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BEING CRITICAL AND CREATIVE PHILOSOPHICALLY

Abstract

In this study, I analyse how to be critical on philosophy, critical thinking and creative writing. I show how they need each other philosophically.

Writing can change people, creates new worlds and possible universes. By writing, we are creating a new version of time; we are playing out a new version of existence. Writing can create personal universes and operates the reader, in this sense, the reader is a kind of co-creator. Writing and reading are collaborative acts in the making and performance of space-time. Reading is a kind of rewriting but by the eyes. Writing and reading share an interdependent orbit around the open space of language. People break away their usual barriers and imagine the unimaginable in creative and critical writing. During the process of critical writing, individuals come up with new ideas and start to have a broader perspective. Critical writing helps with creative thinking, problem solving and making analysis. When we ask 'what are the differences between creative and critical writing', we can say that creative writing is generative in purpose, whereas critical writing is analytical in purpose. Critical writing is judgemental. On the other hand, creative writing is quite free. Although differences are there between them, they are inter-dependant for good writing!

Key Words: Creative thinking, creative writing, critical thinking and writing, authority, politics.

FELSEFİ OLARAK ELEŞTİREL VE YARATICI OLMA

Özet

Bu çalışmada, felsefe alanında nasıl eleştirel olduğu temelinde eleştirel düşünce ve buna bağlı olarak yaratıcı yazma konusunda bir analiz yapılacaktır.

Yazma olayı, insanları değiştirebilir, onlar için yeni birtakım dünyalar yaratabilir. Yazı aracılığıyla biz zamanın yeni biçimlerini yaratır, varoluşumuzun yeni biçimlerini ortaya koyarız. Yazma, okuyucu için de yol göstericidir. Okuyucu, okurken bir anlamda da yazıya anlam katar ve onun yeniden yaratılmasına eşlik eder. Yazma ve okuma iş birliği içerisindedir. Bununla birlikte okuma, bir bakıma metni göz ile yeniden yazmadır. İnsanlar eleştirel ve yaratıcı yazma ile kendi sınırlarını aşarlar ve hayal edilemeyen hayal ederler. Eleştirel yazma ise yaratıcı düşünceye, problem çözmeye ve analiz yapmaya yardım eder. Yaratıcı ve eleştirel düşünce arasındaki farkları sorup, sorguladığımız zaman; yaratıcı yazmanın amacının üretkenlik olduğunu ve yazarken oldukça özgür olduğunu söyleyebiliriz. Oysa eleştirel yazının yapısı analitiktir ve daima olumlu veya olumsuz bir yargıda bulunur. Aralarındaki farklara rağmen, iyi bir yazı üretmek için her ikisi de birbirlerine bağlıdır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Yaratıcı düşünme, yaratıcı yazma, eleştirel düşünme ve yazma, otorite, siyaset.

Think before you speak!

Read before you think!

Introduction

Thinking is an internal philosophical mental process that uses information as input, integrates that information into previously learned material resulting in either knowledge or nothing. Asking questions, problem solving, and analysis are three examples of thinking. When we think, we hold imagination in mind and we aim to transfer that to the written word. In this sense, writing can be a pleasure in life. It can transform writer and reader; it creates new worlds and possible universes. In writing, we are creating a new version of time. However, imagination, creation and claims of a new world can aggravate the state. Politics is usually the enemy of the imagination. Politics is often associated with cohesion. Many writers are unengaged politicians, uncomfortable with authority and power.

Writing helps self-awareness and may even contribute towards self-development. Most writing is actually an argument between you and the words themselves. In writing, the first purpose is usually to surprise yourself and then the reader. In this sense, writing is a form of knowledge creation and, as Socrates said about writing, “Employ your time in improving yourself by other men’s writings so that you shall come easily by what others have laboured hard for.” Most writers agree that the best way to write well creatively is to write for yourself. It follows that the best way to read as a writer is to read for yourself. In *How to Read and Why*, Harold Bloom claims, ‘ultimately, we read . . . in order to strengthen the self, and to learn its authentic interests... the pleasures of reading indeed are selfish rather than social’ (Bloom, 2000: 22). On the other hand, Plato; he was concerned with the communicative function of writing and saw that it was the tool of artificial intelligence as opposed to empathetic dialogue-generated insight. In Phaedrus’ dialogue, he lets Socrates say, ‘... Written words are unnecessary, except to remind him who knows the matter about which they are written’ (Plato, Phaedrus 275d).

