

Critical Thinking CCT 601 Reflective Practitioner's Portfolio	<h1>The Thinking Beyond Thinking Manifesto</h1>	Jeremy Szteiter Spring 2007
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*Critical thinking is ultimately a matter of faith.*

**The Paradox of Critical Thinking:** Critical thinking is really about what we are *not* thinking right now.

When we think critically, we recognize that there is a *secret* beyond the assumptions, beliefs, and conclusions that we make right now. Whatever is foremost in our minds at this moment, whatever we decide is the most important, whatever requires our immediate attention - these things somehow still manage to hide this *secret* - it is this secret that is actually at the root of what we want to know in our life. We are aware that the secret is there, but it stands beyond the boundary of our understanding. We must notice that whenever we are thinking of *something*, there is *something else* that we are not considering right now, *something else* that we have missed. We are compelled to be interested and fascinated anyway in this *something else*, as long as we don't make that most human of mistakes and forget it is there altogether. Critical thinking is realizing that this mysterious idea exists and yet knowing that we don't know yet what it is all about. That is the faith of critical thinking.

Critical thinking means that we know, or at least we suspect, that this secret is there and beckons to us to be discovered, and yet it evades us. Even so, we tirelessly search for the meaning of the secret and have *faith* that it is meaningful. This search does not start with the thinking of our mind, but with the deeper instincts of the soul. The moment before the power of our thinking starts working, a deeper core of faith triggers our attraction to this secret. We are beholden to our evolutionary and revolutionary instinct to embrace change by seeking the answer to the secret and trying to figure out what is there, just on the other side of our current thinking, and we imagine how wondrous it must be. We know that whatever we think, however deeply we have considered, examined, and probed, there must remain that elusive secret that represents what is still missing for us. What is most useful at any given moment is to ask the question, "what am I *not* thinking about right now?" That is the faith of critical thinking.

In order to care about that *thing* just beyond our thinking, we must love it without knowing what it is. Even though we may also love the thinking that we are using right now, we must reject it in order to find the secret. Critical thinking is about what *matters* to us the most. It is about exploring what causes us to *care* at the deepest level.

If I wish to be a good teacher, I must ask myself, "why do I care about that?"  
 Because I believe that it is important to assist people in their learning.  
 but I must ask again, "why do I care about *that*?"  
 Because learning enables people to become the best of themselves.  
 but I must ask again, "why do I care about *that*?"  
 Because people who find their potential solve great problems and find great peace.

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but I must ask again, "why do I care about that?"  
and so on.

The revelation that we are seeking in our critical thinking is at the end of that trail of questioning, and we move toward it as long as we keep asking why we care. This secret, though, will always be just out of reach, even though we seem to get closer and closer. Every time we get closer, we realize that we were not as close as we had thought to begin with. Reaching the end of the questioning is not possible, but we are still driven to do so. Critical thinking involves the special level of curiosity that lives not only in our minds but also in each cell - the molecular miracle that transcends biological observation. Any belief that we can reach the end of the trail is illogical and ill-fated. Even if we "know" this, we continue on our search anyway, hopeful and with unwavering dedication. That is the faith of critical thinking.

With any connection we make with others, we hope that they seek their own best interests while looking out for ours as well. If we do not fully know our own mind, then know the minds of others even less. The mind of another person is always beyond reach of our own thinking. Still, we must believe that each other person seeks his or her own secret and is engaged in that same questioning in the search for what matters. As a human race, we must believe that we share a common motive to find the secret, although the differing paths toward this motive fuel much disagreement and conflict in the world. It is the highest privilege to alert others to the joy of the secret, even when we can't know it ourselves. That is the faith of critical thinking.

Critical thinking is about what is beyond our current thinking, so we must take care to notice what is left unspoken and unstated. Any explanation of thinking, including this manifesto, fails to provide the understanding that lives beyond its own words. If, at some point, we discover that we finally understand critical thinking, real enlightenment is to know that we are still missing that crucial something that lies beyond our thinking and that we must reject what makes us so sure about our understanding.

*Critical thinking is ultimately a matter of faith.*

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# The Thinking Beyond Thinking Manifesto

## The Thinker's Pledge of Contradictions

I will be a thinking scientist by making the world my thinking laboratory, AND I will also be a thinking artist by developing my own aesthetic about the nature of thinking and how to communicate it to others.

I will attend to my own thinking and trust my own style, AND I will also encourage others to find their own styles of thinking.

I will always ask the question, "what should my next question be?"

I will not be fooled to believe that I will *achieve* critical thinking, AND yet I will still continue to *seek* critical thinking.

I will honor all that I have learned, AND I will also embrace perspectives that have never been offered to me.

I will take ownership of my own thinking, AND I will also share my ideas with others.

I will allow my mind to guide my thinking, AND I will allow all of my bodily senses to experience my thinking.

I will have confidence in my point of view, AND I will also notice the relative nature of my thinking.

I will develop, build upon, and revise my own thinking manifesto endlessly.