



Critical Inquiry as Virtuous Truth-Telling: Implications of Phronesis and Parrhesia

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Abstract

This article examines critical inquiry and truth-telling from the perspective of two complementary theoretical frameworks. First, Aristotelian phronesis, or practical wisdom, offers a framework for truth that is oriented toward ethical deliberation while recognizing the contingency of practical application. Second, Foucauldian parrhesia calls for an engaged sense of truth-telling that requires risk from the inquirer while grounding truth in the complexity of human discourse. Taken together, phronesis and parrhesia orient inquirers toward intentional truth-telling practices that resist simplistic renderings of criticality and overly technical understandings of research. This article argues that truly critical inquiry must spring from the perspectives of phronesis and parrhesia, providing research projects that aim at virtuous truth-telling over technical veracity with the hope of contributing to ethical discourse and social praxis.

Keywords: *phronesis, praxis, parrhesia, critical inquiry, truth-telling*

Introduction

The theme of this special issue considers the nature of critical inquiry, specifically methodological work that remains committed to explicit goals of social justice and the good. One of the central concerns of this issue is that critical studies have lost much of their meaning due to a proliferation of the term *critical* in educational scholarship. As noted in the introduction to this issue, much contemporary work in education research that claims to be critical may be so in name only, offering but methodological techniques to engage in critical work; techniques that are incapable of intervening in both the epistemological and ontological formations of normative practices in education. Additionally, the postmodern moment, with its challenge to universalizing theories of emancipatory politics common within critical studies, leaves us reticent to speak truth productively in the aim of social justice. As Kuntz has recently written, we perhaps exist in a state of scholarly paralysis relative to truth-telling where “scholars and theoreticians remain strikingly silent when it comes to their own beliefs or assertions of truth,” rendering the methodologist “as nearly apolitical.”¹

1. Aaron M. Kuntz, *The Responsible Methodologist: Inquiry, Truth-Telling, and Social Justice* (Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press, 2015), 22.

If true, it seems that a situation exists where methodologists have only the ability to speak truth *through* method and technique, not *within* the material realities of social and political contexts. Critical inquiry now exhibits a disquieting inability to intervene and disrupt the status quo on a practical and theoretical level. At the heart of this scholarly impotence are the role of truth and the responsibility of the methodologist as a “truth-teller.” Without the ability to perform truth-telling, recognizing this as an ethically engaged act, the methodologist loses the potential for critical work to disrupt the normative flow of contemporary knowing and being. What is left is a reversion to the certainty of method or the illusion that analytical language metaphors (e.g. coding techniques) may offer the requisite cultural representation for resisting hegemonic educational practices and discourse. However, for Barad, this linguistic, semiotic, and interpretive turn toward cultural representation through language has been given too much power.² The overemphasis on linguistic techniques neglects the materiality of our lived contexts and precludes new onto-epistemological framings of the world. Thus, methodology loses its practical and theoretical import, as it resists speaking truths to who we are and might be ontologically and, relatedly, to what we know and what is possible to know epistemologically.

This does not accord with the central tenets of critical inquiry. Critical scholarship that “stands on the sidelines” concerning the productive speaking of truth that is ethically and materially situated reinforces the perspective of the methodologist as a technical expert; a perspective that reifies the concept of truth as methodologically certain and axiologically disengaged. However, Denzin and Lincoln refer to the social inquirer as a politically and morally engaged actor, not a distant technician who relies upon technique to produce truth.³ Thus, the active political involvement of the inquirer and truth revealed through material engagement, rather than context-independent procedure, are at the heart of critical scholarship. In short, critical thought rests upon the notion of praxis, or action, rather than disengaged method.

In this paper, I return to ancient concepts such as praxis that lay at the heart of critical inquiry to formulate a theoretical and philosophical grounding for the kind of truth that is required of the critical scholar. Such a foundation is perhaps necessary given the hesitation toward truth-telling that is characteristic of educational scholarship that claims criticality, yet reproduces truth as technically situated. The intent is that an investigation of the truths critical inquiry ought to make, grounded in ancient conceptions of practical wisdom and truth-telling, will act as a catalyst for reexamination of ethically situated scholarship and the role of the educational methodologist.

I begin with a consideration of the concept of praxis, noting its centrality in contemporary critical educational perspectives. After briefly discussing some challenges to critical scholarship, and how this perhaps informs the notion of scholarly paralysis mentioned previously, I analyze the concept of praxis within Aristotle’s discussion of intellectual virtues in the *Nicomachean Ethics*. Praxis represents the tangible manifestation of the intellectual state of *phronesis*, or practical wisdom. This contrasts with both epistemic forms of knowledge and skill-production knowledge found in Aristotle’s articulation of *techne-poiesis*. By distinguishing these intellectual states, I hope to show that each makes a claim to truth, though importantly, truths of a characteristically different nature. The nature of the truth explicated by *phronesis-praxis* is distinct from epistemic-technical truths (ones that we might say characterize our modern perspectives), yet constitute truths nonetheless. Thus, Aristotle’s *phronimos*, or practically wise person, is one who knows and speaks truths. I then attempt to connect the understanding of truth from the *phronesis-praxis* perspective

2. Karen Barad, “Posthumanist Performativity: Toward an Understanding of How Matter Comes to Matter,” *Signs* 28 (2003).

3. Norman K. Denzin & Yvonna S. Lincoln, *The Qualitative Inquiry Reader* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2002).

to Foucault's discussions of *parrhesia*, or truth-telling, in the ancient world. I believe these concepts intersect as they each instantiate truth as an ethical act that cannot be understood from a modern perspective of empirical verification. In discussing and connecting the Aristotelian and Foucauldian conceptions of truth in *phronesis* and *parrhesia*, I hope to theoretically ground truth-telling for critical social justice work. Ultimately, I suggest that to claim one's work as *critical* means to commit to notions of truth found in the character of Aristotle's *phronimos* and Foucault's *parrhesiastes*. I argue that critical inquiry must be understood as a virtuous act rather than a process of technical application, and the role of the methodologist seen as one who intentionally engages in ethical discourse.