A writer is a player of language with their imaginations. The writer simultaneously creates a world of fantasy which sharply separates his or her readers from reality. That means writing can create personal universes that operate on the reader and in this sense, the reader can be a form of co-creator. Writing and reading are collaborative acts in the making and performance of space and time. Reading is a kind of secondary rewriting. Readers participate; they become partly like writers, as they participate, consciously and unconsciously, in literary creation and live their life in that moment and at that particular pace whilst reading. Writing and reading share an interdependent orbit around the open space of language.

Writing usually based on critical and creative thinking. In this sense, creative writing with critical thinking is helpful to write about a problem in a different way or from a new perspective, and it is able to make effective and efficient decisions using the right information.

Critical Thinking and Philosophy

Critical thinking is reflective and evaluative thinking oriented toward what to think, to believe and to do. In other words, it is the ability to think clearly and rationally about what to do or what to believe. It includes the ability to engage in independent thinking. In order to live a meaningful life and to structure our lives accordingly, we need to justify and reflect on our values and decisions. Critical thinking provides the tools for this process of self-evaluation. Critical thinking is, in short, self-directed, self-disciplined, self-monitored, and self-corrective thinking. It entails effective communication and problem-solving abilities and a commitment to overcome our native egocentrism (Richard and Elder, 2008: 34).

Critical thinking is all about structured thinking resulting in the creation of sound opinions as well as assisting readers to develop their own opinions. it is at the core of most intellectual activity which involves learning to recognise or develop an argument, use evidence in support of that

argument, draw reasoned conclusions, and use information to solve problems. Examples of thinking skills are interpreting, analysing, explaining, comparing, questioning and generalising. Critical thinking, in short, is important as it plays a central role in problem solving, decision making and communication.

When we look at to the critical thinking, we can see that it is a cognitive activity associated with using the mind. Learning to think in critically analytical and evaluative ways means using mental processes such as attention, selection, and judgement. In other words, critical thinking includes the component skills of analysing arguments, making inferences using inductive or deductive reasoning, judging or evaluating, and making decisions or solving problems. At the same time, critical thinkers are open to new ideas and perspectives. They are naturally sceptical and they understand the logical connections between ideas evaluate arguments and solve problems systematically. They ask questions and analyse them actively. They consciously apply tactics and strategies to uncover meaning. Critical reading is a major part of understanding an argument.

Critical thinking can help us acquire knowledge, improve our theories, and strengthen arguments. Critical thinking helps people avoid future problems that can result from their actions

Critical thinking is generally recognized as a type of thinking that ‘doubts methodically’. The literature on critical thinking has its roots in two primary academic disciplines: philosophy and psychology (Lewis & Smith, 1993: 135). The writings of Socrates, Plato and Aristotle exemplify the philosophical approach. This approach focuses on the hypothetical critical thinker, enumerating the qualities and characteristics of this person rather than the behaviours or actions the critical thinker can perform (Lewis & Smith, 1993: 133; Thayer-Bacon, 2000: 55). Further, the philosophical approach has traditionally focused on the application of formal rules of logic (Lewis & Smith, 1993:135; Sternberg, 1986: 58). One limitation of this approach to defining critical thinking is that it does not always correspond to reality (Sternberg, 1986: 17). By emphasizing the ideal critical thinker and what people have the capacity to do; this approach may have less to contribute to discussions regarding how people actually think.

The philosophical roots of critical thinking are Ancient Greek. Socrates demonstrated the importance of asking questions before we accept ideas. His method is known as "Socratic Questioning" which is the best known critical thinking strategy. And then Plato followed Socrates’s critical thought. Aristotle and the Greek Sceptics emphasised that things are often very different from what they appear to be. In the Medieval Ages, the tradition of systematic critical thinking was abandoned. In the Renaissance, scholars started to think critically about religion, art, and society in Europe. They followed up on the insight of the ancients. In 17th century, Descartes developed a method of critical thought based on the principle of systematic doubt. He emphasised that every part of thinking should be questioned and doubted. Meanwhile, Thomas Moore developed a model of a new social order which he called *Utopia* in which every domain of the present world was subject to critique. Enlightenment thinkers extended to the conception of critical thought more. Kant introduced us to the *Critique of Pure Reason*. In the 19th Century, critical thought was extended even further. Applied to the problems of capitalism, it produced the searching social and economic critique of Karl Marx. In the 20th Century, John Dewey called the critical thinking as reflective thinking (Dewey, 1910: 7). Glaser defined critical thinking as an attitude of being disposed to consider in a thoughtful way the problems and knowledge of the methods of logical inquiry and reasoning (Glaser, 1941: 5).

