

Essay on applications

[Experience](#), [Belief](#)



Critical Thinking

The effect of time and place, including the specific circumstances under which I am required to make a decision, my beliefs, customs and experience play a central role in the soundness of the decisions that I make. I find that if I am rushed in making decisions, I am least likely to make the best decisions, in the same way that tension, fear and over-excitement will affect me.

Culture, belief systems, feelings and intellectual “laziness” often push me away from objectivity. For instance, I know that my faith prohibits abortion, and I am therefore unwilling to seriously consider contrary arguments on the same. I need to build the skills to ask the right questions, seek out information, interpret it and make an objective judgment of the same, but this hardly happens, for reasons that include laziness. I also find myself unable to reign in my subconscious thought processes, which are in main, less than objective.

Without defining my problem clearly and specifically, I end up trying to reach vague and ineffective decisions because the problem is equally vaguely defined. The influence of mass culture, which imposes values and expectations on the decision-making process, which when coupled with frequent distortions/manipulations of reality make it difficult to have accurate information that I can use to make sound decisions. This is worsened by the information overload due the advancement in communication and information technology. There is just too much information, opinions, data and interpretations of the same. This means that even if I correctly apply the critical thinking process i. e. investigate, interpret and judge, I am still bound to find difficulties making a sound

decision because there are too many variables in the process.

Biological Factor – My sex (external genitals, chromosomal and hormonal factors) is an important biological fact, which shapes many decisions that I make. Firstly, it is an important determinant of my gender role as a man/woman, influences my choice of clothing, food, lifestyle, and sexuality decisions. For instance, my hairstyle must reinforce my masculinity (as defined by culture) i. e. must ensure a rugged and simple appearance, as against a heavily made-up and smooth face/hair.

Chapter 3

The existence and nature of truth is the focus of this chapter. The mistaken perception that truth is personal (thus equivalent to opinions) ignores the fact such truth bears imprints of other people's ideas/beliefs. Imperfect perception, meagre thinking skills, flawed memory, and information deficiency mean that people often are mistaken in their truth, and even the wisest individuals and/or groups can be mistaken. Truth is “ what is so about” something (p. 50) and beliefs/assertions are true when they are in tandem with reality. It is independent of people's acknowledgement of it and it is neither changeable by people's ignorance nor transformable by wishful thinking. It is sought and discovered (including through the ascertainment of the causality relationships.), especially if people keep the right frame of mind to seek for it.

Chapter 4

Knowing involves the understanding detail, principles and processes, expressing them and the manner in which we came to learn them.

Knowledge, differs from conventional wisdom, and may be attained actively through direct experience and experimentation, or passively (which is defective because it discourages critical thought). Knowing remains difficult because of inadequate and uncertain knowledge (and information), lack of precedence, forgetfulness, pandering to assumptions and conventional wisdom, and manipulation. Assumptions stifle curiosity that leads to knowledge, and to prevent this, assumptions and convictions must only be employed where evidence permits.

I have been socialized from a very young age to recognize my sex, and behave in accordance with the expectations of a boy/man, in preparation to assume the cultural and other roles expected of a male human being.

Accordingly, in order to best fit in with my biologically determined factor, and culturally defined roles, most of the decisions that I make tend to be driven by these factors. It is as if there are different realities for women and men, and thus decisions that I make may not be necessarily acceptable to women. The role of my sex in decision-making helps me to conform, but keeps in a rut, such that I never really have think about many decisions that I make. For instance, I do not feel too strongly about the right of women to abortion as many women do, because it feels like a distant moral issue as against a reproductive health issue.

