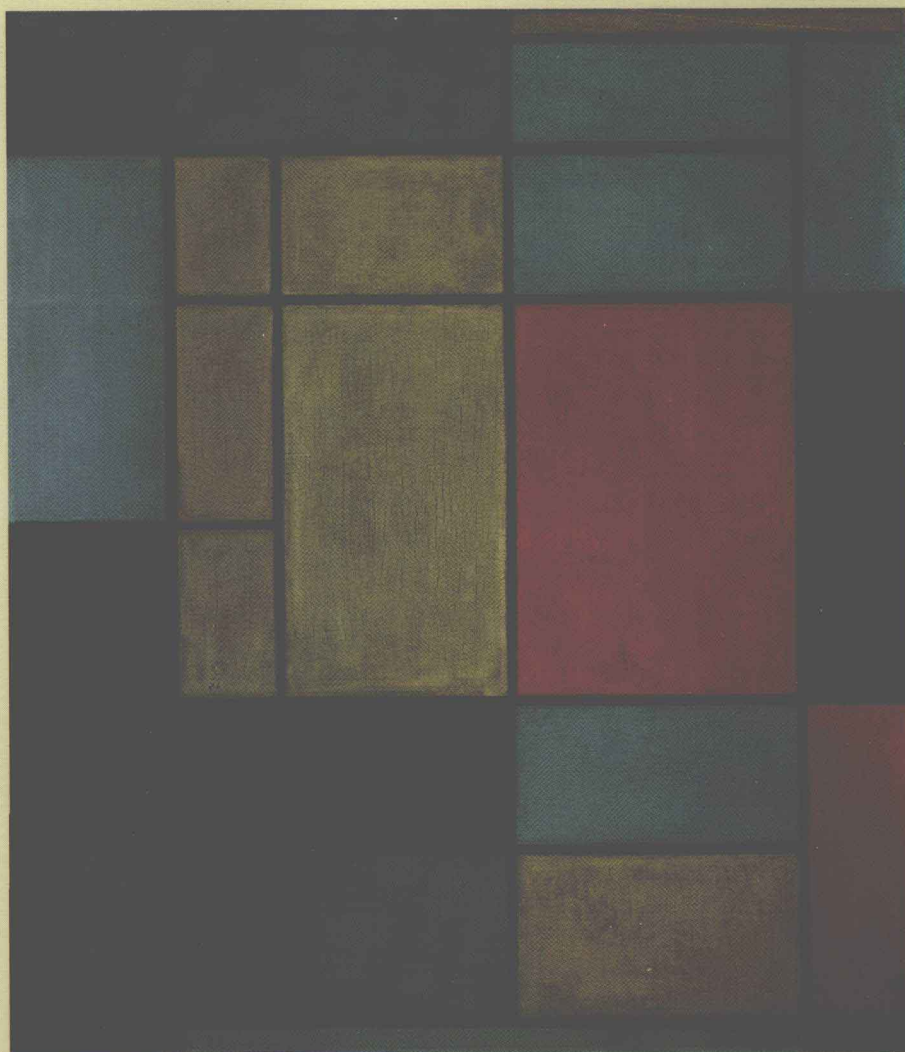


BEYOND FEELINGS

A Guide to Critical Thinking

FIFTH EDITION

Vincent Ryan Ruggiero



Beyond Feelings

A Guide to Critical Thinking

FIFTH EDITION

Vincent Ryan Ruggiero

*Professor Emeritus of Humanities
State University of New York, Delhi*



Mayfield Publishing Company
Mountain View, California
London • Toronto

Copyright © 1998, 1995, 1990, 1984 by Mayfield Publishing Company

All rights reserved. No portion of this book may be reproduced in any form or by any means without written permission of the publisher.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Ruggiero, Vincent Ryan.

Beyond feelings : a guide to critical thinking / Vincent Ryan
Ruggiero. —5th ed.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 1-55934-835-6

1. Critical thinking. I. Title.

BF441.R85 1997

97-18648

153.4'2—dc21

CIP

Manufactured in the United States of America

10 9 8 7 6 5

Mayfield Publishing Company

1280 Villa Street

Mountain View, California 94041

Sponsoring editor, Kenneth King; production, Publishing Support Services; manuscript editor, Tom Briggs; art director and cover designer, Jeanne M. Schreiber; manufacturing manager, Randy Hurst. The text was set in 10/13 Palatino by Publishing Support Services and printed on 45# Ecolocote by Malloy Lithographing, Inc.

