “In other terms, explaining an action is interpreting it as an example of a given class of dispositions” (Ricoeur, 1991, p. 191), that is the individuals’ tendencies or usual ways to behave. The main question here is why did someone do something? The answer could be that he did it out of his disposition to X; so, “this disposition brought him to, push him to, led him to... act this way” (Ricoeur, 1991, p. 191). Dispositions can “be understood as belonging to a class that can be identified, named, and defined. Thus, for instance, a politician decided to promote a legal reform due to his disposition to feel empathy with suffering people who are not covered by old laws.

The third characteristic of reasons for acting is a *teleological causation* which shows that the explanation of any action by motives reveal the teleological structure of human action. This causation is not linear, in which the antecedent moves towards the consequence. Certainly, “a causal theory should not be confused with a nomological theory: it is not necessary to know a law in order to affirm a causal connection, which, as has been stated, governs particular events.” (Ricoeur, 1992, p. 76). In other words, there is more than one way to understand a causal relation. Moreover, the linear law of causality does not allow understanding action, for actions do not follow that sort of law.

Indeed, an action is not always forcefully produced by the very same cause, but it can be executed for different reasons. Nevertheless, the general form of an action-ground can be described as causal: it is teleological. The “teleological explanation is the logic implicit in every use of the notion of motive in the sense of disposition to...” (Ricoeur, 1991, p. 191). Actions are performed because of the ends pursued. Think of the politician who begins his career due to the aim of making of its own country a better place to live.

Finally, the fourth aspect of the concept of a reason for acting is *intention*. Up to now Paul Ricoeur has just spoken about the motives retrospective and interpretive, as they make intelligible

the action executed. Nevertheless, there are reasons for acting that concern more the intention *with which* people do something than the retrospective motives of a completed action. “What is proper to intention taken in the sense of ‘with the intention of...’ is to establish between two or more actions a syntactical series expressed in statements of the following sort: ‘doing x *so that* y’” (Ricoeur, 1991, p. 192). The final intention is the point that makes reason to order retrospectively actions and reasons for acting in a logical chain with which the intention will be reached.

It is clear that the intention rules the action and explains it. But an important point is that this form of the action (teleological) is based on the conditions available, in which the repertoire of know-how is fundamental. “To say that an event occurs because it is intentionally aimed at is to say that the conditions that produced it are those which, as belonging to our repertoire of know-how, are called upon, required, and selected to produce the intended end” (Ricoeur, 1991, p. 191). This repertoire refers to several aspects: firstly, it contains a reference to the own body and its capabilities, and secondly, it refers to the self-knowledge necessary to a person in order to know if he can and know how to execute a specific action.

The politician did not only sign up to the polls, but he walked with people, maybe by bike; he made promises, so he gave discourses in squares and talks at universities, etc. He did those things because he had a body to walk and bike; he had a voice to talk, and he knew he could do such things and knew how to do them. All the actions connected made him to implement the reform he pursued, so he could fulfil his intention.

This very point is the step to the next level in this analysis of practical reason: *practical reasoning*. “The idea of an order of reasons for acting is the key to practical reasoning. This reasoning has no function other than to order the ‘long chains of reasons’ to which the final intention has given rise” (Ricoeur, 1991, p. 193). Therefore, a practical reasoning is made up of several reasons which are ordered in a chain that will achieve an intention. Thus, the teleological causation, proper of the reasons for acting, is the criteria that rules this ordering of reasons, which has the form of ‘doing X so that Y’.

But how to order the reasons in an intelligible and acceptable way? “The source of this ordering is the distance between the character of desirability and the particular action to be taken” (Ricoeur, 1991, p. 193). What is needed is to identify the final intentionality and the repertoire of

know-how, that is, the set of capabilities and the proper self-knowledge. At the end what is needed is a strategy that orders the chains of means according to the reasons considered.

This first dimension of practical reason does not fall into a solipsistic conception of humanity as nobody creates *ex nihilo* the language in which talks and thinks, nor the culture that shapes language and even intentions. Surely, “we suddenly arrive, as it were, in the middle of a conversation which has already begun and in which we try to orientate ourselves in order to contribute to it” (Ricoeur, 1991a, p. 33).

Reasons for acting and practical reasons are the first levels in this theory of practical reason, but how is it possible to create these reasons? What are the very grounds of this theory? The answer should be found in the anthropology of the human capacities, especially in the ability of speaking. As a matter of fact, reasons for acting and practical reason are not incommunicable, as everyone can say what and why does something. To be sure, “Natural languages have accumulated a vast storehouse of appropriate expressions, based on an absolutely specific grammar”, like action verbs and their transformation into passive verbs. (Ricoeur, 1991, p. 189). Therefore, the way of making an action intelligible is by identifying and communicating the reasons or motives of the action, that is, to talk (to the others or to oneself) about them. Thus, the meaningfulness of the action is only provided when talking about its grounds.

Furthermore, thanks to language it is possible to identify one thing from a group; “language indeed is made up in such a way that it can designate individuals through specific individualization operators” (Ricoeur, 1993, p. 112. Own translation), namely descriptions (the man who walked in the moon), proper names (Socrates), adverbs of place and time (here, there, now), etc. Therefore, through these operators, language helps to identify those reasons, motives, intentions, feelings, or in a word, the reasons for acting that make intelligible an action.

Deeply, the ability of speaking reflects one of the main dimensions when thinking about humanity: the possibility of making sense of the world. For Paul Ricoeur

while all is not language, everything in experience makes sense with the condition of being taken to language. The sentence “taking experience to language” invites to consider the speaking human being, if not equivalent to the human being in strict sense, indeed at least as the first condition of being human. (...) properly human action is distinguished from animal behavior,

and stronger from physical movement, in that this must be said, that is, taken to the language, aiming at being meaningful (Ricoeur, 1990, p. 111-112. Own translation).

To be a person is not only to have the same genetic structure, to belong to the very same species. It is firstly to act according to a way of being: the possibility of making sense of the world and of every experience. Making sense requires bearing in mind reasons for acting, to have a final intention, and end in view. Of course, this would not be possible without language, which allows not only to identify reasons and intentions and the repertoire of know-how, but also the characters of desirability of these aspects, so the person can evaluate and decide which of them to take to build the strategy, that is his practical reasoning.

2.1.2 Sociological view about Practical Reason

Apart from reasons for acting and the practical reasoning, Ricoeurian practical reason takes the concept of *rule of action*, which makes reference to the social aspect of action. This sociological view adds an important trait: deliberation about ends themselves. Indeed, “It is no longer simply a matter of ordering a chain of means –or a tree of options– into a strategy. It is now a question of reasoning about the major premises of the practical syllogism” (Ricoeur, 1991, p. 195). Thus, the point now is to deliver about the intentions or final ends that guide the practical reasoning. But, how does deliberation about ends come into the sociological theory?

Even if practical reasoning is an individual doing, as it was seen so far, according to the sociology of Max Weber, it is necessary to count on two essential elements in the concept of action: *orientation toward others*, and *social relationship*. This is so, for

it is not sufficient that an action be interpreted by an agent in terms of a motive whose meaning can be communicated to others, it is also necessary for the conduct of each agent to take into account the conduct of others, either to oppose an action or to work to foster it. (Ricoeur, 1991, p. 193-194)

Therefore, a social action is not only to communicate personal reasons for acting and try to explain an action; people have into account other's actions. But this does not mean to act according to the social demands. Rather, it includes the possibility of opposing the social rules and act in a different way. Indeed, "taking account of the conduct of other agents is found in interactions ranging from conflict, through competition, to cooperation" (Ricoeur, 1992, p. 156). Opposition as well as agreement to others' behaviour or thinking requires an act of thinking to consider if one agrees or not with others' reasons and intentions, and then it is possible to oppose to them or not. Orientation toward others means to assess, through reasons, other's behaviour or thinking and act according to the result of that assessment.

Furthermore, practical reason according to this sociological view must include the concept of *social relationship*, where a person motivates his action with symbols and values that constitute public rules in themselves. Therefore, any action is, in one way or another, directed or guided by rules –this is no coercion–, giving then certain sense and legibility. A "meaningful action is, in one way or another, *rule governed* (...). The meaning depends on the system of conventions that assigns meaning to each gesture, in a situation that is marked out by this system of conventions" (Ricoeur, 1991, p. 194). This makes clear that the term of rule does not convey a sense of constraint or repression, but just an interpreter of conduct. Norms or rules can guide action towards an end in view, so an intention is contained in any rule. "The way in which norms give sense to an action is teleological: realization of common norms is what an action tends to" (Jaffro, 2012, p. 158. Own translation).

