



The Ethics of Critical Inquiry: Educational Research Informed by Parrhēsia

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Abstract

The intent of this paper is to examine the interplay of ethics and critical inquiry. We situate our thinking within a truth-telling philosophical position, specifically Foucault's analysis of parrhēsia (truth telling) and associated concerns. Central to our writing is a belief in educational research contributing to social good and positive change. The emphasis is on the ethical responsibilities of critical methodologists informed by the notion of parrhēsia. We argue that parrhēsia, as an alternative approach to critical inquiry reorients the subjectivity of the truth-teller. Critical inquiry guided by parrhēsia emphasizes the development of critical consciousness in that it requires praxis, one that involves actions and dialog. It elevates the commitment to engagement over self-interest, and is informed by principles of equity and justice through actions. This involves courage and risk taking, key commitments of parrhēsia. In our paper, we examine the implications of courage and risk taking in the context of educational research. We conclude with a discussion of the significance of an educational research framework informed by parrhēsia.

Keywords: *educational research, research framework, critical inquiry, Michael Foucault, parrhēsia, ethics, truth telling, subjectivity*

Introduction

My intention was not to deal with the problem of truth, but with the problem of the truth-teller, or of truth-telling as an activity: ...who is able to tell the truth, about what, with what consequences, and with what relations to power...[W]ith the question of the importance of telling the truth, knowing who is able to tell the truth, and knowing why we should tell the truth...¹

Research is a journey inspired by a researcher's willingness to look beyond obvious answers and commit to social change.² This journey demands sustained engagement and an awareness of the

1. Michel Foucault, *Fearless Speech*, Semiotext(E) Foreign Agents (Los Angeles, CA: MIT Press, 2001).
2. W. Newton Suter, *Introduction to Educational Research: A Critical Thinking Approach*, (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2006).

consequential nature of the research process and findings.³ Our focus is on educational research conceived within the tradition of critical inquiry. One that involves researchers going beyond theorizing, interrogating data points to engage with political discourses, advocating for public good and promoting a more socially-just democratic society.⁴

The intent of this paper is to examine the interplay of ethics and critical inquiry. We look at this point of intersection within a truth-telling philosophical position, specifically Foucault's analysis of *parrhēsia* (παρρησία) and associated concerns. The concept of *parrhēsia* has received some scholarly attention in the development of free speech arguments.⁵ However, its potential role in and connection to education and educational research are limited to a few key works.⁶ We seek to contribute to this emerging discussion.

We believe that the concept of *parrhēsia* is central to educational research oriented toward the quest for social good. We extend this perspective by examining the ethical and moral responsibilities of critical methodologists informed by *parrhēsia*. We argue for the need to re-examine critical inquiry that intervenes on axiological, ontological, epistemological and methodological levels. We explore the concept of *parrhēsia* to re-conceptualize critical inquiry in educational research. We conclude by reflecting on the potential significance of an educational research framework informed by *parrhēsia*. Before undertaking this analysis it's important to note why re-envisioning critical inquiry might be needed.

Most approaches to critical inquiry begin from a presumed position of ideological superiority. In other words, they present a system of beliefs in which the knowledge and political position(s) for which they advocate are superior to existing beliefs. These approaches often rely on an assertion that people (researchers and theorists) know the direction society should be taking socially and politically. An alternative approach to critique should engage the limits of knowledge, especially those devoid of a relational component and engage in a sustained critique of the "historical present."⁷ Rethinking critical inquiry is also needed because the increasing proceduralization of ethics as a technocratic approach to methodology which has come to govern educational research.⁸ This approach to knowledge has adverse consequences for truth-telling by silencing meaningful insights. Hence, the premise of our writing is that a new approach to value claims and critique is needed.

Further, critical approaches to inquiry that fail to embrace a diversity of perspectives allow the possibility for cynical manipulative approaches. These approaches often rely on empty notions of liberation and empowerment offering simplistic answers, dogmatic beliefs and exaggerated di-

3. Sharon F. Rallis and Gretchen B. Rossman, *The Research Journey: Introduction to Inquiry* (New York, NY: The Guilford Press, 2012).

4. Lois Weis and Michelle Fine, *Working Method: Research and Social Justice*, The Critical Social Thought Series; Variation (New York, NY: Routledge, 2004), XV. And see: David E. Blockstein, "How to Lose Your Political Virginity While Keeping Your Scientific Credibility," *BioScience* 52, no. 1 (2002).

5. David Colclough, "Parrhesia: The Rhetoric of Free Speech in Early Modern England," *Rhetorica: A Journal of the History of Rhetoric* 17, no. 2 (1999).

6. Three notable key works are: Kerry Burch, "Parrhesia as a Principle of Democratic Pedagogy," *Philosophical Studies in Education* 40 (2009); Michael A. Peters, "Truth-Telling as an Educational Practice of the Self: Foucault, Parrhesia and the Ethics of Subjectivity," *Oxford Review of Education* 29, no. 2 (2003). And, Aaron M. Kuntz, *The Responsible Methodologist: Inquiry, Truth-Telling, and Social Justice* (Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press, Inc., 2015).

7. *The Responsible Methodologist: Inquiry, Truth-Telling, and Social Justice*, 102.

8. *Ibid.*, 12-33.

chotomies. Overly simplified dichotomies include those between oppressors and oppressed, victims and persecutors, or characteristically dominant and subordinate identities. These approaches to critical inquiry often rely on *naïve* populism and assumptions of an ideal society.