Praxis in Critical Educational Thought

The concept of praxis has a long tradition in philosophical inquiry, influencing the work of thinkers from the ancient Greeks to Hegel, Marx, Dewey and other American pragmatists and European existentialists.⁴ According to Bernstein, the investigation of praxis, or "action" (though, as I will discuss later, in the Aristotelian sense, a more refined understanding of action related to ethical and political engagement), "has become the dominant concern of the most influential philosophical movements that have emerged since Hegel."⁵ Not surprisingly then, considerations of praxis are central to what are termed "critical perspectives" in education. As Pinar and Bowers note, in a broad sense, critical perspectives might be appropriate terminology for a wide range of educational thinkers across diverse philosophical and political affiliations. However, the concept of critical perspectives has largely been appropriated by a group with intellectual roots in the Frankfurt School of Critical Theory and Marxist/neo-Marxist theorists such as Gramsci, Williams, and Freire.⁶ In this section, I examine the centrality of praxis in these particular "critical perspectives" of education, emanating from Freire, and also some of the scholarly critiques aimed at them. It is not the intention to reduce critical scholarship to the critical pedagogical thought of Freire and the educational scholars he has influenced. However, because it is a historically influential school of critical studies in education, and has provoked challenges that inform the situation described in this article's introduction, I intend to use it as a key text of sorts for discussing the issue of critical inquiry that now perhaps sits paralyzed relative to social justice truth-telling.

Paulo Freire famously positions education as a practice of freedom as opposed to a hegemonic process of instilling knowledge in his classic work *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*.⁷ At the heart of this conceptualization of education as a "practice" of freedom is the notion of praxis. Glass writes that Freire's theory of education posited praxis as a primary feature of human life and a necessary condition of freedom. He states that, for Freire, in order to be free and resist oppression, one must engage in praxis, or "reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it."⁸ Further, Freire distinguishes his conception of education as a "cultural action for freedom" that "can never be accounted for in its complex totality by a mechanistic theory."⁹ Thus, he connects

4. Richard J. Bernstein, *Praxis and Action: Contemporary Philosophies of Human Activity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011).

5. *Ibid.*, xvii.

6. William F. Pinar and C.A. Bowers, "Politics of Curriculum: Origins, Controversies, and Significance of Critical Perspectives," *Review of Research in Education* 18 (1992): 163.

7. Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York, NY: Continuum, 1970).

8. Ronald D. Glass, "On Paulo Freire's Philosophy of Praxis and the Foundations of Liberation Education," *Educational Researcher* 30 (2001).

9. Paulo Freire, "Cultural Action for Freedom," *Harvard Educational Review* (1970): 1.

praxis to explicit transformational action that is distinguished from a technical or applied sciences process.

This form of praxis as socio-political transformation is evident in the work of critical pedagogy scholars heavily influenced by Freire's thought. For example, pressing for a revivification of critical pedagogy in the face of increasing globalization and neoliberal reform at the end of the 20th century, McLaren spoke of a return to "revolutionary praxis" at the heart of both Freirean and Marxist perspectives. Writing against what he perceived as a fragmentation of the unifying socialist ideal of critical pedagogy by the postmodern Left, he states that "the 'totalizing' vision of this project remains compelling and instructive, and indeed remains as urgent today as it was thirty years ago."¹⁰ Others have written of the link between critical pedagogy and critical research. Research in this tradition also carries with it the conception of a liberatory praxis aimed at intervening and disrupting hegemonic formations of the world. Kincheloe, McLaren, and Steinberg, for example, write:

Inquiry that aspires to the name 'critical' must be connected to an attempt to confront the injustice of a particular society or public sphere within the society. Research becomes a transformative endeavor unembarrassed by the label "political" and unafraid to consummate a relationship with emancipatory consciousness.¹¹

Thus, we see that not only is the notion of praxis central to the scholarship of the critical pedagogues, but that it is presented as explicitly political, emancipatory, and even as a "totalizing" narrative in contradistinction to oppressive forms of globalization and neoliberalism.

Scholars influenced by post-structural perspectives have consistently criticized the totalizing narratives and emancipatory goals found within critical pedagogy. Attending more to issues of localized identity, these thinkers have challenged the tenets of critical pedagogy for its binary nature (e.g. socialism vs. global capitalism), its universalizing structure, and its inscription of dominant modes of Western rationalism at the expense of other ways of being and knowing. Pinar and Bowers, for example, outlined major scholarly criticisms of critical pedagogy, noting their own concerns that such theorizing of emancipation through critical reflection and dialogue rested on the rhetoric of European-American discourse, thus displacing other forms of knowledge. Consequently, they argue that critical pedagogy fails to adequately account for identity concepts, such as race and gender, within its class analysis.¹² Ellsworth also challenged these critical perspectives for reaffirming paternalistic accounts of education through "rational" discourse. She discussed critical pedagogy as coming from mostly White, male academics who benefitted from an ahistorical account of giving voice to oppressed groups that would result in emancipatory critical dialogue. She writes:

I am...suspicious of the desire by the mostly White, middle-class men who write the literature on critical pedagogy to elicit 'full expression' of student voices. Such a relation

10. Peter McLaren, "Revolutionary Pedagogy in Post-Revolutionary Times: Rethinking the Political Economy of Critical Education," *Educational Theory* 48 (1998): 445.

11. Joe L. Kincheloe, Peter McLaren, & Shirley R. Steinberg, "Critical Pedagogy and Qualitative Research," in *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research*, eds. Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2011): 164.

12. Pinar and Bowers, *Politics of Curriculum*.

between the teacher/student becomes voyeuristic when the voice of the pedagogue himself goes unexamined.¹³

Lather offered a similar critique in her response to McLaren's call for a revival of emancipatory dialogue. She interpreted such a call as a discourse of critical pedagogy that reinscribed "prescriptive universalizing." Going further, she identified this critical perspective as supporting enlightenment ideals and a utopic vision of absolute, final knowledge. Lather writes:

And the rhetoric of moral exhortation, the universalizing calls for class and economics as the "motor force" of history, and disattention to the problematic of agency at the end of the metaphysics of subjectivity reinscribe enlightenment-bound critical theory in its project of freedom through conscious expansion of knowledge, a repetition of the Hegelian narrative of the subject of history arriving at absolute knowledge.¹⁴

These critiques of critical pedagogy reject its metanarrative of emancipation that subsumes local meaning-making, resistance, fragmented identities, and the uncertainty of particular knowledge constructions within its totalizing structure.