This social aspect of intelligibility complements the possible solipsistic view in the reasons for acting and practical reasoning. It is here where deliberation about ends themselves comes to play. As a matter of fact, when anyone takes in consideration others actions and social rules, he is thinking out the ends that set up those rules. This is a path of deliberation. It is "a properly reflective distance, opening a new space of play, where opposing normative claims confront one another: between these claims practical reason operates as an arbiter and judge, ending debate by decisions" (Ricoeur, 1991, p. 199).

An *action* is the result of a personal deliberation based on reasons for acting and practical reasoning, which are guided by the social dimensions of rules and symbols found in culture. But how could the link among those reasons for acting, its social dimensions, with concrete actions be understood? In other words: actions are grounded on reasons and practical reasoning; and all

of these seem to be guided (at least in part) by social rules and symbols, but why can these things (reasons and symbols) produce body-actions?

First, consider what an action is: actions are produced by people. To be sure, people produce actions and they usually base their actions in motives or reasons. So, “to say what an action is, is to say why it is done.” (Ricoeur, 1992, p. 63). It is here where the concepts of motive and intention appear again. A “motive is better interpreted as a reason-for; not that every motivation is rational, for this might exclude desire. Every motive is a reason-for, in the sense that the connection between motive-for and action is a relation of mutual implication” (Ricoeur, 1992, p. 63).

What explains and thus defines an action is a motive, understood as a reason-for, without excluding desire¹². These motives or reasons are social rather than absolutely individual, since the person learns what is good or not from his own culture, with the rules and symbols of that culture. Nevertheless, not every movement done by a person is meaningful, even if the agent knows the reason of his action.

a certain passivity does seem to correlate with the action of doing something. The mediation of this passivity appears to be essential to the relation of wanting to acting, which cannot be reduced to the justification a purely rational agent would give of his or her action. This would be, precisely, an action without any element of desire! (Ricoeur, 1992, p. 66)

In fact, when anyone has an intention to do something, this intentionality can be brought up by desire and not by reason. So the passivity is referred to the relation of the wanting with the acting. People are not just rational beings, but also body-beings. So, to explain what an action is, requires not only including rationality, as it is only one part of any action. This is why Paul Ricoeur wanted to build a concept of practical reason irreducible to scientific-technical rationality. Here is where the concept of disposition reveals itself as other part of action which cannot be eliminated. Rather, this side of human action is what justifies clearly the necessity of understanding human action from a teleological perspective where the rational capacity and the human affections are melded into every action.

¹² Any person can recognize himself, give testimony of himself, when he acknowledges himself as the ‘why’ of an action; he is the one who has a motive or reason for acting, so he gives sense to his actions.

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. What is teleological explanation? It is an explanation in which the order is itself a factor in the production of an event; it is a self-imposed order. (Ricoeur, 1992, p. 78)

Thus, action is not just the result of some reasons for acting, nor even the response to social rules or personal affections. All of this enters into a causal order: teleology. People have their rules, in the sense of guidelines and ends that are achieved by certain actions in a specific order that the person knows how to execute: that is, teleology. Indeed, “In one direction the form of teleological explanation is the implicit sense of the explanation of action in terms of its dispositions”. (Ricoeur, 1992, p. 78)

When an action goes out of its producer and it is inserted in the physical world, it is ruled by physical laws, but it is originated under an intention, this is an order that pertains to the agent, not to the nature. “Action is at once a certain configuration of physical movements and an accomplishment capable of being interpreted in terms of reasons for acting which explain it” (Ricoeur, 1992, p. 66). Thus, physical movements and the explanation of these movements in terms of reasons for acting, which include the whole field of motivation, show clearly that action cannot be understood only as a movement of reason, or only as a movement of the body. In the end the body is the hinge between reasons for acting and the changes produced in the natural world. People can act because they have reasons or motives, because they are bodies and know how to move the body.

What would make this discourse based on the “I can” a different discourse is, in the last analysis, its reference to an ontology of *one's own body*, that is of *a* body which is also *my* body and which, by its double allegiance to the order of physical bodies and to that of persons, therefore lies at the point of articulation of the power to act which is ours and of the course of things which belongs to the world order. (Ricoeur, 1991, p. 111)

Therefore, since people pertain to the order of physical things and the order of persons, they are subject to the laws of that very causal order, but this one is not the only source of

changes in the world, since men can also introduce changes in it out of their intentions. Therefore, body belongs to both causal orders; anyone can take their thinking to the natural world and change nature through their body motions, actions that are guided by thinking and affections. But how does a person know the way to produce those body motions?

To be sure, actions find their explanation in an agent who *knows how* to do an action without observation. The knowledge about how to cause things or how to make them to happen is practical knowledge. The knowledge acquired thanks to observation is theoretical knowledge. But, how can anyone produce facts or changes in the world? He does it because he knows, from the attestation¹³ of his own being, the capacities and what he can cause with them. He knows the body and its capacities and limitations according to his own experience of power over his members and, through them, over the course of things (Ricoeur, 2003, p. 41).

In the end, if people can change the natural world and at the same time can be affected by natural laws is due to their body dimension. Action is not just the result of certain reasons, motivations and desires, ruled by society, but also result of the movements of the body and the knowledge acquired through time about the own body and its capacities. And these body-capacities are also ruled by society, not only to prohibit certain undesirable actions, but to propose other high estimated ones. This is the problem of freedom, its sources and its limits.

2.1.3 The concept of Freedom: from Kant and Hegel

The third element of the concept of practical reason is the Kantian concept of freedom, in the sense of personal autonomy, which allows reason to be practical, and not only theoretical – since freedom is an idea of reason and not of understanding–. Indeed, the Kantian moment is necessary, as “it alone posits the autonomy of a responsible subject, that is to say, a subject who recognizes himself capable of doing what at the same time he believes he ought to do” (Ricoeur,

¹³ Attestation, which will be explained later, refers to self-knowledge that “characterizes the middle ground between absolute certainty and complete suspicion and represents the kind of confidence I can have in my convictions when acting in a climate of conflict and uncertainty. It characterizes the middle ground between absolute certainty and complete suspicion and represents the kind of confidence I can have in my convictions when acting in a climate of conflict and uncertainty”. (Kaplan, 2003, p. 102)

1991, p. 200). This is the moment of the obligatory, the imperative along with responsibility and capacities.

Kant was who took out the concept of freedom from the epistemic to the practical domain, that is, to ethics and politics. This is a break and a leap from the epistemological and phenomenological analysis of the reasons for acting and practical reasoning; this is the turning point towards the concept of practical reason. Certainly, so far the concept of practical reason has been related to the arguments or reasons that make intelligible an action, but these reasons the field of understanding, whilst the concrete actions, included body-actions, are more than just thinking.

Kant was who made problematic the reality of freedom and showed it as “problematic although not impossible” (Ricoeur, 1991, p. 197). To say that freedom is problematic means that it is not clearly stated by understanding, shown mainly by the problem of antinomies, so freedom cannot be known.

The "Dialectic" of the *Critique of Pure Reason* was able to establish only that this freedom was conceivable. Here freedom is justified practically: first in negative terms, by its total independence with respect to “all determining grounds of events in nature according to the law of causality”; and then positively, as the self-givenness of the law (Ricoeur, 1992, p. 210).

Freedom is nevertheless conceivable in two ways: it is thus conceived as independence on the laws of nature and a dependence on a self-legislation, that is, the person’s own rational law: the categorical imperative. In a word, practical reason for Kant is “conceived as self-legislation, as *autonomy*” (Ricoeur, 1992, p. 207).

We owe to Kant the conception of practical reason as the mutual determination of the idea of freedom and the idea of law. (...) It signifies that reason is as such practice, that is to say, by itself alone it is able to determine the will a priori, if the law is a law of freedom and not a law of nature (Ricoeur, 1991, p. 198).

Kant formulated the categorical imperative as a way to understand how reason determines will, that is how an action is rationally moral or not. However, today is not possible to accept

Kantian Categorical Imperative and autonomy as originally formulated, so Paul Ricoeur accepts it, but without leaving it the last word for action: it “is, to be sure, no more than a criterion of control, allowing an agent to test his or her good will claiming to be ‘objective’ in the maxims of his or her action” (Ricoeur, 1991, p. 198), that is to say, it is only a test that helps to determine the goodness of any intentionality.

In the end, what Paul Ricoeur holds from the Kantian ethics is this way of understanding the categorical imperative: “the region of moral obligation, of duty, wherein lies the demand that what ought not to be not be (namely, evil) and, more particularly, the demand that the suffering inflicted on humans by other human beings be abolished (Ricoeur, 1992, p. 290). This demand is due to the fact that “most of the evil in the world comes from violence among human beings” (Ricoeur, 1992, p. 320). Indeed, certain actions are not to be done, mainly due to the possibility that a person cause suffering to other one. So, prohibition is necessary.