Some critical traditions, such as critical theory (mostly stemming from Marx), have attempted to envision the ideal political structure with related subjectivities, as seen with the discourses on liberation, freedom and so forth.⁹ Foucault notes that historically these attempts have all ended in a form of bureaucratic terror (e.g., Stalinism).¹⁰ In addition to the problematic aspect traditionally connected to critical theory the existence of challenges, obstacles and constraints that researchers encounter are often imposed by outside circumstance (e.g., political discourse, proceduralization and so forth), caused by *deficiencies* in thoughts and choices and the rise of expertise.¹¹ These factors are also a driving force of the desire to expand options and consider alternatives.¹²

We believe that in its essence educational research is to contribute to social good and bring about positive change. This belief requires critical understanding and engagement deeply rooted in concerns with ethics, moral commitments, awareness of relations with the self and others, and truth-telling as an activity. In our writing, as stated earlier, we consider the concept of *parrhēsia* as an alternative approach to traditional forms of critical inquiry. *Parrhēsia* is an attempt to foster a critical approach to subjectivity, an ethos of disrupting human subjectivities from within. It allows us to orient research toward a participatory or engaged democratic ethos that involves individuals cognizant of debilitating modes of subjectivity. *Parrhēsia* involves a set of exercises related to one's self, and therefore a means to critically examine subjectivities.¹³ Douglas Kellner notes that traditionally for critical theory “to understand and explain social phenomena, one needs to contextualize one's topic of inquiry within a comprehensive theoretical framework for social analysis and critique in order to avoid illegitimate abstraction which would, for instance, analyze a political or cultural phenomenon apart from its constitution of socioeconomic processes.”¹⁴ In contrast to traditional approaches to critical inquiry, Foucault avoids the reduction of complex social phenomena to any single causality. Likewise, *Parrhēsia* is unique because there is no prescribed comprehensive theoretical framework.

In Foucault's consideration of human subjectivity we find a reworking of methodology breaking with the Cartesian perspective. Ontological harmony within *parrhēsia* is unique from the Cartesian system, in that the ethical conduct of the speaker using *parrhēsia* is linked to his or her beliefs and relevant to his or her capacity to convey the truth. As Foucault notes, Descartes is “not certain that what he in fact believes is, in fact, true.”¹⁵ In the Cartesian system the subject is endowed with access to knowledge and truth only through consciousness and reason.¹⁶ With

9. Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan, 1st ed. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1977).

10. Pushkala Prasad, *Crafting Qualitative Research: Working in the Postpositivist Traditions*, (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2005).

11. Greg Dimitriadis, *Critical Dispositions: Evidence and Expertise in Education* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2012).

12. Maxine Greene, *The Dialectic of Freedom* (New York, NY: Teachers College Press, 1988), 5.

13. Michel Foucault, *The Courage of Truth: The Government of Self and Others Ii: Lectures at the Collège De France, 1983-1984*, trans. Graham Burchell (Hampshire, UK: Picador, 2011), 309.

14. Douglas Kellner, "Critical Theory and the Crisis of Social Theory," *Sociological Perspectives* 33, no. 1 (1990): 23.

15. Foucault, *Fearless Speech*, 15.

16. René Descartes, *Discourse on the Method; and, Meditations on First Philosophy*, ed. David Weissman, trans. Elizabeth S. Haldane, *Rethinking the Western Tradition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996).

parrhēsia the concept of engagement is critical. This engagement is with the self and others and with the self and truth. This orientation is consistent with the view of research in a dialogical space and with an ontological commitment: to intervene simultaneously on epistemological and methodological levels: to take up a specific relationship to the self through life: a commitment to truth telling “rather than a living being who is false to himself.”¹⁷ This connection between *parrhēsia*, discourse (games of truth) and ethics is explored in the following section with a return to the shift from the Cartesian system in a later section.

As a Concept of Truth-Telling: Parrhēsia, Games of Truth, & Ethics

Parrhēsia was well-known in ancient philosophy; yet, largely hidden in contemporary examinations of truth, ethics and knowledge.¹⁸ The early meaning was to open one’s heart and mind completely to other people through his or her discourse.¹⁹ Over time the concept meant frankness, to be direct, to not hide one’s intended meaning in rhetoric. *Parrhēsia* also came to signify the courage of truth-telling and became associated with transforming the soul of an individual. Most importantly the concept developed political dimensions indispensable to democracy.²⁰ *Parrhēsia* meant to engage socially and politically as a consequence of integrity of heart.²¹ It required one to courageously say truthful things that are useful for all to hear.²²

In a series of lectures near the end of his life Foucault began an examination of the ethical implications of how individuals establish a relationship with others.²³ Through this analysis he quickly began to see that his study of “care of self” couldn’t be a spontaneous attitude or natural movement of subjectivity. *Parrhēsia* was, therefore, a necessary component as an intensifier of social relations. It required a type of logical relationship with others. It’s not a “body of knowledge” but a “body of practices” without reference to any external order.²⁴ It educates rather than produces individuals.²⁵ It allows for the mediation between the ethos of an individual and the well-being of a society. In short, it is through *parrhēsia* that an individual constitutes him/herself as a moral subject in relation to others.²⁶

Parrhēsia has a strong connection to democracy. Foucault explored this connection as he became increasingly concerned with the divide between the idea of constitutional equality and actual inequality stemming from concentrations of power.²⁷ He saw the notion of *parrhēsia* as

17. Foucault, *Fearless Speech*, 17.

18. *The Courage of Truth: The Government of Self and Others Ii: Lectures at the Collège De France, 1983-1984*, 344.

19. *Fearless Speech*, 12.

20. *The Courage of Truth: The Government of Self and Others Ii: Lectures at the Collège De France, 1983-1984*, 65.

21. *Ibid.*, 326.

22. *Ibid.*

23. *The Government of Self and Others: Lectures at the College De France, 1982-1983*, ed. Arnold I. Davidson, trans. Graham Burchell (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010); *The Courage of Truth: The Government of Self and Others Ii: Lectures at the Collège De France, 1983-1984*.

24. Nancy Luxon, "Ethics and Subjectivity: Practices of Self-Governance in the Late Lectures of Michel Foucault," *Political Theory* 36, no. 3 (2008): 379.

25. *Ibid.*

26. It’s important to note that early Geek society did not include women in this domain of civic engagement. In his seminar, Foucault responded to a student’s question indicating that women in Greek society were deprived of *parrhesia*.