Creative Thinking and Writing

The best criticism creates new open spaces for creativity. Critical thinking plays a crucial role in evaluating new ideas, selecting the best ones and modifying them if necessary. During the process of creative writing, individuals come up with new ideas which develop into a broader perspective. Creative thinking is a kind of thinking about “outside of the box.” Critical writing also helps creative thinking, problem solving and developing analysis. Some people believe that critical thinking hinders creativity because it requires following the rules of logic and rationality, but creativity might require breaking rules. This is a misconception; critical thinking is an essential part of creativity because we need critical thinking to evaluate and improve our creative ideas.

Creative thinking is about applying the imagination to finding a solution for your learning task. It needs to imagination progress which requires us to overcome how we are constrained by culture, tradition, or circumstance. It involves recognising underlying assumptions, scrutinising arguments, judging ideas and judging the rationality of these justifications by comparing them to a range of varying interpretations. Creative thinking also involves readers in learning to generate and apply new ideas in specific contexts, seeing existing situations in a new way, identifying alternative ways, and seeing or making new links that generate a positive outcome. This includes combining parts to form something original, sifting and refining ideas to discover possibilities, constructing theories and objects, and acting on intuition.

Creative writing is not just an individual process; it is a social skill involving observation, storytelling, collaboration and communication. It is a mixture of conscious and unconscious creative thinking. In the creative act, the mind proceeds to a place where there is no existing path to follow, building something new where there was nothing before.

Free writing is a part of creative thinking and writing. Free writing's association with freethinking has developed over time. Conceiving of free writing as a thinking practice assumes a certain important relationship between thinking and writing, as Elbow articulates: "Writing is a way to end up thinking something you couldn't have started out thinking. Writing is, in fact, a transaction with words whereby you free yourself from what you presently think, feel, and perceive" (Elbow, 1998: 15).

Writing creatively can feel a little like working out logistical, even mathematical challenges. Writing is only a more exacting form of reading; it is individual in its action and exactions. To become, and to remain, an original creative writer you must first become, and be, an original reader, and pursue your individual taste with restlessness, competitiveness and trust in your intuition. There is no end to creative writing.

Creative writing's tale is documented in Athens with Aristotle (384–322 BC). If we go back to the origins of creative writing as a taught discipline, we remember Aristotle's Poetics which is an account of creative practices that have been accepted for years. The practice of creative writing is as personal as Aristotle says. He uses the theatre as a means to reach an end. Aristotle wanted to move people to strong emotion through rhetorical and dramatic strategies. He showed his students techniques for manipulating an audience.

Creative writing is one of the most important skills that it stretches the imagination and offers a wonderful outlet for expression.

Conclusion

Both critical and creative writing are important for writers and readers. Although critical and creative writing seem to work together and perhaps even to overlap, actually they are different from each other. The differences between creative and critical writing is that creative writing is generative in purpose, whereas critical writing is analytical in purpose. Critical writing is judgmental but creative writing is quite free. On the other hand, they always need each other to create good writing. Critical thinking and creativity might seem to have little in common. However, Bailin (2002) argues that a certain amount of creativity is necessary for critical thought. Paul and Elder (2006) note that both creativity and critical thinking are aspects of "good," purposeful thinking. As such, critical thinking and creativity are two sides of the same coin.

As human beings, we need to have a degree of written ability for both creative and critical thinking. When used together, critical and creative thinking can benefit and enrich the learning of the reader. People transcend their usual barriers and imagine the unimaginable in creative and critical writing. We know that, although creative writing and critical writing are separate disciplines, some of the most interesting writing either plays with the boundaries between those disciplines or ignores them altogether.

As a result, critical thinking and creative thinking are strongly linked, bringing complementary dimensions to thinking and learning.

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