Again, it is not the intention to reduce critical scholarship to the perspectives of critical pedagogy. However, highlighting both the central tenets of critical pedagogy scholarship, and the critique of this scholarship from post-structural perspectives, informs the situation that Kuntz describes as "scholarly paralysis" among methodologists who invoke critical inquiry.¹⁵ On one hand, there are critical perspectives committed to an explicit social justice orientation. In order to be critical, one must intervene and confront social injustice with an orientation toward praxis, defined as ethically engaged action. On the other, there are critiques that warn against the development of a totalizing praxis that becomes ahistorical, self-referential, and that sweeps away identity under its universalizing structure. The question that remains is can the ethical commitment to social justice truth-telling characteristic of critical inquiry be reconciled to contextual notions of fragmented truths and identity? As this theme queries, can we move toward a critical praxis that takes on positive notions of truth and the good while still holding to contextual understandings of these notions? I believe that critical methodologists can hold these seemingly contradictory positions. More than that, I believe that an analysis of the ancient concept of praxis, and its overarching intellectual state of *phronesis* as found in Aristotle, underscores the necessity of holding to a discourse that is ethically committed on the one hand, yet attuned to the particularities of context and experience on the other. It is to an examination of these concepts that I turn next to offer a theoretical basis for critical scholarship conceptualized as virtue rather than technique.

Aristotelian phronesis-praxis

Bernstein writes that praxis is frequently translated into English as "practice". However, he suggests that this unfortunately substitutes a low-level interpretation of practicality, engaged with mundane activities, for the high-level understanding of practice or action found in Aristotle's

13. Elizabeth Ellsworth, "Why Doesn't This Feel Empowering? Working Through the Repressive Myths of Critical Pedagogy," *Harvard Educational Review* 59 (1989): 312.

14. Patti Lather, "Critical Pedagogy and Its Complicities: A Praxis of Stuck Places," *Educational Theory* 48 (1998): 488-490.

15. Kuntz, *Responsible Methodologist*.

articulation. Though he does note that praxis takes on a quasi-technical meaning in Aristotle at times, Bernstein also contends that Aristotle introduces a more refined definition of praxis as dealing with activities characteristic of someone's ethical and political life. It is thus distinguished in this sense from theory or the production of an artifact, and characterized by action or *doing* proper. He writes that praxis in this more restricted sense "signifies the disciplines and activities predominant in man's ethical and political life. These disciplines can be contrasted with '*theoria*' because their end is not knowing or wisdom for its own sake, but doing—living well."¹⁶ The distinctions between the "action" or "doing" quality of praxis and that of theory and production are taken from Aristotle's discussion of the intellectual virtues, primarily found in book VI of the *Nicomachean Ethics*. Here, praxis represents the tangible manifestation of the intellectual virtue of practical wisdom, or *phronesis*.

As said previously, praxis and *phronesis* are jointly linked in Aristotle's consideration of the intellectual virtues. *Phronesis*, or practical wisdom, constitutes the reasoning that produces or allows for the action, or praxis, of a good end. A central point of the analysis in this section is that *phronesis* involves value-rational deliberation, whereas the contrasting states of *episteme* and *techne* involve either no deliberation or deliberation only about means rather than ends.¹⁷ This is a crucial point in the consideration of critical work, as scholarship claiming criticality must recognize the importance of virtuous deliberation. In other words, a *critical* scholar does in fact "critique" through deliberating about "what should be" rather than simply displaying "what is" or technically calculating how to reach a pre-determined outcome. The following discussion of Aristotle's intellectual states is meant to highlight the unique nature of *phronesis-praxis*, its key differences from other forms of intellect, and its appropriateness as a theoretical framework for critical scholarship.

Episteme

In the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle discusses several intellectual states which comprise the virtuous person. The first of these intellectual states of reason is *episteme*, which can be translated as scientific knowledge. Aristotle describes the nature of scientific knowledge as that which "cannot be otherwise."¹⁸ He goes on to explain that scientific knowledge is eternal and does not come into being or cease to be. Due to the eternal essence of scientific knowledge, Aristotle contends that it is teachable and its object learnable and concerned with universal principles, either through induction or deduction. He closes his discussion of scientific knowledge by saying that it "is a state by which we demonstrate."¹⁹ In summary, *episteme* is a state of reason dealing with universal principles or laws that one can teach or demonstrate.

16. Bernstein, *Praxis and Action*, xiv.

17. There are really five intellectual virtues discussed by Aristotle, including intuitive reason and philosophic wisdom in addition to *episteme*, *techne*, and *phronesis*. However, because the other two are primarily discussed as characteristically related to one of the other three, many scholars engage with the distinctions between the first three only.

18. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. Roger Crisp (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 105.

19. *Ibid.*, 106.

Techne

The intellectual state of *techne* is often translated into the word “skill.” Aristotle first distinguishes skill by describing it as a “productive state involving true reason.”²⁰ It is a rational state concerning production or bringing things into being. *Techne* differs from *episteme* because it is not concerned with things that come into being by necessity and is “concerned with what can be otherwise.”²¹ Skill carries with it a connotation of context-dependent knowledge. Whereas scientific knowledge is concerned with demonstrable universal principles, skill is concerned with practical knowledge. Though skill is concerned with the practical knowledge of things which can be otherwise, it is also concerned with producing things distinct from itself. The means are separated from the ends. Thus, Aristotle equates *techne* with production. It is the “know-how” or skill knowledge of producing something for an external end.

Phronesis

The intellectual state of *phronesis* is often translated into the phrase “practical wisdom.” Aristotle begins his discussion of *phronesis* by considering the characteristics of those society calls practically wise. According to Aristotle, the practically wise person can “deliberate nobly about what is good and beneficial for himself” and can see “what is good for themselves and what is good for people in general.”²² The concept of deliberation already distinguishes practical wisdom from scientific knowledge because deliberation is not involved in things which are universal. Aristotle further distinguishes it from scientific knowledge by stating that practical wisdom requires an understanding of particulars and not universals only.²³ Thus, practical wisdom, like skill, is concerned with the practical knowledge of things that are variable. However, Aristotle makes a clear distinction between *phronesis* and *techne* as well. Whereas skill is associated with production, practical wisdom is associated with action, or *praxis*. Aristotle writes, “For while production (*poiesis*) has an end distinct from itself, this could not be so with action (*praxis*), since the end here is acting well itself.”²⁴ Thus, *phronesis* is an intellectual state of practical knowledge concerning values, or as Aristotle describes it, concerning “what is good and bad for a human being.”²⁵ The value rationality offered by *phronesis* stands in stark contrast to the technical rationality of *techne* and the theoretical rationality of *episteme*.

