

## Ankara Üniversitesi Açık Ders Notları

### PHI 106 CRITICAL THINKING

#### TOPIC 1:

“Critical thinking is judicious reasoning about what to believe and, therefore, what to do.

(Note my assumption that what you do depends on what you believe—that is, that you act according to your beliefs.)

Judicious reasoning is deliberate and thorough.

Being deliberate implies an intentional consideration of, a responsible attitude toward, ideas, values, and so forth.

Being thorough requires, among other things, an appreciation of the breadth and depth of the issue in question, of the complexities of the issue.

As such, critical thinking is a skill.

It's not something you can just memorize or look up.

And it's a multi-dimensional skill—take a look at the list of skills involved, according to critical thinking guru Richard Paul.

And, as a skill, it's something you get better at, gradually, with practice.

While it is possible to think critically about something just for the fun of it (and I mean that quite sincerely), critical thinking is *judgmental*.

It's thinking carefully about something in order to evaluate it and ultimately decide whether or not it's something you should accept.

So critical thinking is a how-not-to-be-gullible kind of thing.

And of course often people aren't really making a point, they're just talking.

And that's okay. As long as they don't think they're making a point, as opposed to expressing themselves or describing something.

Consider, for example, a student who declares, "I need an extension on this assignment!" Until the student explains why an extension is needed, the statement is just an expression of need, or, more likely, of desire.

So how does one judge or evaluate an argument? Well, that depends on what kind of argument it is.

For now, let's just say there are deductive arguments and inductive arguments. For deductive arguments, if the supporting statements or premises are true, and if the structure is valid, following the rules of reasoning, then you've got a good argument. In fact, you've got a sound argument: the conclusion necessarily follows from true premises.

For inductive arguments, if the supporting statements are true or at least acceptable, if they're relevant, and if they're sufficient or adequate, you've got a good argument. The conclusion probably follows from the premises; the higher the probability, the stronger the argument. So you'll accept or reject inductive arguments with more or less certainty. Keep in mind, however, that in many cases, certainty is a sign of shallow thinking! So sometimes you won't accept or reject the argument—you'll suspend judgment until you've got more evidence.

Critical thinking is "playing devil's advocate" as a matter of routine.

The phrase “playing devil’s advocate” is a very unfortunate one: it suggests that presenting or considering arguments for a claim you don’t at the moment accept is somehow mischievous, even evil.

On the contrary, presenting or considering arguments for a claim you don’t currently accept is a good thing. It’s something to be done quite seriously, not as a mere game. After all, how will you know what to accept if you don’t consider all the possibilities?”

(Compiled from Peg Tittle’s Critical Thinking Textbook)