



EXERCISES

Exercises marked with * have answers in “Answers to Exercises” (Appendix A).

Exercise 2.1

- *1. According to the text’s definition of critical thinking, what factors must be present for critical thinking to be realized?
2. What are the two main categories of common obstacles to critical thinking?
3. What did W. K. Clifford say about the morality of believing claims?
4. What is stereotyping?
- *5. From the standpoint of critical thinking, what event signals that we have allowed our bias in favor of ourselves to go too far?
6. According to the text, what effect can our urge to save face have on our thinking?
- *7. When are you most likely to let your self-interest get in the way of clear thinking?
8. How does subjective relativism imply infallibility?
9. How are subjective and social relativism self-defeating?
10. According to the text, how might selective attention affect your thinking when you are examining evidence for or against a claim?
- *11. How might the influence of a group that you belong to affect your attempts to think critically?
12. According to the text, what is the most powerful group pressure of all?
13. What is the appeal to popularity?
- *14. What is a worldview?
15. In order to know something, must it be beyond all possible doubt? Why or why not?
16. According to the text, how could subjective relativism make critical thinking unnecessary?
- *17. Is critical thinking concerned with the *objective* or the *subjective* truth of claims?
18. What is social relativism?
19. What is philosophical skepticism?
20. Does our knowledge require certainty?
- *21. What kind of doubt is involved in the acquisition of knowledge?

Exercise 2.2


For each of the following passages, indicate whether it contains examples of self-interested thinking, face-saving, or group pressure. Some of these are really tough.

- *1.** Mary: Animals have the same rights as humans.
Jenna: What makes you think that?
Mary: I love animals, and there are so many that are treated horribly all over the world. It's heartbreaking.
- 2.** Jonathan: My essay is better than Julio's.
Betty: Why do you think yours is better than all the others? Do you agree that the content and writing of all the essays are similar?
Jonathan: Well, yes.
Betty: Do you agree that all the other benchmarks of quality are nearly identical?
Jonathan: Yes, but mine is still better.
- 3.** Dear friends, as your state senator I will continue my tireless work on your behalf. I will continue to use my considerable talents to make this district even better. I will continue to let my integrity be the guide for all my actions.
- *4.** We cannot allow those people to move into this neighborhood. They're not like us.
- 5.** I oppose women becoming members of this club. If I endorsed their claims, every friend I've got in the club would turn his back on me.
- 6.** His statements about the West Bank are all false, of course. He's an Israeli.
- *7.** Christianity is superior to all other religions. I was raised Christian, and all my relatives are Christians. This is the only religion I've known, and the only one I need.
- 8.** I'm due for tenure next year, so I am in favor of continuing the tradition of tenure at this university.
- 9.** The United States is the greatest nation on the face of the earth. I don't know anything about other countries, and I don't want to know.
- *10.** If Joan is appointed to the committee, I am guaranteed to have a job for the rest of my life. I wholeheartedly favor Joan's appointment.
- 11.** Free speech should not extend to pornographers. Right now they are allowed to espouse their smut on the Internet and many other places. That's just not how I was raised.

Exercise 2.3

Read each of the following claims. Then select from the list any statements that, if true, would constitute good reasons for accepting the claim. Be careful: In some questions, none of the choices are correct.

- *1.** John: The newspaper account of the charges of pedophilia lodged against Father J. Miller, a Catholic priest in our town, should never have been printed.
- The charges are false.
 - John is a Catholic.


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- c. Important evidence that would exonerate Father Miller was not mentioned in the newspaper account.
 - d. The town is predominantly Catholic.
 2. Alice: The speed limit on I-95 should be 70 mph.
 - a. Raising the speed limit to 70 mph would result in faster and safer traffic.
 - b. The state commission on highways did a study showing that I-95 should have a limit of 70 mph.
 - c. Alice travels I-95 every day and needs to drive 70 mph to get to work on time.
 - d. Alice drives I-95 every day.
 - *3. Janette: Women are less violent and less emotional than men.
 - a. A study from Harvard shows that women are less violent and less emotional than men.
 - b. Janette is a woman.
 - c. Janette is a member of a group of women who are fighting for the rights of women.
 - d. Janette and all her friends are women.
 4. Brie: People should buy stock in IBM, an action that will push the price per share higher.
 - a. Brie owns a large proportion of IBM stock.
 - b. Brie is chair of the board at IBM.
 - c. The stock market is weak.
 - d. Brie has a large family to support.
 5. Colonel Stockton: The United States should attack the terrorists in Iran, even at the risk of a full-scale war with Arab states.
 - a. The terrorists have humiliated Colonel Stockton's forces.
 - b. The terrorists have humiliated the United States.
 - c. Colonel Stockton is loyal to his troops, all of whom want to attack the terrorists in Iran.
 - d. Attacking the terrorists in Iran would cause no casualties and would result in world peace.
 - *6. Morgan: Capital punishment is always wrong.
 - a. All of Morgan's friends agree that capital punishment is wrong.
 - b. If Morgan favored capital punishment, her friends would abandon her.
 - c. Morgan is president of the Anti-Capital Punishment League.
 - d. Morgan has already made her views known and cannot change her mind without seeming to be inconsistent.