Cover image: *Composition I*, 1920. Piet Mondrian. Giraudon/Art Resource, NY.



Printed on recycled paper.



To the memory of Howard Trumble,
whose quiet practice of the skills
detailed in this book was an inspiration
to me, to his family, and to all who knew him



Preface

When the first edition of this book appeared in 1975, the dominant intellectual focus was still subjectivity, *feelings*. That focus, the legacy of the 1960s, was originally a necessary reaction to the rationalism and behaviorism that preceded it. It declared, in effect, “People are not robots. They are more than the sum total of their physiology. They have hopes, dreams, emotions. No two humans are alike—each has a special perspective, a unique way of perceiving the world. And any view of humanity that ignores this subjective side is a distortion.”

Yet, despite its value, the focus on feelings went too far. Like many other movements, what began as a reaction against an extreme view became an extreme view itself. The result of that extremism was the neglect of thinking. This book was designed to answer that neglect. The introduction to the first edition explained its rationale as follows:

The emphasis on subjectivity served to correct a dangerous oversimplification. But it is the kind of reaction that cannot be sustained for long without causing an even worse situation—the neglect of thinking. Worse for two reasons. First, because we live in an age of manipulation. Armies of hucksters and demagogues stand ready with the rich resources of psychology to play upon our emotions and subconscious needs to persuade us that superficial is profound, harmful is beneficial, evil is virtuous. And feelings are especially vulnerable to such manipulation.

Secondly, because in virtually every important area of modern life—law, medicine, government, education, science, business, and community affairs—we are beset with serious problems and complex issues that demand careful gathering and weighing of facts and informed opinions, thoughtful consideration of various conclusions or actions, and judicious selection of the best conclusion or most appropriate action....

[Today’s college student] has been conditioned not to undervalue subjectivity, but to overvalue it. And so he does not need to have his feelings indulged. Rather, he needs to be taught how to sort out his feelings, decide to what extent they have been shaped by external influences, and evaluate them carefully when they conflict among themselves or with the feelings of others. In short, he needs to be taught to think critically.*

*In 1975, “he” was still accepted as a reference to both sexes.

There is an unfortunate tendency among many to view feeling and thought as mutually exclusive, to force a choice between them. If we focus on one, then in their view we must reject the other. But this is mistaken. Feeling and thought are perfectly complementary. Feeling, being more spontaneous, is an excellent beginning to the development of conclusions. And thought, being more deliberate, provides a way to identify the best and most appropriate feeling. Both are natural.

Thinking, however, is less automatic than feeling. To do it well demands a systematic approach and guided practice....

The general attitude toward thinking has changed considerably since the mid-1970s. The view that critical thinking is an important skill to which education should give prominence is no longer a minority view. Hundreds of voices have joined the chorus calling for the addition of critical thinking objectives to existing courses and even the creation of special courses in thinking. There is little disagreement that the challenges of the new millennium will demand minds that can move beyond feelings to clear, impartial, critical problem solving and decision making.

This edition of *Beyond Feelings* retains the four-part design of previous editions. The first five chapters help students understand the *context* in which critical thinking takes place and develop attitudes and ideas that support the development of their critical thinking skills. The next ten chapters help students recognize and solve *problems* that arise in thinking. The final five chapters provide a *strategy* for dealing with issues. A generous selection of contemporary issues for analysis completes the text.

This edition contains a number of refinements. Chapter 2, "What Is Critical Thinking?" has been rearranged, and new material on the mind/brain problem and on intuition has been added. Chapter 4, "What Does It Mean to Know?" includes two new sections, "Testing Your Own Knowledge" and "Is Faith a Form of Knowledge?" Chapter 11, "Oversimplification," includes a discussion of journalism's role in the oversimplification of issues. Chapter 14, "Logical Fallacies," discusses seven additional fallacies. Chapter 19, "Conducting Inquiry," includes a new discussion on the use of electronic indexes in research.