I once advised a female friend to go through with a breast augmentation surgery, because I strongly believed that the size, texture and form of a woman's breasts influenced their sexual desirability as well as their self-esteem. As a man, I think that women who with larger, firmer breasts are more attractive (sexually), and I am sure it is this belief that formed the

basis of my influence on my friend's decision-making, but this was also driven by my sex. On the other hand, she was more worried about the health implications (both psychological and physical), cost and the fear of the actual surgery. She finally had the surgery, but unfortunately, it did not turn out great. She ended up having multiple surgeries to get her the results she expected, and the experience exacted a heavy emotional toll on her.

Ultimately, her concerns about the physical and psychological implications of the decisions proved more important than my beliefs on sexual desirability of women.

Physiological and emotional responses to environmental stimuli influence the thought processes, and may be override attempts to control the thought process. According to Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory, people have innate physiological and emotional needs, such as food, physical security and sexual satisfaction. When one is without food and water, the body secretes hormones that signal the brain, and its functioning. For instance, extreme dehydration may cause hallucinations, affecting one's ability to consider different issues rationally. Deprivation of biological needs pushes the individuals to attempt to satisfy them, usually by subjugating the fulfilment of higher needs (such as love, self-actualization and self-esteem) in order to meet the biological needs. Effectively, while the decision to steal is wrong, starved people would still opt for it, in the same way that homeless people would debase themselves to have food and shelter, even though rational thought may find begging to be hurtful to self-esteem and dignity (higher needs).

The most important change is the need to recognize the influence of

physiological factors on my decision-making, as well as the importance of seizing control over subconscious thought processes that substitute active decision-making. I realize that truth is objective and attainable through active search for it, which can only be possible if I keep an open mindset, ready to pursue facts wherever they may lead me, as against pandering to my own beliefs, assumptions and values, etc. Effectively, I think while these factors are important, I must realize that their influence on my thought process and try to control them. This means that I will not completely discard them, for they serve an important role, only if they are used appropriately.

Chapter 5

Opinions are expressions of judgment as against taste, and they may be mistaken and unreasonable, however sincerely they are held (and however hard we struggle to be objective). Even though opinions differ, they too must be sound (not necessarily right). Moral opinions for instance must stand up against obligations, ideals and consequences applicable. Even experts can be mistaken. Errors that may corrupt opinions include oversimplification of reality, attitudes/beliefs, communication failures, and general fashion of age.

Chapter 6

This examines the nature and types of evidence (e. g. personal experience, published report, and eyewitness testimony) whose reliability varies, evaluation of the evidence and what constitutes adequate evidence. The evidence should permit a sound judgment, have greater force of probability in the case of uncertainty.

It does. Sometimes, immediate decisions are required, and there may not be

enough evidence to reach the best decision as would be possible when considering long-term decisions. However, such decisions, if sound, may prove more helpful than more sound decisions with more evidence.

It is important to create a habit around the critical decision making model i. e. investigate, interpret and judge, in any decision making process. I will also try to cultivate the habit of deferring the actual decision for some reasonable amount of time.

Always refer to the evidence. Impulses ignore the need for evidence, and thus decisions are unlikely to be sound. While impulses are not necessarily bad, before following them through, they should be subjected to the critical thought process to determine their soundness.

Impulses do indeed hijack the rational thought process, but even if our feelings find something that our thoughtful planning may have overlooked, this must still be tested against the evidence available.

I have been multiply driven to making decisions by biological factors and I have found the outcomes to be suboptimal

The more the evidence of what has happened in the past, the better able we can predict the outcome under similar or closely similar uncertainty conditions. Information/evidence is closer to the truth if it closely relates to the current problem and has in the past predicted the outcome reliably.

Chapter 7

An argument is a set of premises and conclusion. A sound argument should have true premises, valid reasoning linking the arguments together. While many arguments may be evaluated against this, others are long, include

multiple premises, have hidden premises, and may lead to multiply varied conclusions.

Chapter 8

Human beings often tend to believe their arguments are superior. While this is not necessarily wrong, it does can be detrimental when driven by ego/ethnocentrism and other biases. It is important, and possible to control the “ mine is better” tendencies.