The Kantian morality “constitutes the moment of interiorization, universalization, and formalization with which Kant identified practical reason” (Ricoeur, 1991, p. 200). But the form of the law is not enough against particular and always different human situations that call for a decision. Actually, there could be several situations where conflicts arise among several legitimate laws, hence it is needed more than a mere formal rule. Furthermore, the Kantian imperative does not emphasize enough the role of other people within this interiorization and universalization moment of morality; under this conception, reason is ahistorical and do not take in account the particular time lived.

These consequences of the formal imperative made Paul Ricoeur complement the Kantian view with Hegelian *Sittlichkeit*, which is the concrete ethical life, without the metaphysical theory of the Spirit (*Geist*). It is here where Paul Ricoeur sees the concrete place of birth of practical reason, since it is in the culture and tradition where people find the rules and symbols of the permitted and prohibited, good and bad, virtues and vices. Actually, family, society and the State contain “the network of axiological beliefs governing the distribution of permission and prohibition in a given community” (Ricoeur, 1991, p. 200). This is not to deny the categorical imperative, but to propose that the first guide to act is found in historical and concrete communities where every person is raised. “His [Hegel’s] conviction was that existing customs prefigure the structures of excellence”. (Ricoeur, 2005, p. 174). So, Paul Ricoeur demands that

the sources of meaningful action are also sought in the *Sittlichkeit* and not only in the Kantian imperative.

Paul Ricoeur asserts, following Hegel, that will is not just determined by a formal structure through practical reason, but by a “dialectical constitution of willing that follows the order of the categories from universality to particularity and singularity” (Ricoeur, 1991, p. 201). This is a movement from the universality of the categorical imperative. Then, particularity is taken in the middle of particular situations, and traditions belonging to the culture. Finally, Hegelian dialectics has into account singularity through reflection on universality and particularity as it joins sense and individuality.

Paul Ricoeur (1992) says that thinking singularity as individuality endowed with meaning is one of the most undeniable acquisitions that a reinterpretation of the concept of practical reason should incorporate. And he adds, it corresponds to the complex idea of deliberate desire and *phronesis*, that is the excellency of the decision. In the end, what the French takes from Hegel is the place of cultural and traditional knowledge about wise or meaningful action, for it is a source of knowledge, but not a scientific one. It is a knowledge that must always be carefully prevented of being thought of as an absolute knowledge, as a person or group could think they should impose their knowledge over other people no matter what. This could be the genesis of a world war.

Practical reason includes reasons for acting, but these cannot be created *ex nihilo*, so every person takes into account what his own culture contains or conceives as accepted or rejected. Here freedom is not different. It is built by every person, taking into account the social rules. In the end, freedom is a dialectic between personal and social aims. But how can decisions be taken to the natural and social world? the answer to this question can only be found in the personal history and the knowledge of it.

2.1.4 Self-knowledge and Identity

People can only build their own being by acting as agents from certain capabilities, such as speaking and acting, etc. But the proper development of capabilities and the execution of practical knowledge require certain self-knowledge due to the fact that it is necessary for any

person to know what he can or cannot do. Paul Ricoeur proposes a kind of self-knowledge called *attestation* which is based on observing the footprints left in the world and arrives at a proper ontology of the self¹⁴. This is a kind of hermeneutics:

It is the task of this hermeneutics to show that existence arrives at expression, at *meaning*, and at reflection only through the continual exegesis of all the significations that come to life in the world of culture. Existence becomes a self –human and adult– only by *appropriating this meaning*, which first resides ‘outside,’ in works, instructions, and cultural monuments in which the life of the spirit is objectified. (Ricoeur, 1974, p. 22. Italics mine).

So, to achieve the meaning of any action, a personal self-knowledge, and becoming a human it is necessary a hermeneutical detour through those fulfilled activities, that is, day to day actions. This is a long detour around all the actions executed by a person, to get to know himself and appropriate the meaning of those actions. This self-knowledge pretends to be in the middle of a direct and infallible self-knowledge and the utterly un-knowledge of himself. It “can be defined as the *assurance of being oneself acting and suffering*”. (Ricoeur, 1992, p. 22). This assurance is a type of certainty between the type of certainty of science and that of common opinion. It is “the alethic (or veritative) mode of the style appropriate to the (...) hermeneutic of the self” (Ricoeur, 1992, p. 21).

Attestation ‘verifies’ what a person is, his identity, his set of capacities, when recovering the footprints of the actions executed. When observing these footprints in the personal history a person can know his own capabilities. This explains why attestation presents itself as a kind of belief linked to testimony. Of course, a testimony is something in which a person believes or not, but here *to believe* acquires the meaning of trust: a testimony is trustable or not.

Attestation, taken as trust, is one of the grounds of the capabilities; it is to trust in himself to develop the capabilities. In the end, Paul Ricoeur says that “attestation is the assurance —the credence and the trust— of *existing* in the mode of selfhood” (Ricoeur, 1992, p. 302). Attestation

¹⁴ Attestation has a double meaning for Paul Ricoeur: the first one is epistemologic, and it is referred to the type of knowledge of oneself. The second meaning for attestation is ontological, which refers to the way people take place or *are* in the world, that is from the capacities of oneself.

is this type of self-knowledge proper to the self, who trust in himself, trust in his own capacities to act in the world and be the kind of person he wants to be, so he can say *It's me here!*

Attestation is closely related to the ontology of the self, and not only to its epistemology. Indeed, the power to act is tied to self-confidence; it is based on the belief of being able to do or not to do, as well as to suffering.

so, I can only initiate by the belief that I can begin new actions in the world; I am exactly what "I can", and "I can" exactly what I am. Here there is a correlation between a completely primitive belief and a work (Ricoeur, 2003a, p. 68).

Thus, talking about practical reason and self-knowledge implies the problem of ontology of the self. Persons are beings who can speak and act, and can narrate their actions. “The person of whom we are speaking and the agent on whom the action depends have a history, are their own history” (Ricoeur, 1992, p. 113). It is in the personal history that the very same person can be shown despite his changes. The stress has to be put on the last sentence: they *are their own history* and this one can be narrated. When narrating his own life the person unveils his identity and the way he has built it. It is an unveiling of the personal ontology, which are the dialectic between potentiality and act¹⁵.

For Paul Ricoeur the problem of personal ontology or human identity is about permanence in time, which can be seen in personal history according to two models: character and promise; *idem-identity* and *ipse-identity*, respectively. In other words, the models are “the perseverance of character and the constancy of the self in promising” (Ricoeur, 1992, p. 124). The first one is related to lasting dispositions and the second one is related to the self-constancy, to keep being the same.

¹⁵ The ontology that Paul Ricoeur proposes is based on a dialectics between act and potentiality. He goes back to ancient philosophies: “We shall ask principally whether the great polysemy of the term "being," according to Aristotle, can permit us to give new value to the meaning of being as act and potentiality, securing in this way the analogical unity of acting on a stable ontological meaning” (Ricoeur, 1992, p. 20). The new value to the meaning of being as an act and potentiality is a dialectic, a mutable way of being, that is a dynamic integration of several, even contradictory, components in human life, which make it instable and, despite it, also understandable. Indeed, even if some contradictory actions can be found in a person life, the analogical unity of action is what allows to acknowledge the very same person.

About character, it “designates the set of lasting dispositions by which a person is recognized” (Ricoeur, 1992, p. 121). The concept of *lasting disposition* is the core of character. It is part of the human being. There are two important matters about disposition: acquisition of habits and the history it makes. Taking the point of acquisition, it is clear that habits do not come from birth, innate, but they are acquired through time, which leads to the second point: since the acquisition of habits make a history, where the main feature is the dialectic between innovation and sedimentation, so the history of character is the history of acquisition of dispositions that seem to be erased by sedimentation. That is the temporal dimension of character, which later will be the point towards narrativization of personal identity.

About the second model of permanence in time, Paul Ricoeur says that “keeping one's word expresses a *self-constancy* which cannot be inscribed, as the character was, within the dimension of something in general, but solely within the dimension of «who?»” (Ricoeur, 1992, p. 123). Self-constancy implies that a human being is not only a body nor his habits or dispositions, but there are other human dimensions, like keeping the word, or generally keeping decisions that reveal a constancy which cannot be included in a permanent structure, in a what, but only in a who, a person that decides to keep being in a certain way. In other words, “the «what» of the «who», as we said above, is character — that is, the set of acquired dispositions and sedimented identifications-with” (Ricoeur, 1992, p. 167). Here is where self-constancy can prevail on habits, since a person can decide not to continue habituated to something or some way of being. Anyone can deliberately change his mind about any ideal, value and habit sedimented and work to change it.

It is this sedimentation which confers on character the sort of permanence in time that I am interpreting here as the overlapping of *ipse* by *idem*. This overlapping, however, does not abolish the difference separating the two problematics: precisely as second nature, my character is me, myself, ipse; but this ipse announces itself as idem. Each habit formed in this way, acquired and become a lasting disposition, constitutes a trait —a character trait, a distinctive sign by which a person is recognized, reidentified as the same— character being nothing other than the set of these distinctive signs (Ricoeur, 1992, p. 121).