As noted earlier, the concept of deliberation is central to Aristotle’s understanding of *phronesis* and has crucial links to critical scholarship. He writes that *phronesis* is concerned with “things human about which it is possible to deliberate.”²⁶ Recall that epistemic understanding are said to be universal and demonstrable from eternal principles. Thus, they require no deliberation. Making this point, Aristotle states that the work of the practically wise person is to deliberate well, noting importantly, “but no one deliberates about things invariable, or about things which have not an end which is a good that can be brought about by action.”²⁷ Additionally, the state of *techne* does require deliberation, but only about the means to reach an already accepted outcome. This is

20. Ibid., 106.

21. Ibid., 107.

22. Ibid., 108.

23. Ibid., 110.

24. Ibid., 107.

25. Ibid., 107.

26. Ibid., 108.

27. Ibid., 109.

the realm of the craftsmen or skilled technician. *Phronesis* extends the concept of deliberation to the realm of the ethical and political as it is ultimately deliberation about virtuous living and doing; about what is good for oneself and others.

There are several points from this analysis that are important within the larger consideration of critical scholarship and truth-telling. First, praxis is situated within the intellectual virtue of *phronesis* and its characteristics of practical and value rationality. Thus, praxis is an enactment of the ethical and political deliberation characteristic of *phronesis*, specifically those actions which are human goods. Second, as a consequence of the first consideration, praxis emanates from a practical wisdom that deliberates about human affairs which are variable, not toward universal principles which are invariable. By its very nature, then, praxis in the Aristotelian sense is ethical engagement, but not about a fixed reality in my view. Third, and perhaps more instructive, is Aristotle's comments that *phronesis* does not involve deliberation "about things which have not an end which is a good that can be brought about by action."²⁸ This speaks to the important distinction between *techne-poiesis* and *phronesis-praxis*. Recall that Aristotle comments, "For while production (*poiesis*) has an end distinct from itself, this could not be so with action (*praxis*), since the end here is acting well itself."²⁹ Thus, while *techne-poiesis* involves an instrumental rationality requiring deliberation about the means to reach a pre-determined end, *phronesis-praxis* involves deliberation and performance of the end itself. Furthermore, Aristotle perhaps indicates that the end, or good, is "brought about" by the action. And, because these ends are not universal in scope, perhaps action, and the practical wisdom which governs it, actually creates the end according to the circumstances at play in a given context.

I will say more about these considerations when discussing the nature of truth within the context of *phronesis-praxis*. For now, it is important to note that the use of praxis within much critical scholarship, perhaps exemplified by perspectives of critical pedagogy, indicates technical and epistemic notions. Liberatory praxis, or reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it, is implicated as a means to reach a pre-determined, acontextual, and universal aim of emancipation. This contrasts slightly, but crucially, with my reading of praxis in Aristotle as action that brings about human goods that are variable, rather than universal, and fitted to the circumstances of particular contexts. Interestingly, Polansky notes that the Marxist tradition (from which critical pedagogy operates) does not maintain Aristotle's distinction of *praxis* and *poiesis*.³⁰ This suggests that perhaps critical scholarship has operated from a conflated understanding of action and production; one that implies a universal aim to which post-modern/structural scholars cry foul for its inability to respond to local and multi-faceted identities. But, if the scholarly response is to disregard truth-telling altogether, this certainly does not align with criticality or praxis. These notions can, and must, still exist even within the more messy and uncertain terrain of praxis that I have attempted to describe here. This is reflected in the many and varied calls for situated and reflective inquiry in social science fields. These calls do not abandon truth altogether but rather see it as multi-faceted, variable, and responsive to complex circumstances. It is to these accounts that I turn next to examine the nature of truth within *phronesis-praxis*.

28. Ibid., 109.

29. Ibid., 107.

30. Ronald Polansky, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 11.

Social Inquiry as Phronetic Entanglement with Truth

Kinsella and Pittman explain that numerous social theorists have indicated that value rationality has given way to instrumental rationality in professional knowledge over the past two centuries. However, the authors also state that many scholars have called for a reconceptualization of professional knowledge that draws upon *phronesis*.³¹ This is reflected in the work of Schön who articulates a conception of professional practice that breaks from the dominant mode of technical rationality, “which has most powerfully shaped both our thinking about the professions and the institutional relations of research, education, and practice.”³² He contends that, where technical rationality conceives of practice as problem *solving*, real practice is also concerned with problem *setting*, or “the process by which we define the decision to be made, the ends to be achieved.”³³ Using a powerful example of building roads, Schön writes that problem solving by the application of techniques occurs when one decides upon the kind of road to build. However, this is not the only consideration because “when the road they have built leads unexpectedly to the destruction of a neighborhood, they may find themselves again in a situation of uncertainty.”³⁴ Thus, the ends of “reflective practice” in Schön’s sense are not fixed, but emergent based on the ethical considerations of particular contexts. This speaks to the nature of deliberation about values characteristic in the *phronesis-praxis* perspective. It also highlights that technical considerations of methodological practice dominate modern perspectives to the exclusion of critically engaged discourse.

Scholars in the field of education have applied the general discussion of *phronesis* in the professions to the discipline of teaching in order to break from the dominance of technical rationality. Noel, for example, discusses three different interpretations of *phronesis* that generate different educational perspectives and that a combination of these interpretations makes up the concept of *phronesis* for teaching.³⁵ The first interpretation is the rationality interpretation which requires teachers to actively examine their beliefs, desires, and actions when deliberating about what to do in the classroom. The second is the situational perception and insight interpretation. Drawing upon Dunne, Noel writes that this interpretation is concerned with the momentary insights that arise within experience. Dunne posits that those guided by *phronesis* may have insights that others in the same situation do not because they have an “eye” for it.³⁶ Lastly, the moral interpretation inextricably links practice with one’s character. Noel again draws upon Dunne for clarification of this interpretation who writes that there is no *phronesis* without virtuous character and no virtuous character without *phronesis*.³⁷ Here again, we see both practical and value rationality where truth is conceptualized not as something fixed or pre-determined, but as contextually dependent and ethically involved. This is important as the phronetic framework allows the critical inquirer to engage in ethical discourse while remaining committed to truth-telling that is not subsumed by the rigidity of technical rationality.