Decisions are risky if there is greater uncertainty about the outcome and thus the risk is our estimation of the ability to cope with adverse outcomes and the strength of our desire to achieve better outcomes. If the losses are known, we know exactly what we have to cope with, and so we only have to deal with our desire for positive outcomes.

It makes us too optimistic, and overlook important evidence that negates our expectations, which in turn leads to suboptimal decisions

I will take \$200. There is a 0.5 probability to get \$200 and even if I lose out, I can afford to lose \$100, which I would have gotten if I did not take the risk. Effectively, my ability to cope with losing \$100 is material and if this amount would have been \$1m against \$2 million, I will certainly do the opposite

If am to be personally involved, I will tend to be risk averse because I do not want the responsibility in the event of the risk materializing. However, I will recommend more risky projects if I am not.

Self-preservation is only natural to humans, even though it may be unreasonable. Assuming personal responsibility changes the perception of risk, as against when other people are involved.

In a heated debate on the right to abortion, Jeremy, who is a Roman Catholic,

college professor and a Republican believes that abortion is not only contrary to the teachings of the bible, but is also murder. He says that a foetus is a human being and thus killing it is murder” that is the truth.” The bible says that God knew as at conception, and so we started existing. Ted, is second generation Mexican who believes women have a right over their bodies, including in the decision to abort or not.

According to Ruggiero (2011), one of the attributes of a good critical thinker is the ability to exercise control over their mental faculties. The difficulties in controlling the casual and semiconscious drifting of thought that renders it equally difficult to remain focussed on a specific matter. In this case, the role of different belief systems, word views, political affiliations, and ideas or the “ the time and place” factors are evident. Further, it is evident that both Tedd and Jeremy do not use the critical thinking process (investigate-interpret-judge). Jeremy believes the bible’s teaching is the truth, which is a complex concept. It is mistaken to think that truth is personal because it must stand up to scrutiny and such ‘ truth” is mostly a reflection of what others think or belief.

The complex relationship between knowledge and faith is also evident in this case study. Is it true that life begins at conception? What is life? It is equal to two live cells (a sperm and an egg)? Imperfect perception, meagre thinking skills, flawed memory, and information deficiency mean that people often are mistaken in their truth, and even the wisest individuals and/or groups can be mistaken. This is why reliance on true evidence as premises and correct interpretation is more important than appealing to emotions. For instance, Tedd argues that women will have abortion any way, which is a

sound premise, and it is reasonable that it is legalized and made safe.

The errors of expression and reaction as discussed in chapters 11 and 12 by Ruggiero (2011) show that humans, by their very nature and vulnerable to making mistakes in expressing ideas. Similarly, in chapter 12, it is clear that people tend to create walls in order to protect themselves from the shame or discomfort arising from being wrong, mistaken, and feeling inadequate. Effectively, by using humor, it is possible to bring down these walls, by making people feel comfortable exposing themselves and others. This will allow people to exchange ideas without fear, which while may be flawed, may still contribute to the development of more sound, creative ideas. For example, by having knowledge management systems at work where employees can interact both formally and informally, they are more free to share, and this results in far better outcomes than formal communication channels can achieve.

Chapter 11

Errors of expression are mistakes, inaccuracies and/or irresponsibility in the manner of writing or saying something. These are obstacles to critical thought both before, and in the process of addressing different issues. They include inadvertent contradictions, circular reasoning, making meaningless statements, reliance on mistaken authorities, drawing false analogies and irrational appeals to emotion, moderation, authority, tolerance, tradition and common beliefs.

Chapter 12

Errors of reaction comprise mistakes in the manner of responding, most because of pride. People tend to prefer not to face up to unpleasant or uncomfortable realities. The errors of reaction include automatic rejection, subject alteration, shifting the burden of proof to other parties, creating a straw man/argument without any substance and attacking critics. People hate to feel inadequate, embarrassed or mistaken, but instead of addressing these problems, they create defences behind which they attempt to conceal such feelings, hence the errors in reaction.