In addition to these changes, a number of new applications have been added, particularly in the final section, "Contemporary Issues for Analysis." And in almost every chapter, explanations of key concepts have been expanded or refined to increase the clarity and focus of the message.

I wish to express my appreciation to all those who contributed to the preparation of this edition. Special thanks to Jeanette Bernhardt, State University of West Georgia; Michael Hailparn, William Paterson College; Mary Jo Hultgren, Central Lakes College; Douglas L. Okey, Spoon River College; Jay Pilzer, Motlow State Community College; Lisa Shoemaker,

State Fair Community College; Catherine G. Thwing, Mohave Community College; Charles E. Weidler, Rowan College of New Jersey; and Marek Wosinski, Arizona State University, as well as Vicki Moran of Publishing Support Services and April Wells-Hayes of Mayfield Publishing Company for their skillful direction of this revision.



Introduction

Beyond Feelings is designed to introduce you to the subject of critical thinking. The subject is undoubtedly new to you because it is not taught in most elementary and secondary schools. In fact, until fairly recently, it was not taught in most colleges. During the 1960s and much of the 1970s, the emphasis was more on subjectivity than on objectivity, more on feeling than on thought.

Over the past fifteen years, however, a number of studies of America's schools have criticized the neglect of critical thinking, and a growing number of educators and leaders in business, industry, and the professions have urged the development of new courses and teaching materials to overcome that neglect.

It is no exaggeration to say that critical thinking is one of the most important subjects you will study in college regardless of your academic major. The quality of your schoolwork, your efforts in your career, your contributions to community life, your conduct of personal affairs—all will depend on your ability to solve problems and make decisions.

The book has four main sections. The first, "The Context," will help you to understand such important concepts as *individuality*, *thinking*, *truth*, *knowledge*, and *opinion* and to overcome attitudes and ideas that obstruct critical thinking. The second section, "The Problems," will teach you to recognize and avoid nine common errors that often occur, singly or in combination, during the thinking process. The third section, "A Strategy," will help you acquire the various skills used in addressing problems and issues. This section includes tips on identifying and overcoming your personal intellectual weaknesses, as well as techniques for becoming more observant, clarifying issues, conducting inquiries, evaluating evidence, analyzing other people's views, and making sound judgments.

At the end of each chapter, you will find a number of applications to challenge your critical thinking and provide exercise for your skills. These applications cover problems and issues both timely and timeless.

The fourth section of the book, "Contemporary Issues for Analysis," presents additional important issues that continue to occupy the attention of the best thinkers of our time.

In brief, *Beyond Feelings* is designed to help you acquire the intellectual skills necessary to solve the exciting problems of today and tomorrow.



Contents

Preface xi

Introduction xv

PART 1 The Context

Chapter 1 Who Are You? 1

The Influence of Time and Place 1

The Influence of Mass Culture 2

The Influence of Psychology 3

Becoming an Individual 6

Applications 7

Chapter 2 What Is Critical Thinking? 9

Mind, Brain, or Both? 10

Critical Thinking Defined 11

Characteristics of Critical Thinkers 13

The Role of Intuition 14

The Basic Activities in Thinking 16

Types of Evidence 16

What Constitutes "Sufficient" Evidence? 19

Critical Thinking and Argument 19

Critical Thinking and Writing 23

Applications 24

Chapter 3 What Is Truth? 26

Where Does It All Begin? 27

Imperfect Perception 28

Imperfect Memory 29

Deficient Information 29

Even the Wisest Can Err 30
Truth Is Discovered, Not Created 31
Applications 33

Chapter 4 What Does It Mean to Know? 36

Requirements of Knowing 36
Testing Your Own Knowledge 37
How We Come to Know 39
Why Knowing Is Difficult 40
A Cautionary Tale 42
Is Faith a Form of Knowledge? 43
Obstacles to Knowledge 44
Applications 45

Chapter 5 How Good Are Your Opinions? 48

Opinions Can Be Mistaken 49
Even Experts Can Be Wrong 50
Kinds of Error 52
Informed Versus Uninformed Opinion 53
Forming Sound Opinions 54
Applications 55