7. Angelo: Marijuana should be legalized.
 - a. All of Angelo's friends smoke marijuana.
 - b. Legalizing marijuana would reduce the consumption of marijuana and save lives, money, and resources.
 - c. Angelo has already said on television that marijuana should be legalized.
 - d. Angelo likes to smoke marijuana.

Exercise 2.4

Read each of the following passages. Indicate whether it contains examples of the kind of group pressure that encourages people to conform (peer pressure or appeal to popularity) or the type that urges people to think that one's own group is better than others. For each example of group pressure, specify the possible negative consequences. A couple of these are very difficult to classify.

- *1. Ortega is deeply religious, attending church regularly and trying to abide by church law and the Scriptures. He has never considered any other path. He believes that laws should be passed that forbid people to shop on Sunday and that designate Easter as a national holiday.
2. John goes to a prestigious college where many students use illegal drugs. Nearly everyone in John's frat house uses them. So far, he hasn't tried any, but his frat brothers frequently ask if he wants some. And he has noticed that he is rarely invited to any frat parties.
- *3. A northeast college has invited a famous writer to be a guest speaker in the campus-wide distinguished speaker series. She is an accomplished poet and essayist. She is also a Marxist and favors more socialism in the United States. During her speech she is shouted down by a small group of conservative students and faculty.
4. Yang Lei is a conservative columnist for one of the best conservative journals in the country. But she yearns for greener pastures—namely, a regular column for a weekly newsmagazine. She gets her dream job, though the magazine does have liberal leanings. The first few columns she writes for the magazine are a shock to her friends. Politically they are middle-of-the-road or even suspiciously liberal.
5. Alex is a fourth-grade teacher at a suburban elementary school in Tennessee. He is liked by students and teachers alike, and he has superior teaching skills. He is also a homosexual. When a group of fundamentalist Christians learn that Alex is gay, they pressure the school board to fire him.
6. Sylvia writes a column for the university newspaper. In her last installment, she argues that in a time of national crisis, the US Justice Department should have the power to arrest and detain literally anyone suspected of terrorism. Her arguments are well supported and presented with a tone of tolerance for those who disagree with her. And



most students do disagree—vehemently. Hundreds of letters to the editor arrive at the newspaper, each one denouncing Sylvia and calling her a fascist and a few names that could not be published. In Sylvia's next column, she apologizes for her statements, says that she made serious errors, and declares that her statements should be viewed as hypothetical.

- *7. Advertisement: When you make the best car in the world, everyone wants it. Audi XK2. A car in demand.

Exercise 2.5

Read each of the following scenarios. Indicate whether it contains examples of self-interested thinking or face-saving and, for each instance, specify the possible negative consequences.

- *1. Barbara thinks that she is a superior student with excellent writing and math skills. She frequently says so to her friends and sometimes ridicules other people's grades and test scores. She predicts that her SAT scores will be in the 2100s. When she finally takes the test, she's calm, alert, and eager to get a fantastic score. Afterwards she says that she feels great. Her scores come back in the 1200s. She explains that the test doesn't count because it's obviously scored wrong and, besides, she's not a good test taker.
- *2. City assemblyman Jackson is in a position to cast the deciding vote on two proposals for the development of a new city park. Proposal 1 offers a parcel of land near the assemblyman's house, which affords him a beautiful view. Its drawbacks are that it costs twice as much as proposal 2 and cannot be easily accessed by most of the public. Proposal 2 suggests a parcel of land near the center of town. It is convenient to the public, has a more beautiful setting, and will raise property values in the area. Assemblyman Jackson says that the obvious best choice is proposal 1.
- 3. Antonio is a college student who responds predictably to his scores on tests. If the score is high, he remarks that he hardly studied at all and that his score ranks among the highest in the class. If the scores are low, he says that the instructor grades unfairly, that the test was flawed, and that he intends to protest his grade to the grade-review committee.
- 4. Sheila is a bright medical scientist. For years she has been working on a series of clinical studies that could establish her favorite medical hypothesis—that high doses of vitamin E can cure skin cancer. Each study in the series has added more evidence suggesting that the hypothesis is probably true. The last study in the series is crucial. It is a much larger study than the others, and it will confirm or invalidate the usefulness of vitamin E for skin cancer. When the study is completed, she examines the

data. Instead of confirming her hypothesis, the study suggests not only that her pet idea is unfounded but also that the doses of vitamin E used are toxic, causing terrible side effects in patients. She concludes, though, that the study results do not disconfirm her hypothesis but are merely inconclusive.