In the field of social inquiry more broadly, we also see calls for ethically engaged praxis, but that which is contingent and in recognition of the uncertainty of diverse contexts. Macklin and

31. Elizabeth Anne Kinsella & Allan Pittman, eds., *Phronesis as Professional Knowledge: Practical Wisdom in the Professions* (Rotterdam: Sense, 2012).

32. Donald A. Schön, *The Reflective Practitioner* (New York: Basic, 1983), 21.

33. *Ibid.*, 39-40.

34. *Ibid.*, 40.

35. Jand Noel, “On the Varieties of Phronesis,” *Educational Philosophy and Theory* 31 (1999): 273-289.

36. Joseph Dunne, *Back to the Rough Ground: “Phronesis” and “techne” in Modern Philosophy and in Aristotle* (Notre Dame, IN: Notre Dame University Press, 1993): 282.

37. *Ibid.*, 284.

Whiteford, for example, suggest appealing to Aristotelian *phronesis* to ground qualitative research in rational discourse within the academy rather than trying to dismantle scientific reason from its dominant position.³⁸ Borrowing from Derrida and Caputo, these authors suggest that practical wisdom within qualitative inquiry must accept and contend with *aporias*, or the perplexities and inconsistencies ingrained in particular contexts that disallow a clear objective for determining how to apply principles to practice. They write, “We must therefore rely on our practical wisdom to make good judgments in the face of these perplexities. In doing so, it will always be the case that our judgments are underdetermined by the facts.”³⁹ Thus, social inquiry in this sense engages with truth, but truth of a different nature than we might traditionally conceive of in a world dominated by scientific reason. It is a contingent truth that resists (and we might say that is unconcerned with) empirical verification. Connecting this discussion back to the larger argument concerning critical scholarship, methodologists claiming criticality may find a more appropriate framework for inquiry in social science scholarship grounded in *phronesis*. This framework decenters empirical certainty gained through a narrow technicism and emphasizes the contingent and slippery nature of ethical engagement.

Lather’s appraisal of McLaren’s call for a renewed commitment to emancipatory politics is instructive here. She charges that McLaren assumes possibilities of a “universalizing discourse of truth telling, and correct readings in the face of ambiguity and uncertainty.”⁴⁰ Lather, rather, offers a “praxis of stuck places” that moves away from “the Marxist dream of ‘cure, salvation, and redemption.’”⁴¹ She writes,

I am trying to enact a logic that thinks praxis as a practice of living on where “one must work—practically, actually,” while simultaneously dislocating the self-presence of any successor regime as a sort of redemption... As a double-edged story that attests to the possibilities of feminist practice yet, in the very telling, registers the limits of it as a vehicle for claiming truth, such a practice is a topology for new tasks toward other places of thinking and putting to work.⁴²

The goal of such a praxis orientation, then, is not to give up on practices of truth-telling but to recognize the complexity of context and to resist the abstraction to universal meaning. Such an abstraction would constitute a move from a “practice of living” to a demonstration of rules; in my view, from *phronesis* to *episteme*. The intention here is to illustrate the calls for a situated understanding of truth-telling, but not one that devolves into a naïve sense of relativism. Rather, these perspectives indicate a framework for truth that a critical inquirer might utilize to productively engage in a dialogic sense of ethical formation with oneself and others. The critical inquirer might not revert simply to discussions of methodological technique that “validate” truth, but to the ethical, political, and social dimensions of his scholarship.

Lastly, Flyvbjerg argues that the social sciences require a reconceptualization toward Aristotelian *phronesis* if they are to succeed. He contends that social inquiry is maintained as a weaker sibling of the natural sciences because it has tried to emulate the epistemic and technical

38. Rob Macklin & Gail Whiteford, “Phronesis, Aporia, and Qualitative Research,” in Elizabeth Anne Kinsella & Allan Pittman, eds., *Phronesis as Professional Knowledge: Practical Wisdom in the Professions* (Rotterdam: Sense, 2012).

39. *Ibid.*, 95.

40. Lather, “Critical Pedagogy,” 492.

41. *Ibid.*, 495.

42. *Ibid.*, 497.

assumptions of these disciplines. As a result, the social sciences are trapped in a losing battle because its practitioners have accepted self-defeating terms. Flyvbjerg writes that the social sciences must be reframed so that they contribute to practical and value rationality, claiming “just as the social sciences have not contributed much to explanatory and predictive theory, neither have the natural sciences contributed to the reflexive analysis and discussion of values and interests... which is at the core of *phronesis*.”⁴³ Components of this phronetic social science include inquiry that engages value-rational questions (e.g. Where are we going? Is this desirable? What should be done?) and methodological guidelines such as dialoguing with a polyphony of voices. Phronetic research is thus dialogic with no voice claiming final authority. In my view, the perspectives exemplified by the scholars outlined here theoretically ground considerations of truth within critical scholarship. Truly critical inquirers must move beyond the perceived certainty of technique to the potentially more uncertain, but nonetheless committed, domain of ethical intervention in their work. The dialogic nature of phronetic critical inquiry suggests that the goal of this work is characteristically different than what might be typically thought of within the empirical sciences. It might be to offer new avenues and insights into an ongoing moral discourse with the goal of expanding our understanding of the problems at hand. As Geertz suggests, it is “marked less by a perfection of consensus than by a refinement of debate. What gets better is the precision with which we vex each other.”⁴⁴

This brief account of scholarship that engages phronetic conceptualizations introduces two interrelated points that are critical for the larger discussion in this paper. First, these authors do not view the move from epistemic or technical notions to phronetic ones as moves from truth to a lack of truth, or from rationality to irrationality. They conceive of positive conceptions of truth even within the now slippery and uncertain terrain of *phronesis*. For example, Macklin and Whiteford speak of making good judgments in the face of perplexities, while Lather posits praxis as a practice of living and discusses attesting to the possibilities of feminist practice. Also, Flyvbjerg’s “phronetic social science” requires producing input into social dialogue and praxis. Thus, speaking truths is not abandoned. Second, and following from the first point, these truths are simply of a different nature and rationality than the epistemic or technical ones that are prominent in modern times. Macklin and Whiteford suggest that our judgments are always underdetermined by the facts, Lather states that her attestations simultaneously place limits as a vehicle for universal truth, and Flyvbjerg contends that the goal of producing input in the phronetic sense is not to generate ultimate knowledge. Thus, we have truths that are contextually grounded and that operate outside of the realm of empirical verification. I want to briefly return to Aristotle to highlight these points regarding the nature of truth in *phronesis* before finding points of connection with Foucault’s sense of *parrhesia*.