PART 2 The Problems

Chapter 6 The Basic Problem: "Mine Is Better" 59

Egocentric People 60
Ethnocentric People 61
Controlling "Mine-Is-Better" Thinking 62
Applications 64

Chapter 7 Resistance to Change 67

Insecurity and Fear 68
Fear and Tradition 69
Overcoming Resistance to Change 70
Applications 71

Chapter 8 Conformity 75

Internal and External Pressures to Conform 76
"Groupthink" 77
Avoiding Mindless Conformity 78
Applications 79

Chapter 9	Face-Saving	82
Face-Saving Situations		82
Causes and Effects of Face-Saving		83
Controlling Face-Saving Tendencies		85
Applications		86
Chapter 10	Stereotyping	89
Facts Don't Matter		90
Contradictions in Stereotypes		91
Causes of Stereotyping		92
Effects of Stereotyping		93
Avoiding Stereotyping		94
Applications		94
Chapter 11	Oversimplification	97
Oversimplification Distorts		97
Causes of Oversimplification		99
A Special Problem: Modern Journalism		100
Avoiding Oversimplification		100
Applications		102
Chapter 12	Hasty Conclusion	104
Weighing Both Sides		104
The Harm Can Be Great		105
Causes of Hasty Conclusions		106
Getting the Facts		107
Avoiding Hasty Conclusions		108
Applications		108
Chapter 13	Unwarranted Assumption	111
Assumptions Reflect Outlook		112
Popular Unwarranted Assumptions		113
Recognizing Unwarranted Assumptions		115
Applications		117
Chapter 14	Logical Fallacies	119
Errors of Perspective		119
Errors of Procedure		120
Errors of Reaction		126
Evaluating Arguments		127
Applications		128

Chapter 15 The Problems in Combination 130

Examining the Problems in Combination 130

Avoiding the Problems in Combination 132

Applications 134

PART 3 A Strategy

Chapter 16 Knowing Yourself 138

Critical Thinking Inventory 139

Using Your Inventory 140

Challenge and Reward 141

Applications 141

Chapter 17 Being Observant 144

Observing People 144

Observation in Science and Medicine 145

The Range of Application 146

Becoming More Observant 147

Reflecting on Your Observations 148

Applications 149

Chapter 18 Clarifying Issues 151

How to Clarify an Issue 151

Sample Issue: Pornography 152

Sample Issue: Boxing 153

Sample Issue: Juvenile Crime 154

Applications 156

Chapter 19 Conducting Inquiry 158

Some Inquiry Results Inconclusive 158

Where to Look for Information 159

How Much Inquiry Is Enough? 163

Managing Extended Arguments 166

Applications 168

Chapter 20 Forming a Judgment 175

Evaluating Evidence 176

Evaluating Your Sources' Arguments 178

Making Important Distinctions 181

Expressing Judgments 182
Applications 187

PART 4 Contemporary Issues for Analysis 191

Applications 192

Notes 199

Index 207



CHAPTER 1

Who Are You?

Suppose someone asked, “Who are you?” It would be simple enough to respond with your name. But if the person wanted to know the entire story about who you are, the question would be more difficult to answer. You’d obviously have to give the details of your height and age and weight. You’d also have to include all your sentiments and preferences, even the secret ones you’d never shared with anyone—your affection for your loved ones; your desire to please the people you associate with; your dislike of your older sister’s husband; your allegiance to your favorite beverage, brand of clothing, and music.

Your attitudes couldn’t be overlooked either—your impatience when an issue gets complex, your aversion to certain courses, your fear of high places and dogs and speaking in public. The list would go on. To be complete, it would have to include all your characteristics—not only the physical but the emotional and intellectual as well.

To provide all that information would be quite a chore. But suppose the questioner was still curious and asked, “How did you get the way you are?” If your patience were not yet exhausted, chances are you’d answer something like this: “I’m this way because I choose to be, because I’ve considered other sentiments and preferences and attitudes and made my selections. The ones I chose fit my style and personality best.” That answer is a natural enough one, and in part it’s true. But in a larger sense it’s not true. The impact of the world on all of us is much greater than we usually realize.

The Influence of Time and Place

Not only are you a member of a particular species, *Homo sapiens*, but you exist at a particular moment in the history of that species. Life today is quite different from life thirty years ago, and very different from life in A.D. 1500 or 10,000 B.C.