27. Foucault, *The Government of Self and Others: Lectures at the College De France, 1982-1983*, 382.

involved in the active confrontation with power and with the continuity between one's beliefs and the way one lives: between bios and logos.²⁸

Foucault is not looking for a *true* philosophy of knowledge, politics, or morality. The idea that “epistemology, morality, and politics could ever constitute autonomous, juxtaposed domains, that each of them must be worked out methodically and separately, would mean leaving behind philosophy in its original inspiration.”²⁹ Philosophical discourse is unique from political discourse in relation to defining and implementing conditions of truth-telling. Likewise, scientific discourse cannot help us to find compelling what forms its purpose, conditions and structures.³⁰ With *parrhēsia*, however, there is a possible link between the conditions for truth-telling, ethical practice and the discursive structure of science and methodology more generally. For Foucault, *parrhēsia* added a key component to his methodological orientation.

Foucault's Methodology

Foucault's work often examined the ways in which the western tradition of knowledge and truth were linked through tradition. Michael Peters, for example, notes that the early writings of Foucault influenced educational research as a set of practices focused on the epistemic cultural formations that shaped the potential for educational knowledge and the discursive rationale-underlying researcher's subjective awareness.³¹ Foucault, however, eventually turned toward *parrhēsia* to build on this foundation by examining the ethical implications of speech in challenging one's subjective awareness. This examination was undertaken as a historical study of the relation between subjectivity and truth.³² *Parrhēsia*, therefore, can be seen as an examination of the ethical and political dimensions of governmentality.³³ Foucault's archeology and genealogy are also methodologies – the differences represented by a perspective on truth.³⁴ Arnold Davidson argues, for example, that,

truth is to be understood as a system of ordered procedures for perfection, the regulation, distribution, circulation and operation of statement...”Truth” is linked in a circular relation with systems of power which produce and sustain it, and to effects of the power which induces it and which extends it. A “regime” of truth.³⁵

With archaeology Foucault sought to identify the conditions for a production of discourse, for example the conditions under which one can speak about sexuality. Whereas genealogy might help the researcher expose sexuality as a positive product of power related techniques, including those of surveillance and examination. Both methodologies also interrogate human subjectivity.

28. *Fearless Speech*.

29. *The Courage of Truth: The Government of Self and Others Ii: Lectures at the Collège De France, 1983-1984*, 346-47.

30. *Ibid.*, 66-67.

31. Michael Peters and Tina Besley, *Why Foucault?: New Directions in Educational Research*, Counterpoints (New York: Peter Lang, 2007).

32. Foucault, *The Government of Self and Others: Lectures at the College De France, 1982-1983*, 377.

33. *Ibid.*

34. Stephen J. Ball, *Foucault and Education: Disciplines and Knowledge* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1990), 13.

35. *Ibid.*

Discourses relate to meaning and social relationships, including those of the subject and power relations.³⁶ For Foucault, “The human subject is a basis upon which discourses are founded, and at the same time, the mode of objectification which transforms human beings and subjects.”³⁷ The human sciences in nineteenth century, for example, re/produced formations of a social body, mediated through concepts of disorder and deviance that placed individuals in a new relation with themselves and others. Foucault’s examination of these formations takes us from an analysis of representations to an analytics of power, and from an overt notion of violence to the microphysics of power; from institutional regularities to the arrangements of power.³⁸ Foucault notes that “Lacan tried to pose what historically is the specifically spiritual question: that of the price the subject must pay for saying the truth, and of the effect on the subject of the fact that he has said, that he can and has said the truth about himself.”³⁹ This led Foucault to examine the historical formation between “subject” and “truth.”⁴⁰ Initially, this began with the “care of the self,” which later evolved into the focus on *parrhēsia*, which can be understood as a shift from “care of the self” to the “care of others.” Put differently, “care of the self” was an essential component of individual freedom, whereas “care of the other” was an essential component of democracy.

Foucault’s mid-career moved into the genealogy of *disciplinary power* to examine the *power of sovereignty*.⁴¹ In this period, Foucault focused on scientific classification or how the discourses of life, language, or labor become structured into a discipline and achieve autonomy and coherence. The focus included how discursive formations achieve scientific status and how related disciplines inform policy, structure and authority.⁴² Discursive formations are also central to how human beings are turned into objectified subjects.⁴³ There is a component of external authority involved in these processes of self-understanding and self-formation.⁴⁴

According to the critics of Foucault these discursive formations seemed to rob humans of agency and offered little room for escape.⁴⁵ These critiques helped move Foucault toward an analysis of subjectivity and ethics. In this move Foucault realized that subjectivity is challenged through *parrhēsia* as it requires that we not obscure ourselves in identity.⁴⁶ It is our active identity from our positionality (such as our citizenship) that gives us a point to make claims, and our communities that provide us recognition and require us to speak to them. Foucault’s shift to a focus on ethics and truth was central to his examination of power and subjectivity. Furthermore, it provided an ethical orientation from which one might problematize power relations. In the following section we examine *games of truth* as a mode to disrupt discursive structures. The concept of games of truth is central to understanding how truth is produced.

36. Ibid., 2.

37. Ibid., 14.

38. Michel Foucault, *History of Madness*, ed. Jean Khalifa, trans. Jonathan Murphy and Jean Khal, 1st. ed. (New York: Routledge, 2009).

39. *The Hermeneutics of the Subject: Lectures at the Collège De France 1981--1982*, ed. Frédéric Gros, François Ewald, and Alessandro Fontana, trans. Graham Burchell, 1st ed., Lectures at the College De France, 1981-1982 (New York, NY: Palgrave, 2005), 30.

40. Ibid., 2.

41. For example: *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*.

42. *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow, 1st ed. (New York, NY: Pantheon Books, 1984).

43. Ibid., 8-11.

44. Ibid.

45. This idea is exemplified in the Habermas’ critique of Foucault, and their subsequent debate. For more see: Michael Kelly, ed. *Critique and Power: Recasting the Foucault/Habermas Debate* (Cambridge, Mass: The MIT Press, 1994).