People's tendency to believe themselves and their arguments/opinions as superior to other people's even when they are vulnerable to ethnocentrism, egocentrism and other prejudices. Effectively, it is true that people's wisdom is relative because it does not depend on what they know, but on their ability to expose themselves to different experiences. People exposed to different cultures are more likely to be appreciative of own biases and thus make more sound arguments.

Chapter 13

Errors in expression and reaction often occur in multiple combinations, which has the consequence of creating an even bigger challenge to critical thought. Others possible errors that may occur include errors of perspective procedure, and this chapter includes anecdotes and samples errors combined in multiple ways.

Chapter 14

The key to avoiding most of the mistakes in critical thought is understanding oneself, and how own biases, inadequacies and flaws, etc., impact the way we think. This can be achieved by creating a critical thinking inventory and using it to enhance one's critical thought performance.

Ellie is ethnocentric and Cecil uses true premises but wrong reasoning. Ellie has a more sound argument based on the premises and judgment of the premises

Renee is ethnocentric and uses false premises that a sex change is disgraceful. Christine's argument is more sound since she is willing to understand what transgender people think as against just herself.

Quentin uses false, egocentric and ethnocentric premises that parents are an improper influence on children. He thinks his religious, personal and political views are superior to those that most parents have. Thus, Lois is much more reasonable in her argument.

Most importantly is the process of critical thinking (investigate-interpret-judge) on the nature of sound arguments, and the common errors that many people make. I have also become more aware of my own role (my beliefs, prejudices, ego, experiences, etc.) in my arguments and the importance of controlling them in order to apply them.

Chapter 15

Observing people can be helpful in understanding how sound our own performance is, and thus improve our critical thinking. In the same way in which observation has been instrumental in medicine and science, it can

help critical thinkers understand themselves, the process and nature of sound thought. Reflection on observation bolsters the quality of insight.

Chapter 16

This chapter defines issues in the context of critical thinking, and describes the importance of having a narrow scope in ensuring a more focussed and complete argument as against taking on everything. It is helpful to decide on one or few aspects of an issue.

Advertisers use captivating visuals (images) that appeal to the audience's irrational desires, but very limited product-specific information. For instance, there are images of sexy models wearing Abercrombie & Fitch clothes with little further information and the same applies to cars, houses and hotels, etc.

The argument suggests that there should be more emphasis on the effects of chronic laziness, because it is more prevalent in the country. However, there is no evidence to back up any of these claims including the assertion that workaholicism is not hurtful as chronic laziness.

Is Islam as a religion providing an ideology that supports and fuels terrorism?

Firstly I need sound evidence that Islamic teachings lead to terrorism, including statistics, and peer-reviewed information. Further, I need to interpret the information, taking due consideration the motivations of different evidences, their strengths and weaknesses, as well as my own biases. Lastly, I need to come to a conclusion as to whether Islam offers an ideological foundation that terrorists use to rationalize their behaviour.

Recording one's observations, ideas and questions, coupled by active reflection on the same is important to critical thinking. Composition courses not only ensure that students are observant of other people and arguments, but endeavour to explain such behaviour (and challenge the observations/ideas), they are encouraged to become creative.

Firstly, it is important that the businessperson has a good understanding of the IT market, its size, the competition, prices and consumer preferences among others. They need evidence in terms of market analysis reports, industry analyses, consumer reviews, and survey reports. Then they should know their own competitive advantage and how sustainable such competitive advantage is. Once this is determined, they need to know whether they have the resources (including human capital and financial capital) necessarily to set up a competitive enterprise. They also need to lay out a well thought out plan, against which they must evaluate their performance once the business is up and running.

References

Ruggiero, V. R. (2011). *Beyond Feelings: A Guide to Critical Thinking*. New York: McGraw-Hill Education.