
Summer 2018 Apologetics Series

Critical Thinking

Outline

- What is critical thinking?
- What the Bible says
- Hallmarks of critical thinkers
- The core element of critical thinking
- What we can do

What is critical thinking?

"Critical thinking is the intellectually disciplined process of actively and skillfully conceptualizing, applying, analyzing, synthesizing, and/or evaluating information gathered from, or generated by, observation, experience, reflection, reasoning, or communication, as a guide to belief and action."

--Michael Scriven & Richard Paul
8th Annual International Conference on
Critical Thinking and Education Reform, 1987

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**Suspending
Judgment**



**Weighing
Information**



**Making a
Decision**

What is critical thinking?

- Unconscious biases
 - availability heuristic & salience biases, for example
 - Logical fallacies
 - *argumentum ad hominem* & *onus probandi*, for example
 - Argumentation theory
 - *a fortiori* arguments, premises, & hypothetical syllogisms
-

What is critical thinking?

- *Krites* meaning “a judge”
 - God appears over and over as a judge in the Bible
 - Gen 18:25, Rom 2:6, 1 Cor 4:4-5, Heb 10:30
- Forms: *krima krivo krisis* and others
- *Kritikos* meaning “able to judge (or discern)”
 - Appears once in Hebrews 4:12

What the Bible Says

- John 5:30
- John 7:24
- Matthew 7:1
- 1 Peter 3:15
- 2 Tim 3:16-17
- 1 Thess 5:21
- Col 2:1-10
- Phil 1:19
- Heb 5:14
- Matt 16:3
- Prov 1:2-7
- Prov 2:1-9
- 1 Cor 2:6-7, 12-15
- Isaiah 40:13-14
- Isaiah 1:18
- Prov 14:15
- Acts 17:11
- 1 John 4:1

What the Bible Says

Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but **test the spirits** to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world. --I John 4:1

Now these Jews were more noble than those in Thessalonica; they received the word with all eagerness, **examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so.** --Acts 17:11

But **test everything**; hold fast what is good. --I Thess. 5:21

Hallmarks of critical thinkers

- *Observe*
- *Aware of bias(es)*
- *Tolerant of ambiguity*
- *Don't accept claims at face value*
- *Honest with themselves*
- *Resist manipulation*
- *Reflective, not reactive*
- *Withhold judgment*
- *Deductive & inductive reasoning*
- *Gather information from credible sources*
- *Resistant to social pressure*
- *Infer*
- *Listen*
- *Ask questions*

Hallmarks of critical thinkers

ELEMENT	PROMPTS
Purpose/Objective	<i>What am I trying to accomplish?</i>
Question(s) at Issue	<i>What are the key questions I need to think through?</i>
Assumptions	<i>What am I taking for granted that might not be correct?</i>
Point of View	<i>What other perspectives should I consider?</i>
Information	<i>What data, information or evidence do I need?</i>
Concepts	<i>What concepts, ideas and frameworks can guide my thinking?</i>
Inferences	<i>What inferences am I making from the evidence?</i>
Implications	<i>If my reasoning is correct, what consequences would follow?</i>

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The Main Element: An Argument

- Argument Format
 1. Reason 1
 2. Reason 2

∴ A conclusion
- “Premise” is a fancy word for “reason”
- Premises help us answer the question of why we should believe an argument
 - In other words, does it “add up”?

Is this a valid argument?

1. People who go to the gym are in good shape.
 2. People in Folsom go to the gym.
- ∴ People in Folsom are in good shape.

1. All stones are divine.
 2. Anything divine is worthy of worship.
- ∴ Any stone is worthy of worship.

Conclusions can be tricky

He is inconsiderate because he damaged my reputation and refused to pay me the money he owed me.

1. He damaged my reputation.
 2. He refused to pay me the money he owed me.
- ∴ He is inconsiderate.

Let's try this out

1. Vestigial organs are useless leftovers from our evolutionary past.
 2. Humans & animals have vestigial organs.
- ∴ Humans & animals must have evolved.
-
1. The Bible contains miracles.
 2. Miracles violate the laws of nature.
- ∴ The Bible must not be true.

Let's try this out

1. Carbon dating is a constant measurement showing the age of organic objects.
 2. The Dead Sea Scrolls were carbon-dated to ~2000 years ago.
- ∴ The Dead Sea Scrolls help to prove the integrity of the Bible.

Let's try this out

1. Carbon dating is a constant measurement showing the age of organic objects.
 2. Organic materials worldwide have been carbon-dated to millions of years ago.
- ∴ Carbon dating proves the earth is millions of years old.

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Arguments evolution supporters shouldn't use



Carbon dating proves millions of years [\[edit\]](#)

The first problem with this argument is the length of time asserted. No method of radiometric dating is reliable when the time involved is more than several times the half-life of the radioisotope. Since the half-life of carbon-14 is 5730 years, there is no way carbon dating, as opposed to any of the many other methods of radiometric dating, could prove an age of more than a few tens of thousands of years.

But the real problem is deeper than this. In other methods of radiometric dating, there are ways to determine how much of the radioisotope was originally in the sample. With radiocarbon dating, this is not possible to do directly, i.e. solely on the basis of measurements on the object in question. Creationists will argue that the ratio of carbon-14 to carbon-12 was drastically smaller in the past, and even secular scientists claim that the ratio has varied substantially in the past few tens of thousands of years. How do they know this? By comparing the *apparent* radiocarbon age (i.e., the age calculated on the assumption that the ratio has always been what it is now) with the ages calculated by other methods, such as historical dates (for the last few thousand years), tree rings (dendrochronology), regular layers of sediment (varves), layers in coral, dating of speleothems (stalagmites) by other radiometric methods, etc. The point is that the proof of the absolute age does not come ultimately from radiocarbon, but from these other methods.

While carbon dating is useful for many purposes, including increasing the confidence of other absolute dating methods by enabling them to be correlated with one another, it is a lousy method to use when you want to know how old the [Earth](#) is.

What We Can Do

- Facilitate discussion
 - Challenge others to **clarify** assumptions and beliefs
 - Probe comments and questions to **discover assumptions**
 - Challenge others to **justify** their ideas and assumptions with evidence
 - Ask for other **perspectives**
 - Challenge others to come up with ideas about the **consequences of beliefs and actions**

What We Can Do

- Ask questions
 - What do you mean by _____?
 - Where do you get your information?
 - How do you know this is true?
 - Is the source credible?
 - Others?