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AUT

Thinking 'critically' about critical thinking

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Format

- An ‘ambivalent’ story of success
- A critique of Western critical thinking (arrow thinking)
- Reflections on our practice: Group discussion



**An ‘ambivalent’
story of success**

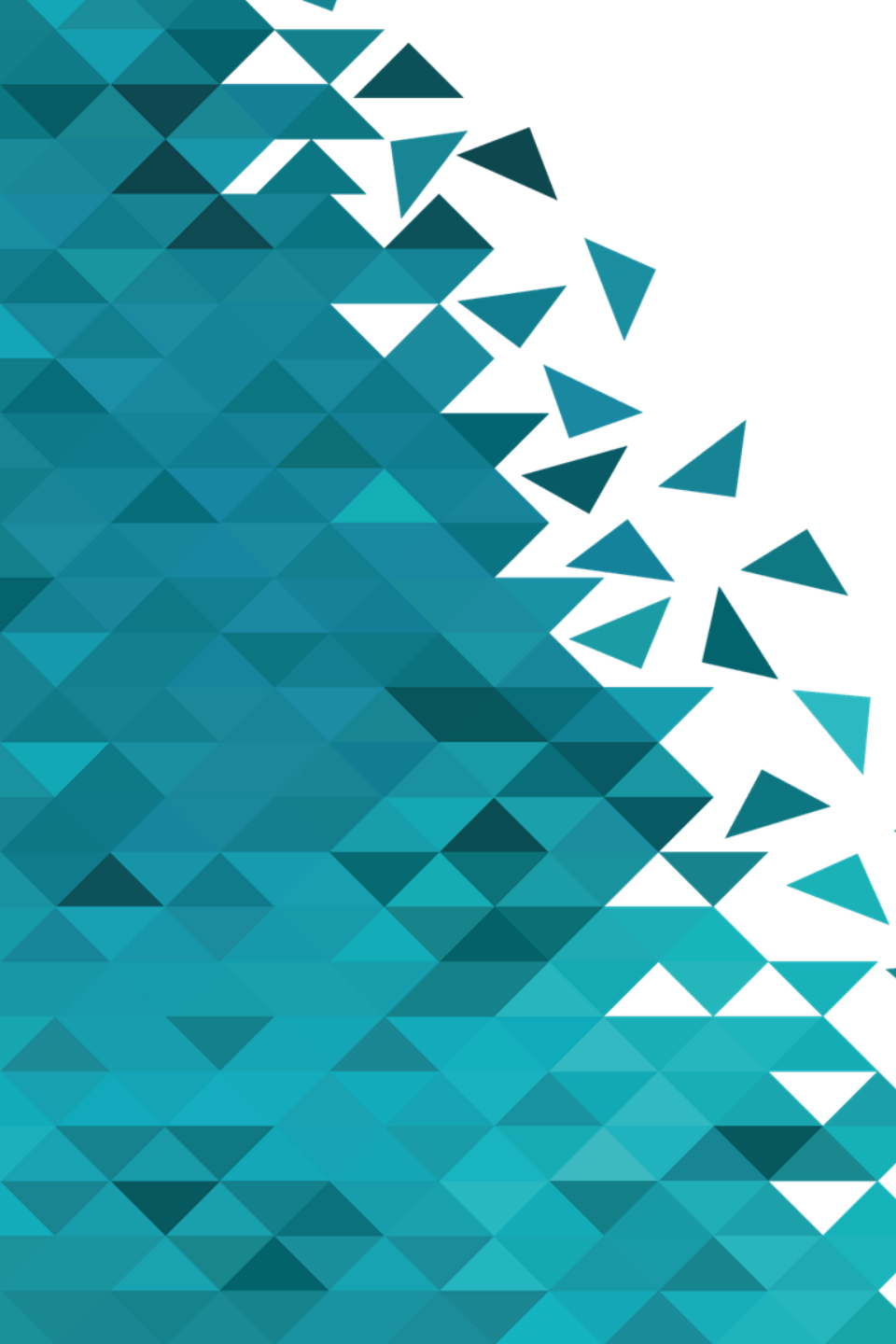






What is arrow thinking?

- Critical thinking:
 - Thesis, anti-thesis, synthesis
 - A reasoned (rational), consistent argument
- The Hegelian dialectic
 - Mastery of the other in order to know ourselves (and Truth)
 - Master needs the other as a reflection of self
- Writing style:
 - Intro, body, conclusion
 - Topic sentence first sentence – helps build/support the argument
 - Avoid emotion, generalisations or vague language



A critiquing of 'arrow' thinking...

Hélène Cixous

Hélène Cixous

Critiques Western academic thinking and writing:

- obscures otherness/'anti-thesis'
- has a political inflection – gender, race, class





The politics of academic writing

Proletarians, immigrant workers, minorities who are not the right “color.” Women. Invisible as humans. But, of course, perceived as tools – dirty, stupid, lazy, underhanded, etc. thanks to some annihilating dialectical magic...A commonplace of History: there have to be *two* races – the masters and the slaves (Cixous 1975, p.70).



Writing that is open to otherness

I, too, overflow; my desires have invented new desires, my body knows unheard – of songs ... What's the meaning of these waves, these floods, these outbursts? ... Who, a feeling a funny desire stirring inside her (to sing, to write, to dare to speak, in short to bring about something new), hasn't thought she was sick? Well, her shameful sickness is that she resists death, that she makes trouble (Cixous, 1980, p. 246).



Écriture féminine

Unleashed and raging, she belongs to the race of waves. She arises, she approaches, she lifts up, she reaches, covers over, washes a shore, flows embracing the cliff's least undulation, already she is another, arising again, throwing the fringed vastness of her body up high...She has never "held still"; explosion, diffusion, effervescence, abundance, she takes pleasure in being boundless, outside self, outside same (Cixous, 1980, pp. 90-91).



The feminine in Cixous' account is:

open, unbounded, unbordered, fluid and “vertiginous”
(Cixous, 1980, p. 91).



Reflections on our practice



Thoughts on...

- Do you have the same sense of disquiet?
- How do you deal with it?
- Other critiques of Western thinking and writing...



References

- Cixous, H. (1975). Sorties: Out and out: Attacks/ways out/forays (B. Wing, Trans.). In H. Cixous & C. Clément (Eds.), *The newly born woman* (Vol. 24, pp. 63-132). Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
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- Hegel, G. (1977). *Phenomenology of Spirit* (A. Miller, Trans.). Oxford: Clarendon Press. (Original work published 1807)
- Toulmin, S. (1958). *The uses of argument*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.