Aristotle notes that the intellectual virtues discussed in *Nicomachean Ethics* are states that “allow the soul to arrive at truth.”⁴⁵ As one of these intellectual virtues, *phronesis* then has a relation to truth but, as discussed previously, this truth is of a different nature than that of epistemic or technically grounded truths. First, it is a kind of truth which guides a person’s ethical and political engagements. Aristotle’s definition of *phronesis* as “a true and reasoned state of capacity to act with regard to the things that are good or bad for man” highlights this point.⁴⁶ As Kinsella and

43. Bent Flyvbjerg, *Making Social Science Matter: Why Social Inquiry Fails and How it Can Succeed Again* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 3.

44. Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 29.

45. Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. David Ross (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 102.

46. *Ibid.*, 106.

Pittman describe it, *phronesis* “is an intellectual virtue that implies ethics...It is pragmatic, variable, context-dependent, and oriented toward action.”⁴⁷ The practical and situated nature of truth in *phronesis* is suggested when Aristotle states that practical wisdom is not only concerned with universals, but “must also recognize the particulars; for it is practical, and practice is concerned with particulars.”⁴⁸ Thus, truth of the phronetic sense incorporates practical and value rationality and contributes to our ethical understandings of the world.

This much has already been suggested, but there are two other important aspects of truth within *phronesis* that I want to discuss which connect it with truth-telling. The first is that the truths of practical wisdom are clearly active and guide the actions of the practically wise person, or the *phronimos*. The *phronimos* is not simply one who possesses the understanding of what is right to do in a particular situation, but is also the one who possesses the capacity to carry this out in action. Here again, we see the relation between *phronesis* and praxis. To know, or to possess truth phronetically, is to actually put into practice the knowledge of what is good for oneself. As Aristotle states, *phronesis* is not only knowledge of the truth but a “reasoned state of capacity to act with regard to the things that are good or bad for man.”⁴⁹ Second, the truths of *phronesis* take on both an individual and social aspect. Aristotle writes that those with practical wisdom are those that “can see what is good for themselves and what is good for men in general.”⁵⁰ At times, Aristotle seems to emphasize the individual nature of *phronesis*, as if it is particular knowledge of what is good or the right thing to do for oneself alone. He writes that practical wisdom is “identified especially with that form of it which is concerned with a man himself—with the individual”, while the wisdom of legislating concerning others, for example, is described as “political wisdom.”⁵¹ Aristotle, though, reflects that “perhaps one’s own good cannot exist without household management, nor without a form of government,” those entities many identify with a different conception of political wisdom.⁵² This suggests that *phronesis* involves both individual *and* social aspects, ethical *and* political engagements, care for the self *and* care for others. Indeed, Bernstein notes that, for Aristotle, “individual ethical activity is properly a part of the study of political activity—activity in the ‘polis.’”⁵³

From the preceding analysis of social inquiry theories engaging *phronesis* and the analysis of Aristotle’s own articulation, we see the following: 1) *phronesis* involves truth, but truth that is contextually situated rather than empirically verifiable or epistemically guaranteed, 2) the truths involved in *phronesis* are ethically and politically active, and 3) the truths of *phronesis* have both individual and social components; they involve a care of the self and care for others. In my view, these aspects of “phronetic truth,” as it might be termed, correspond with many of the aspects of *parrhesia*, or truth-telling, as explained by Foucault. It is such a framework of truth-telling, understood as connected to an Aristotelian framework of *phronesis-praxis*, that I believe provides a philosophical grounding or rationality that allows for critical truth-telling in our postmodern moment.

47. Kinsella and Pittman, *Phronesis as Professional Knowledge*, 2.

48. Aristotle, *Ethics*, 2009, 109.

49. *Ibid.*, 106.

50. *Ibid.*, 106.

51. *Ibid.*, 109.

52. *Ibid.*, 110.

53. Bernstein, *Praxis and Action*, xiv.

Foucault, *parrhesia*, and *phronesis*

Foucault examines the nature of truth-telling through his analysis of the ancient Greek concept of *parrhesia* in some of his final lectures. He notes that, etymologically, the word means to “say everything”, as the *parrhesiastes*, or the one who uses *parrhesia*, “does not hide anything, but opens his heart and mind completely to other people through his discourse.”⁵⁴ Linking the term to truth, Foucault discusses that the verb form of *parrhesia*, *parrhesiazethai*, means “to tell the truth.”⁵⁵ However, he explains that the term is often translated as free-spokenness or free speech.⁵⁶ Furthermore, in ancient Greece, *parrhesia* denoted status, as it was free citizens who held the ability to engage in *parrhesia*. Thus, the *parrhesiastes* was one who possessed the right to tell the truth in their activity within the polis. Foucault analyzes *parrhesia* through an investigation of the nature and status of the truth-teller and his evolution in the ancient Greek context by examining several different texts and characters in antiquity. In this section, I highlight several key aspects of *parrhesia* and connect them with elements of *phronesis* to further develop a framework for truth-telling that aligns with critical inquiry.

The first important link between *parrhesia* and *phronesis* concerns Foucault’s question of how we know someone is a truth-teller or how we know that the *parrhesiastes* really tells the truth. Foucault explains that the truth-teller says what he knows to be true and that there is always an exact coincidence between belief and truth in *parrhesia*. Importantly though, this truth is not empirically verifiable. Foucault writes,

For since Descartes, the coincidence between belief and truth is obtained in a certain (mental) evidential experience. For the Greeks, however, the coincidence between belief and truth does not take place in a (mental) experience, but in a *verbal activity*, namely, *parrhesia*. It appears that *parrhesia*, in this Greek sense, can no longer occur in our modern epistemological framework.⁵⁷

The truth of *parrhesia*, then, is not epistemically grounded. Recall that within the Aristotelian virtues, *episteme* is the state of scientific knowledge or laws of nature that are teachable and easily demonstrated from universal principles. It would seem that the *parrhesiastes* is not engaged in a simple demonstration of truths in this sense. As Foucault explains, the reduction of truth to empirical verification is a modern construction that was foreign to the Greeks. More important to the Greeks than the question of the certainty of truth (in an empirical sense) was the question of how we recognize someone as a truth-teller.