46. Foucault, *Fearless Speech*, 116-17.

Games of Truth (jeux de verite)

Subjectivity results from the effects of external representations and power relations. Power relations are constituent elements of knowledge and are mediated through discursive structures. Foucault notes, “*parrhēsia* is a discourse spoken from above, which comes from a source higher than a citizen, and which is different than the pure and simple exercise of power.”⁴⁷ Foucault saw the production of truth as a component of a complex network of power, authority and domination. In his examination of the production of truth he transitioned his analysis from “regimes of truth” to the analysis of “games of truth.”⁴⁸ Games of truth require consideration of the agency involved in the subject’s relation to truth. With *parrhēsia* “being occupied with oneself and political activities are linked” and include acceptance of risk if the other person agrees to play the game.⁴⁹

Foucault saw *parrhēsia* as a hinge point of ethical concerns and the political struggle for respect of rights, critical thought against abusive techniques of government and an ethics grounded in individual freedom. In the context of “exercises of conscience” Foucault noted that *parrhēsia* is always a game between the one who speaks the truth and the interlocutor. *Parrhēsia* is “not to demonstrate the truth to someone else, but has the function of criticism: criticism of the interlocutor or of the speaker himself.”⁵⁰ This is the game being played around the context of truth. In addition, truth games provide a process by which individuals can know and master themselves.⁵¹ This too is the process of a game between an individual and the interlocutor.

Truth games give us perspective on Foucault’s earlier work.⁵² For example, the transition to games of truth allowed him to examine aspects of subjectification that occurred when someone understood themselves as insane or sick, as a living, speaking, working being, as a criminal, or the subject of sexual desire.⁵³ The methodological relation of *parrhēsia* to subjectivity and truth is relevant to research as critical inquiry. As with “games of truth” action must be built into the research process, rather than potentially resulting from research. This orientation toward action then guides interactions with participants. Research is an inquiry into human experiences and an act in itself.⁵⁴

A research framework informed by *parrhēsia* is independent of the utilitarian theory of ethics. Foucault argued against universal basis for ethics, and against ethics and morality that are regulated. Games of truth were conceived of exercises and not concerned with a foundation for ethics. For Foucault philosophical *parrhēsia* is associated with the theme of the care of oneself, *techne*, spiritual guidance and what the Greeks regarded as an education for the soul.

When exploring the notion of *parrhēsia* Foucault was concerned with a philosophical framework that would endow the individual with the moral equipment to fully confront the world in an ethical manner. In a related manner, a reflexive ethics should be infused throughout inquiry

47. *The Government of Self and Others: Lectures at the College De France, 1982-1983*, 104.

48. Peters and Besley, *Why Foucault?: New Directions in Educational Research*, 188.

49. Michel Foucault, *Technologies of the Self: A Seminar with Michel Foucault* (Amherst: MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1988), 26.

50. *Fearless Speech*, 17-18.

51. Thomas R. Flynn, “Truth and Subjectivation in the Later Foucault,” *The Journal of Philosophy* 82, no. 10 (1985).

52. *Ibid.*

53. *Ibid.*

54. Michael J. Crotty, *The Foundation of Social Research: Meaning and Perspective in the Research Process* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1998).

calling for the development of a critical consciousness.⁵⁵ *Parrhēsia* can support this inquiry elevating a commitment to engagement over self-interest. Critical inquiry informed by *parrhēsia* is not a matter of saying that things are not right as they are. It is a matter of drawing attention to familiar and unchallenged modes of thought. This mode of critique disrupts a priori frameworks and agendas. It enables us to become reflexive about various positions that undergird research⁵⁶ and to resist methodological simplification.⁵⁷ This kind of critical scrutiny helps negate forms of intellectual control that often accompany approaches to understanding issues in education.⁵⁸ Our world is always already emerging, changing, and methodologies always “becoming.”⁵⁹

A better understanding of the relation between ethics and critical engagement requires exploration of the connection between *parrhēsia*, education and critical inquiry.

Epistemological Claims: Education, Parrhēsia, & Critical Inquiry

Foucault’s analysis of *parrhēsia* (as truth-telling) and related concerns, issues, tensions exist within an educational realm. However, in antiquity *parrhēsia* was initially distinct from the type of discourse associated with prophets and teachers. Initially, beliefs about the truth-telling of *parrhēsia* were different from that of teaching, prophecy and wisdom in that *parrhēsia* sought to transform the ethos of its interlocutor and involved risk for its speaker. It also belonged to a temporality of present reality. Foucault suggested in his lectures that,

This idea of someone with knowledge of *techne*, someone who has received this knowledge and must pass it on, there is the principle of an obligation to speak which is not found in the sage but is found in the *parrhēsiast*. But clearly, this teacher, this man of *techne*, of expertise and teaching, does not take any risk in the truth telling people how to proceed with endless pass on, and this is what distinguishes him from the *parrhēsiast*.⁶⁰

As noted, *parrhēsia* is connected to a specific mode of ethical discourse involving risk. In early antiquity the individual who spoke the truth in a manner consistent with *parrhēsia* was risking hostility and death, whereas the focus of a teacher was to ensure the survival of knowledge. The teacher’s truth telling brings people together and binds, whereas the truth telling of *parrhēsia* risks hostility, hatred and death.

Overtime wisdom and truth-telling merged. This required an important shift in the concept of human nature. Studying Greek society Foucault concludes that, “taking care of the self does not presuppose the return to a lost origin, but the emergence of a distinct “nature,” though one that is not originally given to us.”⁶¹ This requires a relationship with someone that guides our self-understanding. Foucault notes the following educational perspective in antiquity,

55. Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln, *The Landscape of Qualitative Research: Theories and Issues*, (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2013). 170.

56. Mirka Koro-Ljungberg, “Researchers of the World, Create!,” *Qualitative Inquiry* 18, no. 9 (2012). Dimitriadis, *Critical Dispositions: Evidence and Expertise in Education*, 4.

57. Edward Said as cited in: *Critical Dispositions: Evidence and Expertise in Education*, VIII.

58. Ibid.

59. Koro-Ljungberg, “Researchers of the World, Create!,” 808.

60. Foucault, *The Courage of Truth: The Government of Self and Others II: Lectures at the Collège De France, 1983-1984*, 24.

61. *The Hermeneutics of the Subject: Lectures at the Collège De France 1981--1982*.

