CHAPTER FOUR
BASIC CONCEPTS OF CRITICAL THINKING

Meaning of Critical Thinking

- Critical thinking, thus, is **thinking clearly, thinking fairly, thinking rationally, thinking objectively, and thinking independently**
- It is **active, persistent, and careful** consideration of a belief in the light of the grounds, which support it and the further conclusions to which it tends
- In this definition, there are three main points that we should focus on: active, persistent and grounds.

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1. critical thinking is an **active 'process which means:**

think things, raise questions and find relevant information through yourself

2. critical thinking is persistent and careful consideration which implies:

Not to make a quick decision, thinking carefully again and again before we arrive certain conclusion

3. **ground:** which implies a good reason to arrive on a certain conclusion

- The aim of critical thinking is to arrive at well-reasoned, considered, and justifiable conclusions.

***1. Clarity*: ** refers to clear understanding of concepts and clearly expressing them in a language

- So critical thinkers always strive not only for clarity of language but, clarity of thought or ideas
- clarity is a gateway standard of critical thinking
- If we are not clearly understand we may ask question for clarification.
- Eg. Could you elaborate more? Could explain in another way?

2. Precision*: *it is a matter of being exact, accurate and careful

- Paying attention to specific detail
- Goes one step further than Accuracy. It demands that the words and data used are exact.
- Eg belete is over weight. How many kg he is?

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***3. Accuracy*:**

- **Having correct and genuine information**
- **CT value truth, accurate and timely information**
- **Every decision should be made based on true information**
- **If the input is false information, decision will not be sound**

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4. Relevance: The question of relevance is a question of connections in discussion or debate

- Which mean not to round around the bush which are not related to issues at our hand
- Critical thinkers do not collect any information
- they focus and carefully choose only the information that has logical relation with the ideas at hands.

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5. Consistency: is about the quality of **always behaving in the same way** or of having the same opinions or standards

- There are two kinds of inconsistency that should be avoided.
- One is *logical inconsistency*, which involves saying or believing inconsistent things (i.e., things that cannot both or all be true) about a particular matter.
- The other is *practical inconsistency*, which involves saying one thing and doing another.

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6. Logical Correctness:

- *it means to **reason correctly***
- *To arrive on well founded conclusion*
- *Having accurate and well supported belief*

7. Completeness:

- *just discussing issues in depth not be shallow discussion*
- *Thus thinking is better when it is deep and well discussed instead of shallow*

8. Fairness:

- **Treat all relevant views alike**
- **thinking should be based on**
  - ✓ **fair**
  - ✓ **open mindedness,**
  - ✓ **Impartiality and**
- **thinking should be free**
  - ✓ **distortion,**
  - ✓ **Biasedness**
  - ✓ **Preconceptions,**
  - ✓ **Inclinations,**
  - ✓ **Personal interests**

A. The Structural Principle

- **Use arguments that meet fundamental structural requirement**
- **valid form is the First requirement for argument to be good (deductive)**
  - **don't use reason that contradict to each other (avoid invalid inference)**
  - **conclusion should follow the premise with strict necessity**
- **good argument:**
  - **structurally good form(valid)-**
  - **Premises must be compatible to each other (compatibility principle)**
  - **conclusion should not contradict with the premises**
    - **(non contradiction principle)**

B. The Relevance Principle

- **One who argues in favor or against a position……?**
  - **Set forth premise whose Truth provides evidence for the truth of the conclusion**
  - **Premise is relevant if its provides logical reason to the conclusion**
  - **basic question**
  - **- Does the truth of the premise support the truth of the conclusion?**

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C. The Acceptability Principle:

- States that the one who present an argument should provide reason that are likely acceptable by mature rational person
- Presenting convincing reason that can be accepted by ration person

D. The Sufficiency Principle: *relevance and acceptability principles together constitute the principles of sufficiency*

- **Premise provides sufficient reason that outweigh the acceptance of the conclusion.**
- **Questions to test sufficiency of evidence**
  - **Are the available reasons enough to drive someone to conclusion?**
  - **are key or crucial evidence missing from the argument ?**

***E. The Rebuttal Principle*:** states meet that other side directly and addressing those critics and question raised from the other side or our opponent

- Effective response has to be provided for the argument raised from the other side
- Ask and answer following questions in applying the rebuttal principle to an argument.
  - What is the strongest side of arguments against the position being defended?
  - Does the argument address the counterargument effectively?
  - What potentially serious weaknesses exist in the argument recognized by an opponent?
  - Does the argument itself recognize and address those possible weaknesses?
  - Does the argument show why arguments for alternative positions on the issue are flawed or unsuccessful?