The point here is that idem-identity does not abolish ipse-identity. Actually, the dialectic between these appears to be what makes every person a unique being. Nevertheless, these two models of being open an interval of sense, a vacuum: how could the two models of permanence in time of a person be dis-covered and re-connected? In other words, how could the *perseverance* of character and the *self-constancy* be highlighted as two different but constitutive dimensions of identity of a single person?¹⁶

The answer to this question is to be found in narrative. Indeed, in a story “the notion of emplotment, transposed from the action to the characters in the narrative, produces a dialectic of the character which is quite clearly a dialectic of sameness and selfhood” (Ricoeur, 1992, p. 140). Therefore, the constitution of the identity of a story character and that of a real person seems to follow the same path: certain emplotment. This is the configuration of concordances and discordances within the story. Both of them refer to the events or single actions shown in the plot, but the first is the principle of order, the arrangement of facts, and the second shows the reversals of fortune. So, “the narrative event is defined by its relation to the very operation of configuration; it participates in the unstable structure of discordant concordance characteristic of the plot itself” (Ricoeur, 1992, p. 142). Ricoeur defines this discordant concordance as a synthesis of the heterogeneous, that is

the diverse mediations performed by the plot: between the manifold of events and the temporal unity of the story recounted; between the disparate components of the action — intentions, causes, and chance occurrences — and the sequence of the story; and finally, between pure succession and the unity of the temporal form, which, in extreme cases, can disrupt chronology to the point of abolishing it (Ricoeur, 1992, p. 141).

Thus, emplotment or configuration is what makes the story as a whole, but also the very characters that compose it. The story is made through the characters and their actions that are

¹⁶ Here it is necessary a warning: “Ricoeur “do[es] not want to leave the impression that the psychological criterion has any particular affinity for selfhood and the corporeal criterion for sameness. (...) the corporeal criterion is not by nature foreign to the problematic of selfhood, to the extent that my body's belonging to myself constitutes the most overwhelming testimony in favor of the irreducibility of selfhood to sameness. (...) it is not the sameness of my body that constitutes its selfhood but its belonging to someone capable of designating himself or herself as the one whose body this is.” (Ricoeur, 1992, p. 128 - 129)

connected in time. “Telling a story is saying who did what and how, by spreading out in time the connection between these various viewpoints” (Ricoeur, 1992, p. 146).

in narrativizing character, the narrative returns to it the movement abolished in acquired dispositions, in the sediment of identifications-with. In narrativizing the aim of the true life, narrative identity gives it the recognizable features of characters loved or respected. Narrative identity makes the two ends of the chain link up with one another: the permanence in time of character and that of selfconstancy (Ricoeur, 1992, p. 165-166).

Indeed, when the dispositions and the identifications-with of a person’s character are narrated can be unveiled how they were acquired or abolished through time, which can explain why a person is or was loved or hatred. Narration also shows how a person was constant and kept himself, even when the circumstances seem to push him to betray his word, to render himself. Thus, “what sedimentation has contracted, narration can redeploy” (Ricoeur, 1992, p. 122).

To this point, practical reason in Ricoeurian philosophy is enriched by self-knowledge and narrative identity. The recovering of the footprints left in the path of life, its own history, allows knowing the identity and narration redeploys the dialectic between character traits and self-constancy. Indeed, narrative shows reasons for acting, intentions, and dispositions and the dialectic between concordances and discordances. But where is phronesis in all this?

2.2 Phronesis within Practical Reason and Ethics

First of all, remember the main aspects of the Ricoeurian concept of practical reason. It includes several dimensions: 1) it is based on the reasons for acting and practical reasons, which can include the desire and not only rational motivations. Here lies the level of meaningfulness of any action where a person can explain (to himself and to others) why he does, did or will do something. A person can build a chain of reasons, a strategy according to a final intention, so human action can be understood as teleological. All of this is possible thanks to the capability of speaking, which allows identifying the proper ‘reasons’ and final intentions that motivate and give sense to any action.

2) The second trait about this concept of practical reason is the sociological view, which avoids the solipsistic dimension of the first component. Reasons for acting and practical reasoning are proposed following the social dimension that contains *rules of action*. These rules contain an orientation towards others, so any action takes into account the others' behavior, either to oppose or to agree with them. The point here is to deliberate about the very ends that those rules propose. Then, any person acts according to the symbols and values of his community, thanks to the *social relationship* in which he lives. This social relationship is what allows any person to learn and identify the meaning given to a particular symbol in specific contexts.

Thus, it is clear that any action deliberately executed is based on reason and much more: first the social symbols and rules; second, the bodily capabilities and self-knowledge about them. The repertoire of know-how, which is not just about the rational abilities or thinking, but the psychological dispositions and bodily capabilities, that demands to widen the concept of practical reason to the body, since this dimension takes decisions to the natural world. This is not an anthropological dualism as there is not a body guided by a mind, but a person who thinks and acts from his entire being, from his rational and corporeal dimension, all of which interferes in the process of deliberation.

3) Finally, this concept of practical reason takes on Kantian concept of freedom and Hegelian *sittlichkeit*. From Kant, it is taken the Categorical imperative as a guide to test intentions, which is a kind of testimony of human freedom. But this form of freedom is materialized in Hegelian concept of institutions, which includes culture as its main source. Nevertheless the absolute dimension of the *Geist* and the possible total knowledge is avoided by Paul Ricoeur, who insists of the dangers of thinking about a perfect knowledge of action and the goodness for humanity. And last, but not least, self-knowledge is required to execute any action properly. Here Paul Ricoeur has proposed attestation and narrative identity, that helps to understand the concordances and discordances of the personal story where actions, reasons, intentions and dispositions create an identity.

2.2.1 Embedded in Practical Reason

First of all, phronesis is found in the first element of practical reason. Regarding the exposition of the first three traits of the concept *reason for action* Paul Ricoeur states:

we have discovered a good part of what Aristotle called phronesis or practical reason. Indeed, our first analysis devoted to the notion of *reason for acting* does not go beyond the Aristotelian notion of reasoned preference, *proairesis*, which is but the psychological condition of the much richer and more inclusive notion of practical wisdom (1991, p. 196).

So, the three first aspects of the reason for action are embedded in the Aristotelian phronesis: it includes motivation, since it has a character of desirability, and it is ruled by a teleological causation. Indeed, the French thinker highlights: “our analysis places no break between desire and reason but draws from desire itself (...) the conditions for the exercise of deliberative reason” (Ricoeur, 1991, pp. 191). By taking reason and desire into deliberation Ricoeur is not making a totally anew philosophical comprehension of thinking or action. Actually, he is taking the Aristotelian theory. To be sure,

Aristotle expressed this affinity between desire and deliberation by ascribing the entire order of deliberative preference to that part of the irrational *-alogos-* soul that participates in *logos*, to distinguish it at once from the properly reasonable soul as well as from the irrational soul inaccessible to *logos*. There is much truth in this ascription of the logic of *praxis* to an anthropological level that is neither the domain of speculative thought nor, for that matter, the domain of passion blinded to reason. (Ricoeur, 1991, p. 192)

Thus, the final point is not to establish only one anthropological domain of action, such as reason or desire, but to understand how an action is enriched or influenced by all human dimensions. The field of *praxis* is rooted in desire and reason. Paul Ricoeur “do[es] not reduce action to be the effect of passionate causes, but understand it as a behaviour guided by ends” (Jaffro, 2012, p. 157. Own translation).

Then, the concepts of intention and practical reasoning show the discursive dimension of phronesis: “Practical reasoning is, therefore, only the discursive segment of *phronesis*” (Ricoeur,

1991, p. 197). If the first three traits of the reason for acting just made the psychological dimension of phronesis, with the inclusion of intentionality and its own teleology is brought the discursive dimension.

Paul Ricoeur asserts that *phronesis* “joins together a true calculus and an upright desire under a principle –*a logos*– that, in its turn, includes personal initiative and discernment (...). All of this, taken together, forms practical reason” (Ricoeur, 1991, p. 197)¹⁷. As it can be seen, this concept of practical reason, that “tends to privilege an ethical point of view” (Jaffro, 2012, p. 156. Own translation), has three main dimensions: individuality, alterity and universality; first, individual reasons for acting in a practical reasoning; then, the social ruled-action which shows the participation of others in those reasons for acting; and, finally, the rational idea of freedom, first tested by the categorical imperative, and second materialized by concrete mediations in the family, the economic and political order institutions, or *Sittlichkeit*.

This very triad is what structures ethics in Paul Ricoeur: “*aiming at the good life with and for other in just institutions*” (1992, p. 180. Italics on the original). Actually, the idea of a good life is always individual, although not originally created *ex nihilo* by anyone; then this good life is shared, tied and aimed with and for others; and finally, it is in just institutions where this good life can come to be real.