Education is imposed against a backdrop of errors, distortions, bad habits and dependencies, which have been reified since the start of life. So that it is not even a matter of returning to a state of youth or infancy where there would still have been the human being; but rather of a referring to a “nature”... which has never had the opportunity to emerge in a life immediately seized by a defective system of education and belief. The objective of the practice of the self is to free the self, by making it coincide with a nature which has never had the opportunity to manifest itself in it.⁶²

It’s a relationship with the “other” that helps one take stock in one’s self. This relationship became essential in Greek philosophy to the “care of the self.” However, simply taking stock in one’s self was ineffective to develop an ethical nature. This development is not “a requirement of solitude, but a real social practice.”⁶³

Over time the philosophical contours of *parrhēsia* and education converged. In the story of Dion it was philosophy and *paideia* (training, culture, education) and the interrelated function of doctrine (*logos*) and life (*bios*) that led to social acceptance.⁶⁴ In antiquity education is a social, political and institutional concern. Foucault notes the problem,

if you are not well educated, how can you decide what constitutes a good education? And if people are to be educated, and they must receive the truth from a competent teacher. But how can we distinguish the good, truth-telling teachers from the bad or inessential ones?⁶⁵

In time, this relation informs *parrhēsia*—or, it is only through education that one develops the capacity for *parrhēsia*. The pedagogic aspects of *parrhēsia* require the right type of education, one of *praxis* (knowledge and practice). It also connects “care of the self” with a pedagogic component related to ontological harmony (*logos* & *bios*).⁶⁶ Education and *parrhēsia*, therefore, are linked. Furthermore, *parrhēsia* is *techne*, a particular knowledge that takes shape in practice through theoretical knowledge and exercise.⁶⁷ However, *parrhēsia* like *phronēsis* is beyond *techne* in that it requires reflection and a connection to a life well lived.

Foucault linked Socrates to various domains, one of *parrhēsia* and to prophetic verdiction, the verdiction of wisdom (*sage*) and the technical verdiction of teaching.⁶⁸ The Socratic mode of inquiry linked the sage (wisdom), technical knowledge and the practical knowledge of the teacher. This question raised by Socrates was how to teach virtue and knowledge required to live well and for society to function properly. Subsequently, Foucault linked Socrates to a “truly ethical” *parrhēsia* as it was most directly concerned with life.⁶⁹

In our contemporary society shaped by the Cartesian legacy, an ethical life and critical speech are not seen to have a valid relation to truth. Foucault saw the *parrhēsia* of antiquity as a

62. *Ibid.*, 536.

63. *Ibid.*, 537.

64. *The Courage of Truth: The Government of Self and Others Ii: Lectures at the Collège De France, 1983-1984*, 61.

65. *Fearless Speech*, 93.

66. *Ibid.*

67. *The Courage of Truth: The Government of Self and Others Ii: Lectures at the Collège De France, 1983-1984*, 24.

68. *Ibid.*, 27.

69. *Ibid.*, 149.

potential way to explore a shift from institutionalized discursivity to the ethical domain of individuals. The following section examines critical inquiry and ethics.

Beyond Enlightenment Humanism & Universals

The work on *parrhēsia* has the potential to foster ethical resources and the epistemological stance that intellectuals should use to guide their work. These ethical resources begin with a drive toward self-understanding.⁷⁰ Individuals often unknowingly participate in systems that affect the conditions of their selfhood, such as with disciplinary techniques.⁷¹ As an ethical framework concerned with the potential for political action, *parrhēsia* calls for relationships unstructured by their endpoint. This approach aligns with pragmatism and ethics in that it rejects instrumental approaches to human interaction. *Parrhēsia*, therefore, involves a commitment to relational modes of knowledge and critique about subject formation.⁷² This critique begins with a suspicion of universal truths.⁷³

Research frameworks developed through a Kantian approach (nonconsequentialist or deontological) employ categorical ethical principles. This approach operates from the basis of treating persons as ends in themselves and never solely as means.⁷⁴ However, as a result of the interpretive turn in educational and social research this ethical basis has become significantly complicated, as seen over the last several decades.⁷⁵ Foucault rejected the Kantian legacy of transcendental (universal) rules, but sought to retain the critical legacy where he situated himself methodologically.⁷⁶ This critical tradition examines our historical present.⁷⁷ In relation to this critical disposition, avoiding dogmatic universals of traditional humanism requires interpretive work to develop models that allow individuals to select among a variety of ethical models and relationships.⁷⁸ Between "facts" and "values" critical inquiry informed by *parrhēsia* disrupts the divergence in humanism.⁷⁹ This interpretive work includes the need for a relational component to develop formal principles upon which to act. Practices of ethical self-governance constitute a core aspect of *parrhēsia*.

Educational research informed by *parrhēsia* attempts to trace the development and use of common social perceptions and their impact. It stresses the importance of questioning belief systems from a historical perspective. Educational research must continually seek to uncover the theoretical assumptions that undergird its practices through the act of explication and critical reflection.⁸⁰ Subsequently, the disciplines of history, literary analysis, philosophy and so forth are equally significant if not a necessary means to interpret and describe belief systems.

70. Luxon, "Ethics and Subjectivity: Practices of Self-Governance in the Late Lectures of Michel Foucault," 381.

71. Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*.

72. Luxon, "Ethics and Subjectivity: Practices of Self-Governance in the Late Lectures of Michel Foucault," 378.

73. Ball, *Foucault and Education: Disciplines and Knowledge*, 203.

74. Kenneth R. Howe and Michele S. Moses, "Ethics in Educational Research," *Review of Research in Education* 24 (1999).

75. Ibid., 21. Schram, Flyvbjerg, and Todd address the same issue within their examination of phronesis, see: Sanford F. Schram, Bent Flyvbjerg, and Todd Landman, "Political Political Science: A Phronetic Approach," *New Political Science* 35, no. 3 (2013).

76. Foucault, *The Government of Self and Others: Lectures at the Collège De France, 1982-1983*, 379.

77. Kelly, *Critique and Power: Recasting the Foucault/Habermas Debate*, 148.

78. Luxon, "Ethics and Subjectivity: Practices of Self-Governance in the Late Lectures of Michel Foucault," 380.

79. Kuntz, *The Responsible Methodologist: Inquiry, Truth-Telling, and Social Justice*.

80. Crotty, *The Foundation of Social Research: Meaning and Perspective in the Research Process*.

In the following section we explore educational research informed by critical perspectives. We focus on associated concerns, issues, and tensions within the current discourse in educational research.