5. David and Max are in a heated debate about the theory of biological evolution. David rejects the theory in favor of creationism, which says that life on Earth was created or facilitated by a supreme intelligence. Max rejects creationism in favor of evolution. David marshals an abundance of facts that seem to prove his case. In addition, he alleges that evolution is false because there are huge gaps in the fossil record suggesting that there has never been a smooth, tidy progression of species from earlier forms to later forms. Max has no answer for this fossil-record gap argument and looks exasperated. David is about to declare victory when Max suddenly begins to quote the research findings of reputable biologists showing that there really are no gaps. After the debate some of Max's friends quietly congratulate him for being clever enough to quote research findings that are fictitious.



Self-Assessment Quiz

Answers appear in "Answers to Self-Assessment Quizzes" in Appendix B.

1. According to the definition of critical thinking given in the text, what factors must be present for critical thinking to be realized?
2. From the standpoint of critical thinking, what event signals that we have allowed our bias in favor of ourselves to go too far?
3. According to the text, how might selective attention affect our thinking when we are examining evidence for or against a claim?
4. According to the text, what is probably the most powerful group pressure of all?
5. According to the text, what is a worldview?
6. What kind of doubt is involved in the acquisition of knowledge?
7. According to the text, why is it important to look for opposing evidence when evaluating claims?

Read each of the following scenarios. Indicate whether it contains examples of self-interested thinking, face-saving, or both.

8. Edgar predicts that Horace Windblower will win the 2016 presidential election. In fact, he bets money on it and brags that he always predicts the winners. Windblower loses by the widest margin in US history. At first,

Edgar refuses to pay the bet but finally relents. He claims that the election was rigged from the very beginning.

9. Lois strongly believes in UFO abductions—people being kidnapped by space aliens. She says that she has absolute proof: a small piece of metal that she says is “not of this earth” and a cut on her shin that she says came from alien probes. However, several metallurgists in the area say that the piece of metal is ordinary aluminum. And her daughter reminds her that she got the cut on her shin when she ran into a desk drawer. Lois doesn’t say anything else about her “evidence,” and she asserts that the real proof is in the skies in the form of alien spacecraft.
10. One day Julie and Jill hear their instructor read a list of arguments for and against abortion. Half the arguments are pro, and half con. Julie is on the pro side, Jill on the con side. Later when they discuss the abortion arguments, they recall the facts differently. Julie remembers that most of the arguments were for abortion rights. Jill remembers only the arguments against abortion and can’t recall any pro arguments.

Specify whether the following passages are examples of face-saving, self-serving, or group-pressure thinking, or a combination of these.

11. The world would be better off if everything were run by Republicans.
12. Everyone believes in affirmative action. That fact alone ought to convince you to do the same.
13. Look, every student I know cheats on exams once in a while. So why not you? Why do you have to be such a Boy Scout?
14. People should do whatever makes them happy.
15. Congressman Hornblower: Anyone who doesn’t believe in God shouldn’t have a say in how this nation is run. I don’t think that atheists should even be citizens.
16. Yes, I smoked marijuana in college, but I didn’t inhale.
17. In the United States about 75 percent of the population has some kind of religious belief or denominational affiliation. In light of this, how can you say you’re an unbeliever? If you’re an unbeliever, you’re un-American.

Read each of the following statements and indicate whether it is an example of the subjectivist fallacy or social relativism.

18. This may not be your truth, but it’s my truth.
19. It’s true for me that killing innocent civilians is morally wrong. It may not be true for you.
20. Chinese diplomat: My country cannot be judged by some universal standard. It must be judged by its own unique criteria and norms.



Writing Assignments

Select an issue from the following list and write a three-page paper defending a statement pertaining to the issue. Follow the procedure discussed in chapter 12 for identifying a thesis and an appropriate argument to defend it.

- Are the media biased?
- Should a single corporation be allowed to own as many media outlets (newspapers, radio and TV stations, publishers, etc.) as it wants?
- Should the US government be allowed to arrest and indefinitely imprison without trial any American citizen who is suspected of terrorism?
- Should immigrants to the United States ever be banned simply because of their religion?
- Should racial profiling be used to do security screening of airline passengers?