In this path from simple reasons to practical reason the phronesis has a well-established place. What is its place and what are its functions?

2.2.2 From Ethics

Up to now the concept of practical reason has been shown along with the anthropological perspective from Paul Ricoeur. Of course, practical reason is embedded in human capacities and these, guided by Phronesis, take to consider personal identity, which can be unveiled when narrating the life. Phronesis has appeared gradually, but never completely. Now, when the time to

¹⁷ The quote contains the main aspects of Phronesis and of Aristotelian definition of virtue: a logical component, which is the reasoning that arbitrates between claims (true calculus); a psychological component, that is, the reasoned preference (upright desire); an axiological component, the ethical norm or principle (*logos*); and, finally, the personal justness (discernment).

talk about responsibility is come, phronesis will be shown as Paul Ricoeur conceived it in *Oneself as Another* (1991).

Paul Ricoeur thinks that rationality of the laws (legal, moral, cultural, etc.) could not be enough to solve difficult circumstances, so the only way out is a decision, a judgment in situation made by phronesis. This is a kind of intuition, which is partially rational and partially irrational, as the thinking process takes into account happiness, which comes from desire, and the means to achieve it, which involves logical reasoning. Here Phronesis is heir of Aristotle, Kant and Hegel.

“Of [Aristotle’s] Phronesis 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”. (Ricoeur, 1992, p. 290-291) From a teleological view, the Ricoeurian concept of phronesis holds the «good life»¹⁸ as its horizon. This is where the French philosopher places desires, aspirations. “The "good life" is, for each of us, the nebulus of ideals and dreams of achievements with regard to which a life is held to be more or less fulfilled or unfulfilled” (Ricoeur, 1992, p. 179).

In relation to action, phronesis has to do with the means that will take people to the suitable action. In Aristotle, “Practical wisdom thus seems to have two limits: an upper limit, happiness, and a lower limit, singular decision” (Ricoeur, 1992, p. 175. Footnote 5). Then, when thinking what to do, people have to consider the desire to be happy, according to the personal ideal of happiness; and, they have to respond to particular situations, where little or big conflicts arise and seem to oppose to happiness.

Here, 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 as a whole, while making use of that phronesis which we showed above escapes the means-ends model (Ricoeur, 1992, p. 177).

Determine what the person considers a good life is a task of phronesis. It must specify the characteristics of these possibilities, namely: the values and moral standards, religious, professional, etc., which will be essential at the time of performing the action.

¹⁸ Asserts Ricoeur “Whatever the image that each of us has of a full life, this apex is the ultimate end of our action” (1992, p. 172).

At this point a merely calculating reason is not enough, since the issue is not only about choosing the appropriate means for defined purposes. Here it is not possible to decide on the advisability of an ideal from strict rational parameters. To choose the very ideals that will shape the image of a fulfilled life develops a dialectical relationship between personal desires and social norms. This conflict and uncertainty can only be solved by *phronesis*.

Now, there might be contradictions among purposes, because society may propose one thing that will qualify as good, and personal inclinations wish or propose another in direct contradiction to the first. Certainly, the rational examination is imposed here to see each of the purposes and its validity. But also, if it is determined that both purposes are valid and there is a conflict, the only way out may be defined by practical wisdom, whose task is to decide the appropriate action to such uncertainty; to be sure, “practical wisdom consists here in inventing just behaviour suited to the singular nature of the case” (Ricoeur 1991, p. 269).

Social norms or rules guide human behaviour, propose some ends, but what if there is a conflict among these norms and desires or contents of happiness? Should the norm be simply obeyed or disobeyed? From Kantian ethics, Paul Ricoeur does take the categorical imperative as a test of personal intentions. The test made through the categorical imperative tries to avoid evil in people’s plans of life, practices and even daily actions. This exercise is found when making specific the vague ideals that shape everyone’s image of good life. That is, *phronesis* has to make this test against evil so to avoid that any ideal turns out to inflict suffering to others or to himself. This is the plane of advantages or disadvantages that must be considered when deciding.

The action-configurations that we are calling life plans stem, then, from our moving back and forth between far-off ideals, which have to be made more precise, and the weighing of the advantages and disadvantages of the choice of a given life plan on the level of practice. It is in this sense that Gadamer interprets Aristotelian *phronesis*. (Ricoeur, 1992, p. 177).

Finally, from Hegelian philosophy Paul Ricoeur takes, as was shown above, the *Sittlichkeit* as the main social perspective of this *phronesis*. Here *phronesis* reaches concrete mediations on deliberation. Family or their opinions in a debate or conversation, plays a role. Of course deliberation can remain closed to oneself, but others can participate also in deliberation. In fact,

other people can help to understand better the particular situation, to see different solutions or even disadvantages of some decisions.

Reduced to modesty, *Sittlichkeit* now joins *phronesis* of moral judgment in situation (...). It is through public debate, friendly discussion, and shared convictions that moral judgment in situation is formed. Concerning the practical wisdom suited to this judgment, one can say that *Sittlichkeit* "repeats" *phronesis* here, to the extent that *Sittlichkeit* "mediates" *phronesis* (Ricoeur, 1992, p. 290-291).

Moral judgement is not created alone in a rational calculus, but in daily debate and discussion where everyone can identify his own reasons and affections and the possible faults in them. Here practical reason is a social and public capacity, not only due to the social rules and symbols, but for the scenario where anyone can contrast his reasons for acting and practical reasons. Society, or better, public debate and familiar discussions are a kind of laboratory of moral judgement, of practical reason and *phronesis*.

Nevertheless, this social dimension of *phronesis* has to be complemented by the critical function of practical reason, since ideology and utopia can serve as forms of alienation where freedom is lost and person's projects of good life come to be just a dream in the service of a few. "The critical function of practical reason is here to *unmask* the hidden mechanisms of distortion through which the legitimate objectification of the communal bond becomes an intolerable alienation" (Ricoeur, 1991, p. 206).

Chapter III

Critical Phronesis: from CTM and Paul Ricoeur

Having studied the CTM's theory about the concept of critical thinking and its grounds in the first chapter and the Ricoeurian theory of practical reason and phronesis in the second one, it is time now to show how these two philosophies may integrate into a way of understanding what critical thinking is. Though Paul Ricoeur did not think of the concept of critical thinking, or its further development at school, his concept of practical reason and phronesis might bolster the CTM concept of critical thinking.

In this chapter, first, I put forward the philosophical grounds common to critical thinking and the Ricoeurian theory of practical reason and phronesis, with the end of showing how they may support the CTM's concept of critical thinking. In the second part, I explain the new concept of critical thinking that emerges.

3.1 CTM and Paul Ricoeur: shared philosophical traits

First of all it is necessary to say that both theories, Paul Ricoeur's and CTM's, come from different philosophical traditions; CTM belongs to analytical philosophy and Paul Ricoeur mainly to phenomenological hermeneutics. Though there are some conflicting differences with respect to practical wisdom, there are several philosophical concepts common to both. However, as it was presented in the second chapter, Paul Ricoeur's concept of practical reason nurtures from analytical perspectives, mainly through the concept of reasons for acting and associated concepts, like practical reasoning, motivation, intention, etc.

According to Paul Ricoeur, analytical philosophy has focused on the description of action and the truths appropriate to them. Indeed, "the *interactive* character belonging to most practices (...) is not stressed in the analytic theory of action because action sentences are taken out of their social environment" (Ricoeur, 1992, p. 155). Indeed, this social dimension of a person is a must,

for nobody thinks or acts absolutely alone, but based on others thoughts and experiences shared in conversations and traditions. So, it was necessary to construct

a new alliance between the analytic tradition and the phenomenological and hermeneutical tradition, once it had been recognized that the major issue resided less in determining what distinguishes actions from other events occurring in the world than in determining what specifies the self, implied in the power-to-do, at the junction of acting and the agent. (Ricoeur, 1992, p. 113)

Similarly, the examination of critical thinking in the present work is not about its definition, but a person or what specifies a critical person. In other words, the very core of all of current discussion about critical thinking is the *ethos* of the critical thinker, which cannot be understood isolated from his social dimension grounded on an anthropological view where the person is conceived as an agent capable of doing things in the world and not only capable of thinking about it.

Even though there is not exact agreement between CTM's and Paul Ricoeur's epistemology, one might say that both of them demand the same type of grounds: the CTM's theory asks to ground beliefs and actions in completely evaluated reasons from specific criteria: formal and informal logic (Siegel, 2007). Likewise, Ricoeurian practical reason and phronesis consider reasons for acting under criteria to evaluate them: social intelligibility and acceptability and its own logic. Although the criteria are not the very same —and thus their concept of reason differs— they have a common form: the assessment of reasons, that base actions or believes. Furthermore, the assessment is performed under well-defined criteria.