Research, Ethics & Critical Inquiry

Research and inquiry often function in a heuristic manner. Educational research, for example, is argued to be interpretive only in its function of description, classification and explanation. Historically, its explanatory function has primarily been self-referential. The changes in our research in education models remain grounded in explanation and verification. It is the practice of forming discursive structures (frameworks) that provides a basis, rationale and meaning for the derived concepts. Subsequently, educational research is a complex set of contested values infused in a legacy of racism, colonization, imperialism and eugenics, to name just a few. Different positions on these issues are grounded in evidence supporting various claims. From this legacy, we can reasonably assert that a “disciplinary matrix” of political/social interests undergird qualitative factors, empirical traditions and theoretical models or perspectives.⁸¹ This “disciplinary matrix” also frames and shapes predictions. Furthermore, it functions as more than just genuine insight. In terms of human knowledge, therefore, interpretation gives empirical knowledge its character and prescribes its form.⁸²

Scientific inquiry attempts to demonstrate a naturalistic basis for social phenomena within the confines of a formalized system of knowledge. It performs both an evaluative and descriptive function. Although, it seemingly does not derive an identifiable basis from traditional rationalism (which dissolves the senses preceding knowledge formation), the epistemology of educational research often rests on the practice of abduction (reasoning from effect to a cause) or modes of inference. This is made possible through modes of representation and the organization of various standards and representations formed symbolically within schemas.

The aim is not to suggest that science is simply one more perspective, devoid of any elevated level of epistemic status. However, there is a need to consider it as a constructed and interactive basis for knowledge. Our world is becoming increasingly complex, intensely dynamic and networked. Educational research should seek no finality or static paradigm for reality, identity and truth. Furthermore, the examination of social phenomena cannot be assumed to stem from an inquiry that possesses a self-warranting logic or stands in any one particular relation to the world. In other words there is no pure science devoid of axiological and normative principles or values, which are self-evidently or unconditionally valid. This does not mean social practices cannot be deduced from empirical data, but we cannot reject elements of agency, power relations, or institutional and disciplinary roles in the production of knowledge. The individual’s relation to science is part of a historically identifiable system of thought at an intersection of discourse, schemas of human nature and ontological beliefs that lay outside the confines of science.

As noted earlier, research is consequential in nature. That is, engagement with research processes centered in the notions of truth and public good is value driven. *Parrhēsia* involves speech acts as a mode of political engagement. Research, in general and critical inquiry more specifically are aimed at advancing a more socially just society. As Kuntz notes, critical engagement

81. Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 3rd ed. (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

82. *Ibid.*

must be an attempt to confront an injustice.⁸³ Ethics, therefore, should be seen as the essence of critical inquiry for social good conceived with the notion of social justice.

Ethics is a construct shaped by the researchers' values. Ball notes that for Foucault, policy and research construct objects of knowledge and subjects of intervention.⁸⁴ Educational researchers often shy away from the notion of value. Instead, outcomes and benefits are used. Yet, value is central to reflexivity and ethics. The importance of values and the concept of *parrhēsia* (research framed within this notion) are linked. Further, values shape one's perspectives, which, in turn, (*in*)form a particular philosophical stance. Hence, research shaped by *parrhēsia* adheres to the premise that research is not value-free as Enlightenment epistemology argues. As Howe notes, "Educational research is always advocacy research inasmuch as it unavoidably advances some moral-political perspective."⁸⁵ Value claims within the human sciences must be treated with critical scrutiny, as these claims cannot be taken for granted.⁸⁶ For Foucault, these value claims are inherently connected to power/knowledge. Deconstructive criticism involves an approach that allows us to think about meaning, value and truth.⁸⁷

Research informed by *parrhēsia* is consistent with an axiological framework in which ethics is the overarching component.⁸⁸ Researchers who, for example, suggest their work is ethically neutral and value-free, are only oriented toward discovering the most effective teaching strategy, are still taking an ethical stance and making a value claim. Positioning ethics as the overarching research framework constitutes a radical departure from current research trends, as most frameworks for educational research subordinate ethics, including reducing it to procedure.⁸⁹ Subsequently, many researchers feel uncomfortable going beyond the data point.⁹⁰ In today's world being responsible means taking action. This creates a need to examine our perceptions and extend the approach from data interpretation to questions of policy and engagement.⁹¹ As members of the educational research communities our responsibility is to contribute to the political process.⁹² It is not necessarily looking for a straightforward answer, or perhaps even a solution; but rather stances that we take reflective of personal values and ethics.

Educational Research: Frameworks, Parrhēsia and Critical Inquiry

Research is always guided by a researcher's assumptions. This involves "assumptions about human knowledge and assumption about realities encountered in our human world."⁹³ To challenge a particular approach is first to understand that mode of inquiry. It is to be responsible

83. Kuntz, *The Responsible Methodologist: Inquiry, Truth-Telling, and Social Justice*, 24.

84. Stephen J. Ball, *Foucault, Power, and Education*, 1st ed., Key Ideas in Education Series (New York, NY: Routledge, 2013).

85. Howe and Moses, "Ethics in Educational Research," 56.

86. David M. Jones and Stephan Ball. *The Discourse of Education* in, *Critical Theory and Educational Research*, (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1995). 40.

87. Nicholas C. Burbules. *Forms of Ideology-Critique* in, *ibid.*, 59.

88. Donna M. Mertens and Ginsberg Pauline E., *The Handbook of Social Research Ethics*, (Sage Publications, 2009).

89. Michael Crotty, *The Foundations of Social Research: Meaning and Perspective in the Research Process*, (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications Ltd 1998).

90. Blockstein, "How to Lose Your Political Virginity While Keeping Your Scientific Credibility."

91. *Ibid.*, 92.

92. Lee G. Bolman and Terrence E. Deal, *Reframing Organizations: Artistry, Choice, and Leadership*, (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2003). 92.