It is this question of the recognition of the truth-teller that specifically links *parrhesia* with *phronesis*. Foucault explains that the “proof” of the sincerity of the truth-teller is his courage because he says something that is dangerous. The potential for the truth-teller to incur wrath from his addressee was one of the key elements of *parrhesia* in the Greek context. Foucault writes that “when a philosopher addresses himself to a sovereign, to a tyrant, and tells him that his tyranny is disturbing...then the philosopher speaks the truth.”⁵⁸ On the other hand, one who speaks the truth but takes on no risk is not a *parrhesiastes*. But why does this additional element of risk in *parrhesia*

54. Michel Foucault, *Fearless Speech*, ed. Joseph Pearson (Los Angeles: Semiotexte, 2001), 12.

55. *Ibid.*, 14.

56. Michel Foucault, *The Government of Self and Others*, ed. Frederic Gros (New York: Macmillan, 2011).

57. Foucault, *Fearless Speech*, 14.

58. *Ibid.*, 16.

link it to *phronesis*? It is because the *parrhesiastes* is willing to risk potential danger because of his ethical and political commitments to those he addresses. A lengthy passage from Foucault is instructive here. He writes,

When, for example, you see a friend doing something wrong and you risk incurring his anger by telling him he is wrong, you are acting as a *parrhesiastes*...If, in a political debate, an orator risks losing his popularity because his opinions are contrary to the majority's opinion, or his opinions may usher in a political scandal, he uses *parrhesia*.⁵⁹

Thus, we see that the truths told by the *parrhesiastes* are ethically laden, rather than empirically validated. Furthermore, Foucault notes that the validation of the truth-teller in ancient Greece was that such a person had certain moral qualities. He writes, "The 'parrhesiastic game' presupposes that the *parrhesiastes* is someone who has the moral qualities which are required, first, to know the truth, and secondly, to convey such truth to others."⁶⁰ *Parrhesia*, then, involves speaking truths about what is good and bad for humans, the distinctive character of Aristotelian *phronesis*.

Parrhesia is further linked with *phronesis* because of its contextual nature, its impact on practice, and its inter and intrapersonal dynamics. Regarding the first point, Foucault distinguishes *parrhesia* from *athuroglossos*, or someone who is a babler and says whatever comes to mind. Whereas the one using *athuroglossos* does not recognize when to speak and when to be silent, the *parrhesiastes* is firmly aware of the contextual circumstances that require truth-telling and that might call for reservation. The one using *athuroglossos* cannot distinguish "the circumstances and situations where speech is required from those where one ought to remain silent."⁶¹ This connects with the context-dependent nature of the practical wisdom of *phronesis* and reflects Dreyfus' interpretation of the *phronimos* as the expert social actor.⁶² Secondly, *parrhesia* is validated through the harmony between the truth-teller's words and his life. An important distinction is made between what Foucault terms "political" *parrhesia* and "philosophical" *parrhesia*. In its original political sense, *parrhesia* generally took the form of someone speaking the truth to a ruler or to the assembly, but as it shifted to the philosophical sense, Foucault writes that "the target of this new *parrhesia* is not to persuade the Assembly, but to convince someone that he must take care of himself and of others; and this means that he must *change his life*."⁶³ Just as *phronesis* guides praxis, or action related to right living, *parrhesia* speaks truths that are relatable in the right actions of someone's life. Finally, Foucault notes that in the philosophical shift of *parrhesia*, truth-telling has both social and individual dynamics. He explains that *parrhesia* in the philosophical sense occurs in the context of community life, human relationships of public life, and individual personal relationships. The truth-teller knows to tell the truth to others so that they may change their actions. Interestingly, *parrhesia* also becomes a form of self-examination. Foucault explains that a noticeable shift occurs in the *parrhesiastic* practices between master and disciple. Previously, the master had always disclosed truths to the disciple, but in later iterations of *parrhesia* the truth about the disciple "emerges from a personal relation which he establishes with himself; and this truth can

59. Ibid., 16.

60. Ibid., 15.

61. Ibid., 63.

62. Hubert Dreyfus, "Could Anything be More Intelligible than Everyday Intelligibility? Reinterpreting Division I of Being and Time in the Light of Division II," *Appropriating Heidegger* (2000): 155-174.

63. Foucault, *Fearless Speech*, 108.

now be disclosed either to himself...or to someone else.”⁶⁴ In this sense, the *parrhesiastes* possesses the truth in relation to oneself and others. Thus, we might say that the *parrhesiastes* is also a *phronimos*, as this person is characterized as someone who “can see what is good for themselves and what is good for men in general.”⁶⁵

Here, I have attempted to illustrate points of connection between Aristotelian *phronesis* and Foucaultian *parrhesia*. Through this examination, I suggest that *parrhesia* is a phronetic act. The truths spoken in this act of truth-telling are not epistemic, but are rather ethically based, contextual, and guide the right living (or praxis) of oneself and others, the key characteristics of Aristotelian *phronesis*. Interestingly, Foucault engages with the art of living and, thus, examines “techniques” of *parrhesia*. As Flyvbjerg (2001) notes, however, Foucault’s later shift to a focus on *techne* is not *techne* in the conventional sense of an applied science or applied *episteme*. It is *techne* “‘from the other side,’ that is from values—what is ‘good and bad for man,’ in Aristotle’s words—which is, in my interpretation, from *phronesis*.”⁶⁶ This link between *phronesis* and *parrhesia* provides an important framework through which to view critical truth-telling in a social world that we also take to be complex, contingent, and fractured. It is through this crucial link between Aristotle and Foucault that I believe we have a rational grounding for maintaining truth that ethically and politically intervenes in the world, but that also resists the move to universalize and prescribe. I conclude with a consideration of the implications of such a philosophical grounding for critical inquiry.

Conclusion

In this paper, I have specifically engaged with the problem of what Kuntz terms “scholarly paralysis” within critical inquiry.⁶⁷ Despite the proliferation of the term *critical* in educational discourse, there is a specific tension between criticality and the problem of truth. Using the dialogue between critical pedagogy scholarship and the critiques of it offered by those influenced by post-structural perspectives as a key text, I have tried to highlight the contested nature between the commitment to social justice aims on one hand (from the critical perspective) and the resistance to universalized theories of emancipatory narratives on the other (the post-structural critique). This, perhaps, informs the situation of scholarly paralysis relative to truth-telling. In other words, though so many want to identify as “critical,” few want to engage in truth-telling for fear of universalizing or prescribing, substituting one mode of domination for another.