When these philosophies ask about rational grounds (independently of their particular accounts of reason) they pursue intelligibility and acceptability of the grounds for thinking and acting. They emphasize criteria, rather than simple abilities or capacities. CTM philosophers assess beliefs and actions by logical criteria. These criteria help avoid relativism, for “relativism renders us incapable of making reasoned judgements (...) and portrays scientific reasoning, commitment and judgement as arbitrary” (Siegel, 1988, p. 107). In the end, relativism is the opposite of critical thinking.

On his side, Paul Ricoeur also looks for reasons, but he includes ‘irrational’ reasons, those not assessed against logical criteria but with respect to whether they are intelligible and acceptable according to their character of desirability. Indeed, an emotion, like anger, could help understand an action, and the community determines if an action out of this affection is acceptable or not. These ‘irrational’ reasons have their own criteria and logics to evaluate them: the logic of comparing and contrasting one action to the criteria of social rules, the immediate context, and the image of the good life. Indeed, Paul Ricoeur does not look for universally valid criteria, but neither does he accept an absolute and individualist relativism. Certainly, he “expressed the same aversions toward ‘the Hegelian temptation’ of absolute knowledge, as he did in rejecting every attempt to reduce interpretation theory to an arbitrary relativism according to ‘anything goes’” (Kristensson, 2010, p. 8). Thus, both CTM and Paul Ricoeur strive to evaluate reasons according to specific criteria in order to get away from an undesirable relativism.

This perspective about the assessment of emotions and intuitions, —i.e., subjective affections— is one of the greatest contributions to the CTM’s theory of critical thinking. Though CTM seems to be right in saying that this kind of subjective affections are not assessable by logical criteria, the latter are not the only possible criteria of assessment. Paul Ricoeur’s proposal is to assess emotions and other affections according to social and cultural criteria.

Nevertheless, this does not mean that every socio-cultural rule is good in itself, but they without a doubt serve as an indicator of the function of emotions and subjective passions in critical thinking. These affections can be, as Guillermo Hoyos (2012) said, indications about what is good or not, acceptable or not in society. These affections do not constitute the final word, the primary source of criteria to think critically, but neither are they to be excluded from the assessment of reasons in critical thinking. They can work only as indications of wrong or good possibilities of thinking and acting.

Thus, a critical person is one that bases his beliefs and actions in well assessed reasons or arguments. This is so due to his “macro-disposition to be moved by reasons” (Siegel, 1988, p. 8). An emotion can be a reason or argument needed of assessment, and social rules can be criteria to assess them. Peter Facione says that “human disposition is a person's consistent internal motivation to act toward, or to respond to, persons, events, or circumstances in habitual, and yet potentially malleable, ways.” (2000, p. 64). Here the philosopher links disposition, habitude, and motivation to act rationally. Paul Ricoeur also uses the concept of disposition to explain action:

“What usually makes you act this way? —the response mentions a disposition, an enduring or even permanent tendency.” (1992, p. 65) He relates it to *habitude*, history of the person, and motivation. “The first notion related to that of disposition is habit, with its twofold valence of habit as it is, as we say, being formed and of habit already acquired”. (Ricoeur, 1992, p. 121). As it was shown in the second chapter, for Paul Ricoeur the concept of disposition is implied in the notion of class of motives. Furthermore, “an explanation [of any action] in terms of disposition is a type of causal explanation” (1991, p. 191). This causality is teleological, where the ends or intentions can explain certain dispositions and its corresponding actions. So Paul Ricoeur thinks that a disposition, that might change in time, help understand action, making it intelligible and thus assessable.

But this concept goes beyond: “Character, I would say today, designates the set of lasting dispositions by which a person is recognized”. (Ricoeur, 1992, p. 121). In the end, dispositions are a big part of what a person is. Similarly, Peter Facione identifies dispositions with character, with people: “one’s dispositions are among the distinguishing features of one’s character or personality.” (2000, p. 64). This ‘coincidence’ in the concept of disposition is very important when thinking the relation between CTM theory and Paul Ricoeur’s, for this reveals that both theories think of the person as a whole and not just the sum of some parts. Indeed, Harvey Siegel ask us to consider the critical thinker, a person, rather than just the set of abilities and dispositions (1989, 1997) —not unlike how Ricoeur, following Aristotle, thinks of *phronesis* and its link to the *phronimos*, who is not only the actor of the *phronesis* but one who chooses the right rule in a given situation (Ricoeur, 1992).

One of the central dispositions and at the same time a thinking ability for the CTM is self-knowledge. Paul Ricoeur also considers this within his *attestation*. For the CTM we need to examine whether arguments hold under a belief or action, as well as to identify the thinking abilities and dispositions to be improved. Here self-knowledge is mainly developed at a specific circumstance to evaluate an argument given, to identify possible errors in the thinking process or the dispositional component, such as believes not utterly conscious, prejudices, biases, etc., that undermine an argument or reason. In the end, for the CTM self-knowledge is episodic, that is, developed only at specific times, when it is necessary to check an argument, leaving out the personal history and the knowledge that every person acquires through time about his own dispositions and tendencies.

Indeed, the Ricoeurian concept of attestation includes a strong historical component in the self-knowledge of a person's life and, through this, an ontological side. Attestation is closely related to identity and personal history. When a person thinks of his past life and looks for something, he knows his actions, arguments, beliefs, biases, etc., at a determined time; this is the epistemic dimension of attestation. But this epistemic mode of being can also identify the dialectics between innovation and sedimentation of dispositions, habits of mind, and ways of acting in the personal history. Then, a person can build his own history, his own personality according to his image of a good life. When a person not only knows his thought at a specific time but attests his history and his decisions in actions, he can be critical about his own being.

Attestation is not only about acknowledging emotions or prejudices that go under an argument; it is to be aware how they have interfered with life, which can be seen when observing the whole history and not just an episode of it. To attest emotions in thinking is not only to admit that at a specific time thinking was overridden by anger or jealousy; it is to try to see into the personal history whether such emotions usually interfere in the same manner and try to do things in a different way when they come.

Indeed, this could be a complement to the CTM theory. One can complement the CTM theory with the Ricoeurian perspective, where the historical and the ontological dimension of self-knowledge could foster CTM's self-knowledge. But the CTM's theory is not the only one that benefits from this marriage. CTM thinkers propose several, more or less specific lists of abilities of thinking, all of them capable of being developed at school. Paul Ricoeur did not propose thinking abilities within his concepts of practical reason and phronesis, but it is obvious that talking about a process of identifying reasons for acting and interpret them requires specific abilities. "It [interpretation] implies critical motives in the activity of comparison. An individuality can be grasped only by comparison and contrast" (Ricoeur, 1991c, p. 57). So, for instance, reasons for acting are compared to and contrasted against social rules. When Paul Ricoeur includes motives into the possible reasons for acting, he is following a logical pattern:

these motives can be considered "irrational" from one point of view: this in no way robs them of their generality, that is to say, of their capacity to be understood as belonging to a class that can be identified, named, and defined (1991, p. 191).

Moreover, logical thinking is necessary for instrumental thinking that proposes adequate means to specific ends, and for the relation between those ends and the image of a good life. Even though Paul Ricoeur does not propose specific thinking abilities, they are included when he thinks of deliberation and the hierarchy of actions or reasons. Furthermore, thinking abilities (logical and not logical) are necessary to deliberate well.

About dispositions or the critical spirit, the CTM presents a well-defined list of them needed for a critical thinker, but Paul Ricoeur does not specify those dispositions necessary to act wisely, to be a *phronimos*. So, here it is possible to see how the CTM's theory of critical thinking can complement Ricoeurian philosophy. Indeed, as was presented above, Paul Ricoeur includes dispositions within his concept of reasons for acting. These help understand why a person did or does something: out of the disposition to X. Dispositions are not rational-logical abilities, but habits or character traits that help people perform actions. Critical thinking, according to the CTM thinkers, is not possible without the right dispositions and, similarly, the *phronimos* should have the dispositions necessary to deliberate appropriately before making a decision and performing an action. Paul Ricoeur does not propose a list of dispositions, but they are part of his theory of practical reason and action.

These two points, lists of abilities and lists of dispositions, are complemented with some pedagogy and didactic materials and tests designed by some of the CTM thinkers to be applied in school activities. These of course are out of the scope of Paul Ricoeur's philosophy, since he did not develop a pedagogical theory. But given the common aims and grounds just expounded, it is possible to integrate those aspects of CTM theory with some of the Ricoeurian philosophy into a proposal of critical thinking in school today. Now, let us see the Ricoeurian aspects that have not been considered by CTM thinkers.

CTM theorists do not explicitly consider desire as part of the comprehension of action or the concept of reason. Nevertheless, it is included in the critical spirit, since it "comprises a willingness and desire objectively to evaluate reasons and their evidence according to impartial and non-arbitrary standards" (Cuypers, 2004, p. 77). Indeed, "an agent will be practically rational, then, at least in good part on the basis of having certain desires and beliefs" (Audi, 2001, p. 123).