93. Crotty, *The Foundation of Social Research: Meaning and Perspective in the Research Process*, 17.

in relation to *why* it could benefit from revisiting to generate new understandings. Further, this exploration needs to be grounded in possibilities and potentialities, because the act of re-conceptualizing does not apply rejecting what has been done thus far. It embraces the “organic” approach to inquiry within which understanding certain theoretical perspectives doesn’t replace another; rather—coming to know how various theories contribute to and shape our understanding of research and its process to extend our thinking, to push the established boundaries and to problematize the existing discourse(s) driven by our quest for social good. The act of re-thinking is a process that requires stepping back to reflect and to re-strategize. It is a dialogical movement that creates opportunities and enables us to open ourselves to views that differ from our own and through such engagement new understandings emerge.⁹⁴ “Research cannot be conducted without conscious or unconscious use of underlying theoretical perspectives.”⁹⁵ A research framework centered on *parrhēsia* nurtures the development of a “critical consciousness” in that it fosters reflexive ethics; enables ongoing reflection on values that undergird perspectives; engages in a continuous critique and dialog elevates the moral commitment to engagement over self-interest, and requires commitment to equity and justice through actions.⁹⁶ Furthermore, as a research methodology, it represents a call to action.⁹⁷ A research framework informed by *parrhēsia* is consistent with a type of research in which relational modes of meaning formation are accepted.⁹⁸

Subjects of Intervention: Parrhēsia & Critical inquiry

In this section we explore the essence of critical inquiry conducted in the quest for social good informed by the notion of *parrhēsia*. In the tradition of educational research, there was an emphasis on delineating the (moral-political) component of social research and the “descriptive” (scientific-methodological) component.⁹⁹

Humankind has focused on creating explanations of human nature. There are a few aspects of this configuration for understanding the relation between knowledge and meaning. Perhaps, most importantly, various attempts to understand the mind’s relationship to knowledge are themselves inscribed in systems of thought, which positions the mind as both object and subject of an interaction.¹⁰⁰ This orientation and positioning of the mind in relation to knowledge and meaning mark a point when human beings began to possess access to knowledge and truth. One of the primary aims of science is imposing conformity.¹⁰¹ The human subject’s relationship to knowledge positions the mind as both object and subject of an interaction that disassociates thought from an external reality.¹⁰²

94. Rebecca Luce-Kapler, *Writing with, through, and Beyond the Text: An Ecology of Language* (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, 2004).

95. Ellen M. Broido and Kathleen Manning, “Philosophical Foundation and Current Theoretical Perspectives in Qualitative Research,” *Journal of College Student Development* 43, no. 4 (2002): 434.

96. Cannella & Lincoln, Ethics, Research, Regulations, and Critical Social Science in: Denzin and Lincoln, *The Landscape of Qualitative Research: Theories and Issues*. 170.

97. Kuntz, *The Responsible Methodologist: Inquiry, Truth-Telling, and Social Justice*, 12.

98. *Ibid.*, 76-77.

99. Howe and Moses, “Ethics in Educational Research,” 21.

100. Foucault, *The Hermeneutics of the Subject: Lectures at the Collège De France 1981--1982*.

101. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Graham Burchell, *European Perspectives* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1994), 202.

102. Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 285-94.

The Cartesian Legacy

In the Cartesian system the subject is endowed with access to knowledge and truth primarily through consciousness and reason.¹⁰³ This is based on an interpretation of human knowledge and truth as subordinate to a spiritual belief in the mind's pre-reflexive *cogito* as the basis of knowledge.¹⁰⁴ Cartesian dualism is dissolved only through a radical skepticism and analytical reasoning.¹⁰⁵

In the Cartesian system the intellectual foundations of certainty dissolve sensory foundations prior to meaning formation.¹⁰⁶ However, the general scientific inquiry onto intelligence attempts to demonstrate a naturalistic basis for intellectual phenomena within a formal system of knowledge. Subsequently, the scientific method has inverted the relation situating man within the context of observation. This interplay between knowledge and experience involves a framework conceptualized through modes of representation. With Descartes, the systemization of conscious thought over a domain of objects is emphasized over self-evidence and intuition.¹⁰⁷

The development of knowledge in the West and the position of the subject's relation to meaning are drawn from various forms of representation. The fundamental issues raised relate to a *phenomenology of mind* in which perception, thought and experience remain grounded in a logical, analytical and referential transmission of information and meaning. According to Foucault,

On the one hand, there are the internal conditions of the act of knowledge and of the rules it must obey to have access to the truth: formal conditions, objective conditions, formal rules of method, the structure of the object to be known...the conditions of the subject's access to the truth are defined within knowledge.¹⁰⁸

Analyzing Descartes, Foucault noted the conditions by which individuals were "capable of truth" in relation to knowledge. The conditions are that "one must not be mad" (what Foucault calls "an important moment in Descartes").¹⁰⁹ He notes that there are also cultural conditions, in which after Descartes,

to have access to the truth we must have studied, have an education, and operate within a certain scientific consensus. And there are moral conditions: to know the truth we must make an effort, we must not seek to deceive our world, and the interests of financial reward, career, and status must be combined in a way that is fully compatible with the norms of disinterested research, etcetera. with two reservations of conditions intrinsic to knowledge and conditions extrinsic to the individual, when the subject's being is not put in question by the necessity of having access to the truth, I think we have entered a different age of the history of relations between subjectivity and truth. And the consequence—or, if you like,

103. René Descartes, *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, trans. John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoff, and Dugald Murdoch (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1984).

104. Foucault, *The Hermeneutics of the Subject: Lectures at the Collège De France 1981--1982*, 25-28, 190, 294, 309.

105. See: Deleuze and Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?*

106. See: "Cogito and the History of Madness" in Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 31-63.

107. Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 285-94.

108. Foucault, *The Hermeneutics of the Subject: Lectures at the Collège De France 1981--1982*, 18.

109. Ibid.

the other aspect of this—is that access to truth, whose sole condition is henceforth knowledge, will find reward and fulfillment in nothing else but the indefinite development of knowledge.¹¹⁰

The Cartesian shift brings us to the point where the sole condition of truth is knowledge. Furthermore, the capacity for the human subject to know a truth that passes through, permeates, and transfigures his or her being can no longer exist.¹¹¹ It is only over time within the “institutional accumulation of bodies of knowledge” or through social benefit that truth is revealed, and this truth does not offer salvation for human subjectivity.¹¹² For Foucault, the point of enlightenment and fulfillment, the moment of the subject’s transfiguration by the “rebound effect” on himself of the truth he knows can no longer exist.¹¹³

Science, research and culture are modes by which we organize meaning and therefore shape experience through representations formed symbolically within schemas. Educational research produces explanatory paradigms and axiological schema utilized in description (mimesis). Our concern is the manner in which research functions in relation to the standards of science, and whether a framework informed by *parrhēsia* has the potential to better illuminate social phenomena or can function as a useful method for explaining meaning formation through human interaction.