However, to engage in critical work is to engage in processes which intervene in the status quo and contribute to praxis. Thus, critical intervention and truth-telling must be involved. What, then, is the way around the seeming contradiction between criticality and resistance to truth-telling? Investigations of Aristotelian *phronesis* and Foucauldian *parrhesia*, and the crucial link between the two, help to provide a response. Each ancient concept is committed to the ethical formation of self and others. At the same time, each is committed to practical living and the contingencies of specific contexts. With this theoretical grounding, one can remain committed to social justice work and critical truth-telling while recognizing the historical and contextual limitations of such practices.

64. Ibid., 164-165.

65. Aristotle, *Ethics*, 2009, 106.

66. Flyvbjerg, *Making Social Science Matter*, 111.

67. Kuntz, *Responsible Methodologist*, 22.

Foucault's positive conception of truth in discussion of *parrhesia* presents a stark contrast to his earlier work identifying the power effects of truth. Ross suggests that the positive ethical formation of truth in *parrhesia* stands as a disposition which shapes the will against unthinking patterns of authority that Foucault had analyzed earlier. She writes,

It seems Foucault in the end moves away from the modern ideal of philosophical activity...to the ancient one of aesthetic self-forming. What the exemplar chooses is primarily a relation to themselves, rather than the aspiration to shape practices. As an ethical project the stylisation of the self in relation to truth may well chart an alternative path for forms of existence to the paths of practices elaborated and reinforced by the normalising tendencies of the disciplines but neither do such projects of self-stylisation pretend or aspire to legislative force.⁶⁸

What Foucault speaks of as aesthetics, techniques, or care of the self, necessitates a relation to truth, but one that ethically works on the self in dialogue with others while resisting the move to universalize.

Additionally, Kuntz suggests that the work of truth-telling in critical social inquiry be reformulated as an understanding of relationality in contrast to naïve relativism that he claims is simplistically associated with postmodern thought. It is an understanding of truth as relative (i.e. you have yours, I have mine) that stifles claims to truth and leads the inquirer to scholarly paralysis at best and a reversion to truth generated by methodological technicism at worst. But, when one understands the world as relational, the social inquirer recognizes a responsibility to engage in truth-telling. Kuntz writes,

Epistemologically, relativism reinforces particularistic ways of coming to know—as though no knowledge can be extended beyond the immediate environment in which it is made manifest. This, in turn, leads to a degree of ontological disengagement and disinterestedness...I note this as a simplistic reading of postmodern thought...The point of relational assumptions about the world is not that all things are relative and therefore I have no right to intervene in other relations; it is, indeed, quite the opposite. *Because I am forever in-relation, I have a responsibility to engage; I am never free to pretend a disassociated stance.*⁶⁹

This relational quality of truth-telling redirects the critical scholar to engage in ethical discourse; truth-telling related to right living guided by practical insight. In other words, this is rationalizing critical inquiry as engagement in *parrhesia* as a phronetic act rather than understanding truth-telling in the domain of epistemic or technical formations.

To conclude, I draw two final implications for critical inquiry. One, the critical inquirer must engage in ethical dialogue that contributes to praxis, or our understanding of *phronesis*, of what is good and bad for human beings. This requires truth-telling, but truth-telling that is relational and accountable to where those truths come from. Critical inquiry so conceived would resist the move toward epistemically guaranteed knowledge validated through methodological technique. As Flyvbjerg notes, “the goal of phronetic research is to produce input to the ongoing social

68. Alison Ross, “Why is ‘Speaking the Truth’ Fearless? ‘Danger’ and ‘Truth’ in Foucault’s Discussion of *Parrhesia*,” *Parrhesia* 4 (2008): 70.

69. Kuntz, *Responsible Methodologist*, 73.

dialogue and praxis in a society, rather than to generate ultimate, unequivocally verified knowledge.”⁷⁰

Two, following from the first point, methodologists claiming to engage in “critical” scholarship must re-think their role as technical expert and place more emphasis on their role as virtuous truth-teller. Because solely technical approaches cannot intervene in the status quo and maintain the idea of the disengaged social actor (recall Aristotle’s distinction between *techne* and *phronesis*), something more than a technical expertise with research methods is needed within critical scholarship. Though there is purpose for the actual approaches of conducting research (e.g. research designs, methods of data collection/analysis), this alone is not a means for critical truth-telling in the phronetic sense I have described here.

Critical inquiry conceived as virtue as opposed to technique would have important implications for methodological philosophy and practice. For example, the inquirer might emphasize working with participants to effectively challenge what are seen as problematic or even oppressive structures within the educational landscape. This contrasts with the notion of seeing participants or research spaces as sites of knowledge to be extracted through methodological procedures. Additionally, inquiry from the standpoint of virtuous truth-telling and contribution to dialogic praxis might be more concerned with Gadamer’s sense of a “fusion of horizons”⁷¹; the points of connection between two socially embedded worldviews rather than discovery of some underlying eternal truth or reality. Lastly, critical inquirers might utilize analytical practices that better engage the material reality of our lived contexts, rather than traditional approaches that privilege technique and the unified subject.⁷²

It might be argued that the decentering of epistemic and technical rationalities I have suggested here contradict Aristotle’s more unified vision of the states of virtue. My intention, however, is to indicate that a separation of this unified vision of virtue has already occurred within our modern emphases on empirical certainty and technical validity to the detriment of practical wisdom. I argue that critical scholarship must turn toward the virtue of *phronesis* as a more appropriate theoretical framework that pushes back against the pull toward methodological technicism. Interestingly, Aristotle notes that all the intellectual states function together to form the virtuous person, yet *phronesis* is at the heart of this, “for with the presence of the one quality, practical wisdom, will be given all the virtues.”⁷³ Thus, *phronesis* allows for not only the dialogic encounter of truth-telling that I have argued for, but also for the critical inquirer to judge how best to use particular techniques to further ethical truth-telling for intervention and, if necessary, disruption of normative formations. Such reformulations of methodology allow for a fuller sense of critical inquiry that reaffirms the commitment to the ethical imperatives of social justice and the good.

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72. Alecia Y. Jackson, “Posthumanist Data Analysis of Mangling Practices,” *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education* 26 (2013): 741-748.

73. Aristotle, *Ethics*, 2009, 117.

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