For Paul Ricoeur, desire is an ontological element of the person and it is directly related to action. “Existence, we can now say, is desire and effort” (1974, p. 21). Furthermore, “desire can be treated as a *reason* for acting and is placed implicitly on the plane of rationality and discursiveness” (1992, p. 134). This seems to be accurate in thinking of the act of deliberation included in the exercise of critical thinking, for the general disposition to think and act as a critical thinker can be based on the desire to be a certain kind of person, the desire to be a rational person.

What about the CTM’s theory in relation to the sociological considerations in Paul Ricoeur’s theory of practical reason? Weberian concepts seem to have a parallel in the concept of critical thinking. Firstly, *orientation toward others* is included in examining other’s reasons for believing or acting, so they include dispositions, such as “discover and listen to others’ view and reasons” (Ennis, 2011, p. 2). The complete examination of reasons does not leave aside others’ arguments or reasons that justify any belief or action, for critical thinking is not an isolated and hermetic thinking; instead, it takes into account others’ positions to assess them and decide what to believe or do.

This relation to others’ thought or actions is highlighted when considering the *social relationship*. It is wholly admitted in CTM’s theory in thinking about criteria of assessment, which comes from formal and informal logic. These criteria are not invented by the movement, but they are found in the history of philosophy. “These principles (...) are embedded in traditions of rational inquiry (...). And the traditions themselves are dynamic, open-ended, plural ones that contain alternative or competing streams (Siegel, 2003, pp. 191-192). The logical norms or rules are there to assess reasons, but contrary to Ricoeurian emphasis on interpretation and guidance dimension of the rule, for the CTM the constraints and limitations imposed by those rules always outweigh further considerations to the point that any argument that violates the rules of logic is immediately discarded as a good reason.

Finally, what do Kantian and Hegelian theories have to do with CTM’s theory? First of all, the formality of the Kantian imperative draws a parallel with logical criteria proposed by the CTM’s philosophers for assessing reasons. Indeed, these criteria are just formal rules about the structures or arguments or its ideas; they are universal and objective much like the categorical imperative. So, like the Kantian imperative, these criteria could be a test of the soundness of reasons, but they are not the only aspect of reasons that should be regarded when assessing them.

This is required in order to avoid relativism, which can take every person to do whatever they want, regardless of the consequences to other people, to avoid evil, or suffering to others. This means that freedom is conceived, from the CTM theorist's point of view, as the possibility of autonomy guided through the assessment of reasons by universal forms. Secondly, the concept of practical reason would be derived from this concept of freedom where reason has the main role as a legislative dimension of human behavior, not just a capacity to know the world, but also to act upon it.

About the Hegelian *Sittlichkeit*, there seems to be a total rejection by the CTM philosophers. These thinkers do not see, as Paul Ricoeur does, the necessity of taking into account culture, its traditions and knowledge. They accept that people are raised culturally, with all the traditions, beliefs, values, and norms, but this is precisely the point they think should be controlled for it is the main cause for people to act inadequately. These philosophers think that reason should control this dimension on the basis of objective and universal criteria, those of logics.

3.2. Critical Phronesis

As a result of the just expounded relations between the CTM and the Ricoeurian philosophies, a different concept of critical thinking is proposed: the *critical phronesis*, that is, *the capacity, made up of thinking abilities and the ethos of the person, to assess reasons according to the orthos logos in every situation, in order to decide what to believe and do aiming at a good life with and for others.*

This *capacity or aptitude* comes to be constituted of thinking abilities and the *ethos* of the critical person. This is a proposal for a certain sort of person that could be educated in school. Certainly, to talk about the *ethos* of the critical thinker means to talk about the whole person, as Harvey Siegel (1989) required, and not only about a set of thinking abilities and a set of dispositions. This *ethos* would include the latter but is above all a way of being critical, that is, being a person moved by reasons or arguments well evaluated from *logos* and *pathos*, logical reasons or arguments and affections such as desire emotions, sentiments, etc.

The general description of this *ethos* is proposed here as the kind of character of a person who makes decisions on the grounds of the *logos* and the *pathos*, that is, neither only logical reasons, nor only dispositions. Rather, it is about a conjunction of all the rational and all the irrational, that is, both dispositions in favor or service of rational reasons and those that do not work for rationality, such as strong emotions of anger and despair. The *ethos* would be precisely the way a person joins together these two human dimensions in a balanced manner. Furthermore, this *ethos* includes all the history of a person and the way he himself acknowledges, assesses, and values it in order to make changes. It includes also, the image of a good life, individually as well as socially, and the role that a person would play in the building of his own life.

Critical phronesis is a capacity or an aptitude of doing something. It is not an isolated capacity, but it is integrated with other human dimensions: capacities (speaking, acting, narrating, and being responsible), affections (desire, sentiments, emotions, intuition, etc.), imagination (projects of life, ideals, dreams); in short, phronesis has to do with everything in the human being. But one of the most important traits for the phronimos is attestation. Of course, it is important to know the world, the circumstances of every context demanding a decision, as the CTM requires, but without the proper self-knowledge every decision or action might just fall into mistakes. And, as was presented above, attestation includes the knowledge of one's own body and trust necessary to execute any deed.

Reasons are not only logically assessable. Actually, they need to be assessed against other non-logical criteria, at least ethical criteria. Logical assessment can identify the inner inconsistencies of reasons and no more, while an ethical exam could determine whether coherent reasons have undesirable consequences. Furthermore, not all reasons for acting are rational or logical, since emotions or intuitions also take or move people to do certain things. Indeed, an emotion like anger is a manifestation of some form of thinking, maybe related to the sense of injustice or even with the sense of the ideal of something, like personal well being. Emotions, sentiments, and intuitions are not spontaneous ways of "feeling", but they are based on some thoughts or ideas. Thus, these affections can be indicators of ideas not utterly conscious about the state of affairs in a specific circumstance. These cannot be assessed by logical criteria, but societies have their own rules and standards of excellence to indicate to what extent these are justified or not.

As Paul Ricoeur (1991) proposes, the intelligibility of an action can be understood according to the reasons for acting that moved the person to act. And these reasons can be rational or ‘irrational’. To be sure, an action or even a belief can be justified by emotions, sentiments, or intuitions, and these are assessable —though not always in the same way. For example, to kill out of jealousy is not approved, ethically, nor legally in the middle of specific cultures and societies. It is out of question. But we know there have been societies where this is admitted. Although this does not mean that we need to just accept these events, it is not appropriate either to try to change at once those cultural aspects that do not agree with what seems right.

The *orthos logos* represents the criteria that guide the assessment of those reasons. Indeed, some reasons can be assessed logically, but others, like emotions, cannot. The latter could be assessed by social rules, what Alasdair MacIntyre call standards of excellence: “rules of comparison applied to different accomplishments, in relation to ideals of perfection shared by a given community of practitioners and internalized by the masters and virtuosi of the practice considered.” (Ricoeur, 1992, p. 176). In the end, these are the principles, norms, or guidance aspects that would lead reflection and discussion in order to evaluate reasons or actions. So, ‘irrational reasons’ are assessed according to the criteria applicable to them, according to the society’s standards of excellence. The *orthos logos*, the right rule, can be found by the phronimos who identifies the context, the type of reason, and its criteria. It is by no means unique, nor absolutely relative, since it depends on the particular case, its context, and the specific person involved.

Orthos logos is at least logical, ethical, and social. Indeed, every situation that involves human action includes logical, ethical, and sociological dimensions that are usually regulated or guided by some principles or rules. If the dimension is logical, the rules or regulations have been proposed by philosophers of logic (formal and informal); this includes a search for fallacies as well as care against self-contradiction among words and actions. If the dimension is ethical, the guidance is mainly given by personal convictions and cultural morality. Finally, if the dimension is political, regulation comes also from social utopias, institutions, and positive law.

Aiming at the *good life* is the general objective of critical phronesis, as it is the horizon of every action and practice in life. But this does not depend on every person’s desires, nor does it depend on those of the society. The good life is built by a dialectical process where the person

assesses his desires and the society's rules in order to build a coherent and appropriate image of the life he wants to live. This indeed includes aspects such as profession, lifestyle, kind of belongings, etc. It is mainly related to his intimate convictions about the things that deserve to be pursued, the moral and ethical values, and the ends of life. It is closely related to the *ethos*, to the kind of person he wants to be. Finally, the good life is not necessarily an isolated exercise. In the end, if the good life is with and for others, one needs to count on them; one needs to bear in mind possible downsides of the person's image of the good life with respect to other people. Including the others can take the form of demanding advice and/or group deliberation. Actually, to ask for other people's advice helps understand other points of view, widen one's understanding of the situation in mind, and of course, it entails an educative act of the *ethos*.