Researchers need to consider whether claims of validity (truth claims) are derived as much from empirical observation as opposed to the series of delineations and presuppositions imposed through preexisting norms. This raises the question of what function connoted meaning places over detonated meaning; and more generally what role the researcher plays in formalizing the interpretive and evaluative function of meaning. In educational research the researcher must draw distinctions, but at the same time reduce empirical data to a structural level with apparent ambivalence for the developmental or relational contingencies. What should be essential to relational contingencies is research conducted in the quest for the social good.

The question over the social good is one of the most persistent problems of philosophers throughout the ages. Moral perspectives inform the construction of the notion of “good” and its different meanings. As Ricoeur notes, “meaning is central to the quest for good where the construction of a definition of “good” is an on-going process that does not end with the completed temporality.”¹¹⁴ Social implies interactions with the “other.” Disclosing more things to critical scrutiny; reflecting continuously on our positions, “what they allow us to see and to understand, what they blind us to do.”¹¹⁵ Speaking openly and truthfully without the use of rhetoric, manipulation, or generalization is essential to the ongoing processes of the construction of social good.¹¹⁶

110. Ibid.

111. Ibid., 18-19.

112. Ibid., 19.

113. Ibid., 18.

114. Paul Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning* (Fort Worth, TX: Texas Christian University Press, 1976).

115. Dimitriadis, *Critical Dispositions: Evidence and Expertise in Education*, 4.

116. Foucault, *Fearless Speech*.

Conclusion

It is common for perspectives to change overtime and to vary according to various influences, thus the need to study the function of scientific paradigms.¹¹⁷ Educational research is a manifestation derived from social ideologies and beliefs. Therefore, it is important to examine the forms it has produced or promoted as well as those neglected or repressed. We should take these additional factors into account when considering models for educational research.

A research framework informed by *parrhēsia* offers an alternative perspective for evaluating the significance of self-directed, evaluative, and self-reflexive understanding that critiques underlying assumptions of human nature, reality, representation, systems of thought, political systems and notions of self. This framework also suggests the relevance of examining and reconsidering an ethos stemming from notions of thought in which meaning and knowledge are abstracted from the self.¹¹⁸ It offers a means to examine the divide between the universal and the particular, the ability to conceptualize a complex reality and episteme.¹¹⁹ This is similar to Aristotle's conception of the interaction between *nous* and *phronesis*.¹²⁰

Incorporating *parrhēsia* into educational research is situated in the contemporary movement toward re-shaping critical work, in general and critical methodology, specifically with the focus on truth-telling. The application of *parrhesia* in critical methodologies and research practices within education is an ongoing process (or activity) using collaborative reflective critique to disrupt a priori frameworks and agendas. This includes methodologies in place as well as research direction, goals and applications. Our presented argument is that the concept of *parrhēsia* facilitates movement toward and emphasizes ethics as process; makes researchers cognizant of ethics, language and their roles within the research process. This is consistent with Christians' assertion that "qualitative research insists on starting over philosophically, without the Enlightenment dualism as its foundation. The result is an ethical-political framework that is multicultural, gender inclusive, pluralistic and international in scope."¹²¹ This framework would include cultural sensitivity and mutivocality, those factors consistent with the notion of *parrhēsia*.¹²²

At the heart of theoretical writing is answering the authors' "why" questions. In case of our writing the question is "why *parrhēsia*?" as a framework for critical inquiry for educational research. Our position is that we must not simply challenge the status quo only to find ourselves groundless. We must cultivate a critical praxis. We regard an approach to educational research informed by *parrhēsia* is to break with traditional forms of critical inquiry. Educational research informed by the notion of *parrhēsia* offers a framework to cultivate an ethical approach through critical praxis. It also presents a framework unique from previous approaches to critical inquiry as discussed in this paper.

117. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*.

118. Michel Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended: Lectures at the College De France 1975-1976*, ed. Mauro Bertani and Alessandro Fontana, trans. David Macey, 1 ed., Lectures at the College De France 1975-1976 (New York, NY: Picador, 2003).

119. As Deleuze and Guattari put it, "It is the brain that says I, but I is an other. It is not the same brain as the brain as the brain of connections and secondary integrations, although there is no transcendence here. And this I is not only the "I conceive" of the brain as philosophy, it is also the "I feel" of the brain as art." Deleuze and Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?*, 211.

120. Joseph Dunne, *Back to the Rough Ground: "Phronesis" and "Techne" in Modern Philosophy and in Aristotle*, Revisions (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1993).

121. From Christians, C. G. chapter *Ethics and Politics in Qualitative Research* published in Denzin and Lincoln, *The Landscape of Qualitative Research: Theories and Issues*. 125.

122. Ibid.

We believe that critical inquiry informed by the notion of *parrhēsia* is significant as it relates to conducting educational research and to preparing a future generation of educational researchers as responsive and responsible methodologists.¹²³ A model for research informed by *parrhēsia* would be one that explores things such as school culture in relation to multiple frameworks or perspectives. The qualities of critical methodology, which the notion of *parrhēsia* embraces, are understanding the consequential nature of our work as researchers and being critically reflective. It involves risk taking, courage and emphasizes an overarching ethical framework orientated toward a democratic ethos. A framework informed by *parrhēsia* involves a relational approach to research, a shift from research subjects to participants. It has the potential to enable a critical engagement with various forms of subjectivity as an ongoing project “with the hope for progressive social change.”¹²⁴

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123. Kuntz, *The Responsible Methodologist: Inquiry, Truth-Telling, and Social Justice*.

124. *Ibid.*, 12.

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