Principles of Critical Thinking

1. The Fallibility Principle

- Willingness of participants in an argument to acknowledge his/her fallibility
- Accept one ‘s own initial view thay may not be the most defensible position on the issue
- Consciously accept that your view may wrong - willing to change your mind
- An admission of fallibility is a positive sign for further discussion, inquiry and fair resolution of the issue
- No one is perfect, so everyone must admit imperfection
  - If you refuse to accept your fallibility, you are not willing to change you mind even if you heard better argument.
  - So you are in state of ignorance

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2. The Truth Seeking Principle

- **participant should be committed to search truth**
- **one should be willing to**
  - **Examine alternative positions seriously**
  - **look for insights and positions of others**
  - **Allow others to present arguments for or against issue**
- **The search for truth is lifelong endeavor and can be attained if:**
  - **We discuss and entertain the ideas and arguments of fellow**
  - **We listen arguments for positions and**
  - **Have Willingness to look at all available options**
  - **We encourage criticisms of our own views**
- **So, everyone should have the Willingness to look at all available options**

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- ***3. The Clarity Principle:***
- **Formulations of all positions, defenses, and attacks should be free of any kind of linguistic confusion**
- **discussion is successful if it carried on in language that all the parties involved can understand**
- **expressing in confusing, vague, ambiguous, or contradictory language will not help reach the desired goal**

4. The Burden of Proof Principle

- **Burden of proof rests on the participant who sets forth the position or argument**
- **Participant is logically obligated to produce reasons in favor of his claim**
- **The arguer is Obliged to give logical answer to the why/how questions**
- **Exception: if claim in question is well established or uncontroversial, burden to proof rests on the opponents who stands against original argument**

5. The Principle of Charity

- **If the participant ‘s argument is reformulated by an opponent, it should be carefully expressed in its strongest possible version (intension of the original argument)**
- **Opponent has an obligation of interpreting a speaker's statements in the most rational way, considering its best strongest possible interpretation of original argument**
- **but If we deliberately create and then attack a weak version-uncharitable version- of the original argument, we will fail to achieve the desirable goal of the discussion**
- **Good discussion imposes an ethical requirement on their participants and there is practical reason for being fair with one another ‘s arguments**

6. The Suspension of Judgment Principle

- **suspend judgment about the issue if**
  - **no position is defended by good argument, or**
  - **two or more positions seem to be defended with equal strength**
  - **one has no good basis (evidence) for making a decision**
- **To make decision: relative benefits or harm of (consequence) should also take in to consideration**
  - ***The Resolution Principle***

7.The Resolution Principle

- **Issue should be considered resolved if the**
  - **Argument for one of the alternative positions is a structurally good**
  - **Argument provides relevant and acceptable ,sufficient reasons to justify the conclusion**
  - **Argument provides effective rebuttal to all serious criticisms of position it supports**

Why are issues not resolved? When

- **When One or more of the parties to the dispute:**
  - ✓ **has a blind spot:** not **objective about the issue at hand and rational but not psychologically convinced by the discussion**
  - ✓ **have been rationally careless**
  - ✓ **has a hidden agenda**
  - ✓ **not being honest with themselves**
  - **are in deep disagreement of underlying assumptions**

- **Critical thinkers:**
  - Are honest, acknowledging what they don't know, recognizing their limitations, and being watchful of their own errors.
  - Regard problems and controversial issues as exciting challenges.
  - Strive for understanding, remain patient with complexity, and are ready to invest time to overcome confusion.
  - Base judgments on evidence rather than personal preferences, deterring judgment whenever evidence is insufficient.
  - Are interested in other people's ideas and so are willing to read and listen attentively, even when they tend to disagree with the other person.
  - Practice restraint, controlling their feelings rather than being controlled by them, and thinking before acting.

Uncritical thinkers:

- believe they know more than they do, ignore their limitations, and assume their views are error-free.
- Regard problems and controversial issues as troubles or threats to their ego.
- Are inpatient with complexity and thus would rather remain confused than make the effort to understand.
- Base judgments on first impressions and they are unconcerned about the amount or quality of evidence
- Are preoccupied with themselves and their own opinions, and so are unwilling to pay attention to others' views.
- Tend to follow their feelings and act spontaneously

- The following are some of the problems that impede critical thinking
- like egocentrism, socio centrism, unwarranted assumptions and stereotype and relativistic thinking.

A. ***Egocentrism:*** is the tendency to see reality as centered on oneself.

- Egocentrics are selfish, self-absorbed people who view their interests, ideas, and values as superior to everyone else‘s

- Ego centrism is manifested in two ways
- self-interested thinking and the superiority bias.

I. **Self-interested thinking:-** is the tendency to accept and defend beliefs that harmonize with one‘s self-interest

- Supporting something or conclusion b/c it in favor of our interest
- So no one is immune from such a kinds of thinking

II. superiority bias: is a tendency to over rate one self or to see one self better in some respect than others

B. Socio centrism

- It is group-centered thinking
- Socio centrism can distort critical thinking in many ways.
- Two of the most important are **group bias** and **conformism**
- **Group bias** is the tendency to see one‘s own group (nation, tribe, sect, peer group, and the like) as being inherently better than others.
- **Conformism** refers to our tendency to follow the crowd - that is, to conform often unthinkingly or emotionally

C. Unwarranted Assumptions and Stereotypes

- **Unwarranted assumption** is some thing taken for granted without any conclusive evidence or without proof
- It is unreasonable which hinders our seeing things very clearly.
- **Stereotype** is one example of unwarranted assumption
- Which means making generalization about large class of people from small sample- hasty generalization

D. Relativistic Thinking

- Relativism is the view that truth is a matter of opinion.
- There are two popular forms of relativism: *subjectivism* and *cultural relativism*.
- **Subjectivism** is the view that truth is a matter of individual opinion.
- Both beliefs are true – *for* them. And what is truth for one individual might be wrong for another
- The other common form of relativism is cultural relativism.
- This is the view that truth is a matter of social or cultural norms.

- Eg. According to cultural relativism, therefore, drinking wine is immoral in Iran but is morally permissible in France.

E. Wishful Thinking

- It refers to a state of believing something not because you had good evidence for it but simply because you wished it were true