IV FINAL COMMENTS

Following the ideas shown in this work on CTM's concept of critical thinking and the description of Paul Ricoeur's concept of Phronesis, I present here a few final comments in lieu of conclusions —mostly comments about the pedagogical implications of the concept of critical Phronesis. This section will not consider the points developed in every chapter, which are: 1) that CTM emphasizes logics over human affections (desire, emotions, sentiments, ideals, etc.), therefore it is too logic; 2) the CTM lacks a clear concept of practical reason to explain the relation of reason with other human dimensions in action, such as emotions, intuition, etc.; 3) the concept proposed here (critical Phronesis) includes the very core of the CTM's concept, which is the twofold component of thinking abilities and dispositions, and the demand of examination of reasons according to clear criteria. From Ricoeurian philosophy, it includes the general ethical view of the good life, and the 'irrational' reasons under the Ricoeurian concepts of practical reason and Phronesis.

This final point makes room for the following possible research projects.

1) Deepen the critical dimension of Ricoeurian practical reason from its political side. Here the concepts of ideology and utopia play a very important role, not as possible dangers of educational systems, but as possible horizons of education and better societies.

2) Find possible implications of the narrative dimension in critical thinking. To be sure, the narrative dimension of human beings is not only a possible way to understand identity, but an ontological way to build oneself from attestation.

3) Propose didactic strategies that could take this theory of critical Phronesis into practice. The didactical point here would be to take students to explore their own history lives in order to attestate their capacities and the way they have been building their identity.

Now, as the main conclusion or final comment, I will put forward some guidelines for educational training. This is a philosophical-pedagogical basis for specific actions in school, but they are only general principles that can be applied in several ways. All of them try to develop at least one of the aspects included in the definition of the *critical Phronesis* presented above.

Following the CTM, thinking abilities and the *ethos* of the person are to be included within the *critical Phronesis* as a capacity or aptitude that responds to the very context where incertitude appears. This context is not only the personal-historical one, but the social and cultural that proposes certain values, norms, and ideals of behavior. Thus, the *ethos* of the critical thinker is not an isolated trait; rather, it is integrated into the personal history and social context. As to the pedagogical consequence of this consideration, turns out that to develop this kind of thinking (critical Phronesis) it seems necessary to choose just the abilities and/or dispositions needed the most according to what has been discovered in the attestation of capabilities and social needs, that is, the abilities and dispositions needed according to the personal history and social context. For example, in the case of students, the abilities can be chosen according to their cognitive and affective development and their own social historical necessities.

In choosing the set of abilities and or character traits, the *ethos* of the person wanted should be born in mind. This certainly includes an understanding of the society and its historical and current needs. If, for instance, a school is located in a very violent environment, where most people highlight individualism, the school teachers should probably choose to focus critical thinking training on the *ethos* of peaceful persons who would be able to discuss their differences and reach agreements. In the Colombian case, according to Guillermo Hoyos-Vaquez (2013a) education should strive for training in political culture for democracy, which is achieved through communication, that is, knowing how to listen to other people and how to reach a reasonable agreement in the middle of opposite views.

Here the Ricoeurian emphasis on *attestation*, based on social and personal history, is relevant not only for the reflection on the social *ethos* needed, but for the individual aspects that any student should try to foster according to his own personal history. It is a task that must be done by the students themselves, guided by their school teachers. The student should check their own personal history themselves, but the school, that is, teachers and other members of school staff, should make guidance available to them.

Context should be regarded in a reflection about developing thinking abilities and the *ethos* of the students. In other words, it is necessary to apply the thinking abilities and dispositions in specific contexts, for training aims not only at acquiring certain content comprehension, but to train pupils in critical thinking that helps them to face real life, with the problems and uncertainties of each situation. If Phronesis is a capacity to respond to specific

situations, training on phronetical thinking should be done according to specific situations. Following the Ricoeurian concept of phronesis, it turns out that such situations should include a historical dimension, that is, an examination of pupils' personal history to see if anyone has already faced a situation similar to the one presented in the exercise. Narrative then becomes a useful and necessary tool. As Frederick A. Guerin says,

If Phronesis is practical reasoning, one of the most important carriers or temporalizing mediums for such reasoning is narrative. I will make the claim that if narrative is one of the key ways we come to know ourselves and others as temporal beings, this knowing is not accessed through a pure logic of demonstration, nor in the perfection of method, but, rather, in everyday phronetic, practical reasoning which helps us to creatively and critically evaluate ourselves, and our world (Guerin, 2012, p. 19).

Indeed, any critical thinking proposal aims at fostering the way in which a person faces particular situations in everyday life. In facing specific situations (even if they are fictional or real) students are encouraged to apply logical thinking and some of their own ethical traits. In the end, an exercise that presents a very specific situation is an occasion to apply *logos* and *pathos* in a review of personal history and thoughts, emotions and values brought about in the exercise. This yields self-knowledge through narrative and *attestation*. What is present here is a narrative imagination, but not applied only to other people's reasons (thoughts and feelings), but to one's own. To be sure, "the thought experiments we conduct in the great laboratory of the imaginary are also explorations in the realm of good and evil. Transvaluing, even devaluing, is still evaluating." (Ricoeur, 1992, p. 164). This evaluation is evaluation of reasons and their power to justify an action or belief.

Context specificity allows not only developing narrative imagination and self-knowledge, but the discernment of *orthos logos*. That is, criteria to assess reasons, both rational and irrational. In the end, it is a brief exam of the context of the case in view according to the possible dimensions that it includes. Indeed, every case of human action includes logical, ethical and social points to consider and these need clear criteria to guide discussion or reflection with respect to the abilities/dispositions fostered.

Evaluating criteria, that is, finding the *orthos logos*, is an activity that has a well-defined goal: to reach a good life with and for others in just institutions. This is Paul Ricoeur's motto for his 'little ethics' (1992). Even if the CTM does not include any substantial or concrete content, like an ethical or political one, within their theory of critical thinking, they propose critical thinking in order to help achieve a better society, and a better society is one where people can reach more or less their image of happiness. Since Paul Ricoeur does not propose any concrete ideal of happiness or the good life, this is also a kind of a formal proposal.

With respect to its content, the "good life" is, for each of us, the nebula of ideals and dreams of achievements with regard to which a life is held to be more or less fulfilled or unfulfilled. (...) In this sense, the "good life" is "that in view of which" all these actions are directed, actions which were nevertheless said to have their ends in themselves. (Ricoeur, 1992, p. 179)

This is a shared good life, not an individual one, so this sharing should be part of the criteria to assess reasons. The exercise of critical thinking is not a vacuous one that only pursues good reasoning *per se*, as if people were only thinking machines, for students have dreams, hopes, fears, etc. (Siegel, 1988). As Guillermo Hoyos Vasquez thought, the term reasonable is based on Aristotelian practical wisdom, and "not everything that is rational is the most sensible (*lo más sensato*), the most sensible is having into account the different rationalities, different logics, different points of view. That is the most reasonable" (2003a, 41. Own translation). In other words, what the Colombian thinker asks is to strive for practical wisdom taking into account different points of view. This exercise of hearing others, of thinking of other people that are different, and, due to that, with opinions as valid as mine, helps avoid false ideologies that try to obliterate difference. Here lies the possibility of avoiding ideologies.

As a consequence of this last remark, one necessary feature of critical thinking is the possibility of thinking with and for others. To deliberate, says Paul Ricoeur, is not necessarily an individual activity, rather it can profit from the plural perspectives and ideas about how to see and solve a problem. In his own words,

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 (1991, p. 273)

When people work in groups to think a problem or specific aspect of it, they can learn from others' point of view and ideas. Moreover, in the current Colombian context thinking along with others can help promote utopias to build a better society. Following Guillermo Hoyos again,

it makes sense to think of a [Colombian] society less violent, think of a society less poor. "Do you know it?" No, I do not know it, as it is not there yet. I think of it, and maybe I can convince others to think of it, so we can start working on that, on that idea, on that utopia (2013a, p. 42. Own translation).

So, through communication, listening and sharing ideas and reasons, it is possible to change others minds and start working for a better place, a better life. This is likely if people learn how to listen and speak to others that think differently. This is possible if people make room for group activities to think together, to deliberate from different points of view where others have a valid voice that is heard precisely because they are different (Hoyos, 2012). This is one of the possible ways to aim at a good life with and for others in just institutions, where more than a single person thinks, criticizes, and deliberates along with others.

A final word: it is important to note that these 'principles' are not the only ones to be developed, but it seems they are the minimum ones from this perspective that tried to foster the CTM's concept of critical thinking from Ricoeurian philosophy. These recommendations do not need to be developed in every single doing, but all of them should be regularly and frequently applied. It is also clear that the order presented above does not demand any kind of hierarchy, but it is recommended to include all of them in a program or objective of developing critical thinking.

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