

## CLEAR AND CRITICAL THINKING

The Business Dictionary defines clear thinking as “Reasoning unclouded by biases, prejudices, hopes and fears, and uncritically accepted [assumptions](#) or facts. See also [critical thinking](#).”<sup>1</sup> Critical thinking is defined as “[Objective examination](#) of [assumptions](#) (adopted rules of thumb) underlying [current beliefs](#) to assess their correctness and legitimacy, and thus to [validate](#) or invalidate the beliefs.”<sup>2</sup> This leads me to believe in order for this process to be successful the two of these must work together.

According to Rudinow and Barry, “critical thinking is a process that emphasizes a rational basis for what we believe and provides standards and procedures for analyzing, testing, and evaluating our belief.”<sup>3</sup> Steve Williams writes, “Critical thinking enables us to understand and deal with the positions of others and to clarify and comprehend our own thoughts as well.”<sup>4</sup> A fellow friend shared with me some lecture notes she received concerning critical thinking in a lecture in 1985. Critical thinking can become beneficial but can also become dangerous stated her professor. “For many decisions, it pays to be skeptical and think critically. Critical thinking requires that we educate ourselves about all the facts, not just those being supplied to us by people attempting to persuade us toward a particular course of action. If we actively apply critical thinking skills, we must be willing to acknowledge that some of our previously held

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1 "What is clear thinking? Definition and meaning," BusinessDictionary.com, accessed September 20, 2017, <http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/clear-thinking.html>.

2 Ibid.

3 Joel Rudinow and Vincent E. Barry, *Invitation to critical thinking* (Australia: Thomson Wadsworth, 2008).

4 Steve W. Williams, *Making Better Business Decisions* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2001), 2-3.

beliefs are possibly in error, and we must be ready to alter our stand if convincing evidence is presented, regardless of how personally appealing our opinions may be.”<sup>5</sup>

“The intellectual roots of critical thinking are as ancient as its etymology, traceable, ultimately, to the teaching practice and vision of Socrates 2,500 years ago who discovered by a method of probing questioning that people could not rationally justify their confident claims to knowledge. Confused meanings, inadequate evidence, or self-contradictory beliefs often lurked beneath smooth but largely empty rhetoric. Socrates established the fact that one cannot depend upon those in "authority" to have sound knowledge and insight. He demonstrated that persons may have power and high position and yet be deeply confused and irrational. He established the importance of asking deep questions that probe profoundly into thinking before we accept ideas as worthy of belief.”<sup>6</sup>

As I continued to research the topic of clear and critical thinking; it became obvious that this is also extremely important as a part of the writing process. My thoughts were confirmed when I located this article titled *The Relationship between Clear and Critical Thinking and Writing*. “Critical thinking can lead to clearer thinking and clearer writing. During writing, especially when writing for a given audience, it is necessary to engage in critical thinking when planning out an argument and providing the premises and conclusions. When critical thinking is not applied, our thoughts come across as unstable, and arcane. Critical thinking, however, allows us to better word our thoughts, making our paragraph more concise and usable.”<sup>7</sup>

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5 Ibid.94.

6 Richard Paul, Linda Elder, and Ted Bartell, "A Brief History of the Idea of Critical Thinking," *The Critical Thinking Community*, March 1997, , accessed September 20, 2017, <https://www.criticalthinking.org/pages/a-brief-history-of-the-idea-of-critical-thinking/408>

My friend shared her resources with me as a simplified way on how to apply clear and critical thinking to my process of writing and thought process. Her words were as followed which I am sure some may be from other sources (textbook)<sup>8</sup>. “Identifying the critical thinker within myself may consist of acknowledging and embracing the attributes of a critical thinker that others as well as myself recognize based on the decisions I make in life. The attributes of a critical thinker that she had a tendency to portray:

- Verify and consider the credibility of the source from which the information is coming from.
- Analyze the information available with some degree of skepticism: not always taking things at face value.
- Gather as much relevant information as possible on the subject in question.
- Ponder the evidence or information in order to find truthfulness and the most beneficial answer to all involved.
- Consider alternative explanations and their degree of fit with the existing data.
- Test the convictions of their decisions as much as necessary
- Not being passive
- Have solid reasons and justifications for accepting and rejecting information put to her.”

After reading about her critical thinker within herself; I began to look at myself in the mirror to see if I possess the skills of a clear and critical thinker. Do I? The answer is yes, no maybe so... This essay is causing me to become reflective of who I have been as a writer and a thinker. I love to write. I love to research. However, the question is now is have I been doing it in a clear and critical way? Have I been using the tools of clear and critical thinking? I have always taken for granted that writing is a passion for me so it's no problem. However, I am seeing the struggle

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7 I. J. Quitadamo, M. J. Kurtz, and L. B. Resnick, "The Relationship Between Clear and Critical Thinking and Writing," UniversalClass.com,, accessed September 20, 2017, <https://www.universalclass.com/articles/business/critical-thinking-skills/the-relationship-between-clear-and-critical-thinking-and-writing.htm>.

8 Ibid.

to navigate through this on-line writing class. Something that I believed was my greatest strength is now beginning to look like my weakness. I am not so sure if this is a course that I should have taken on line. This is only my second semester trying on line classes. But whatever, it may be the journey continues and I continue to take the skills that I have and work with them.

In this assignment, I have come across some great tips to use to make sure that I am consistently and conscientiously engaging in clear and critical thinking. “When writing a piece, and even when reading someone else's writing, critical thinking comes into play throughout the activity. Critical thinking allows you to determine, when writing:

1. Is my idea/argument a good or a bad one?
2. Is my idea/argument valid and defensible? Or is it invalid and indefensible?
3. Is my position on the issue rational and reasonable?
4. Do I deal with the complexity of the situation or do I use clichés and stereotypes to get points across?
5. Do I delve deep into the topic or only touch upon surface issues?
6. Do I address other points of view properly?
7. Do I question my own ideas and test them for validity?
8. Do I have specific goals in mind with this writing?

It is important in critical writing that the writing critical thinker engaged in self-assessment and self-improvement. The various levels of thinking are all assessed, for validity, precision, accuracy and context. There should be **integrity** to the whole writing process”<sup>9</sup>

The word integrity resonates with me. Integrity is built by defeating the temptation to be dishonest; humility grows when we refuse to be prideful; and endurance develops every time you reject the temptation to give up.” ~ Rick Warren That quotes says it all for me. I will continue the journey to stay on the path and to become a better writer, critical thinker, and student of The Word. Proverbs 10:9 Whoever walks in integrity walks securely, but he who makes his ways crooked will be found out.

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9 Ibid.