The world's state of progress differs, and likewise its knowledge and beliefs and values. The opportunities for learning and working and relaxing are not the same. So people's daily thoughts and actions vary.

Variations in place and circumstance also can make a difference. If you're from a large city, the odds are you look at many things differently from someone in the country. A person raised for eighteen years in New York City or Los Angeles who goes to college in a town of three thousand will find the experience difficult. So will a person raised on an isolated farm. But probably for opposite reasons!

If you are an American sports enthusiast, you're probably interested in football, baseball, or basketball. But if you were Chinese, you'd be much more familiar with and excited about Ping-Pong; and if you were European, soccer. If one of your parents is an automobile mechanic, you undoubtedly know more about cars than the average person. If the other is a teacher, you'll tend to have a somewhat different perspective on school and teachers than do other students.

In much the same way, all the details about the members of your family very likely have some bearing on who you are. Their religion, race, national origin, political affiliation, economic level, and attitudes toward one another all have made some contribution to your identity.

Of course, you may have rejected your parents' beliefs and values. Still, whether you accepted or rejected what your parents tried to teach you, your present views grew out of those teachings. In forming your views, you were responding to your upbringing. Given different parents with a different culture and different values—growing up, say, in Istanbul rather than Dubuque—your response would necessarily have been different. You would, in that sense, not have been the same person.

The Influence of Mass Culture

In centuries past, family and teachers were the dominant, and sometimes the only, influence on children. Today, however, the influence exerted by mass culture (the broadcast media, newspapers, magazines, and popular music) often is greater.

By age eighteen the average teenager has spent 11,000 hours in the classroom and 22,000 hours in front of the television set. He or she has done perhaps 13,000 school lessons, yet has watched more than 750,000 commercials. By age thirty-five the same person has had fewer than 20,000 school lessons, yet has watched approximately 45,000 hours of television and seen close to two million commercials.

What effects does mass culture have on us? To answer, we need only consider the formats and devices commonly used. Modern advertising typically bombards the public with slogans and testimonials by celebri-

ties. This approach is designed to appeal to emotions and create artificial needs for products and services. As a result, many people develop the habit of responding emotionally, impulsively, and gullibly to such appeals.

Television programmers use frequent scene shifts and sensory appeals such as car crashes, violence, and sexual encounters to keep audience interest from diminishing. Then they add frequent commercial interruptions. This author has studied the attention shifts that television viewers are subjected to. In a dramatic program, for example, attention shifts might include camera angle changes;* shifts in story line from one set of characters (or subplot) to another, or from a present scene to a past one (flash-back) or to fantasy; and shifts to “newsbreaks,” to commercial breaks, from one commercial to another, and back to the program. Also included are any shifts of attention that occur *within* commercials. I found as many as 78 shifts per hour, excluding the shifts within commercials. The number of shifts within commercials ranged from 6 to 54 and averaged approximately 17 per fifteen-second commercial. The total number of shifts came out to over 800 attention shifts per hour, or over 14 per minute.**

A century ago, even uneducated Americans were accustomed to listen attentively to political debates lasting five or six hours. And the speakers used bigger words and longer sentences than are common today. What many people today perceive to be dullness in teachers, textbook authors, and work assignments may actually be their own deficiency. Television viewing (and other modern entertainments) may have prevented them from developing a mature attention span and accepting the normal rhythms of life.

Finally, mass culture promotes values that oppose those held by most parents and teachers. Play is presented as more fulfilling than work, self-gratification as more desirable than self-control, and materialism as more meaningful than idealism. People who adopt these values without questioning them may end up sacrificing worthy goals to their pursuit of “a good time” and lots of money.

The Influence of Psychology

The social and psychological theories of our time also have an impact on our beliefs. Before the last few decades, people were urged to be self-

*This is typically accomplished by using two or more cameras and switching from one camera to another.

**There are about eleven minutes of commercials per hour, the exact time varying by network and program. Thus, at a rate of 4 per minute, the total number of commercials per hour is 44. This calculates, therefore, to 78 shifts outside commercials plus 748 shifts within commercials (17 shifts per commercial times 44 commercials per hour) for a total of 826.