

Critical thinking in A Transformed World

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(Studying societal phenomena depends on comprehension, not interpretation)

Max Weber

Abstract

(A rapid changing world), those were the words that the sociologist Anthony Giddens started his book, The Run Away World with, as he explains the great impact of globalization that by witch the world is witnessing tremendous development in science and technology, and those big leaps on the track of human styles of cognitive thinking. New features of the knowledge revolution are becoming more evident through expanding the role of intellect, ridding oneself from suppress of tyranny and power, that was once imposed by the cleric's and Catholic Church in Europe. The castles of logic are spreading upon the grounds of reality, in return of the retreat of superstitions that were once main obstacles confronting logical thinking.

Key Words: Rationality, Understanding and configuration, Freedom and control, Manufacturing reality, Creative Thinking

Rationalism

Free thinking knocked the doors of humanity once it was first introduced by the philosophers of enlightenment to emphasize upon the relation between (**comprehension and creation**) it's the controversy between deep understanding of reality(**Anthony Giddens 2003**) that is acquired by logical thinking, to be apt to form and construct reality. It's the action of (**freedom and control**) where man is freed from the burdens of the past, and eventually seizing the abilities to have control upon reality, subsequently, (**Natasha Gill, 2010, p 67**) stepping towards future with concrete steps.

There is no means to **create reality** without understanding it, that's how the Marxian mindset interpreted (**Marios Camihis, 1979**) the nature of the relation between technical and scientific development in an approach to stabilize and sustain reality. **Controlling** it would be by **understanding it** deeply including all its details. This control was deteriorated quickly, for what science and technology have controlled by understanding nature and its details, it has become today the main cause of losing this control. Today both are blamed for pollution, greenhouse crisis, raise in psychological stress, depression, raise of unemployment, risks of nuclear leaks, and global markets' crises. Here we witness the retreat of (**clear and absolute**) that were the main pride of science and technology, during the past and a half century of the human race, pushing the world into the turn of ambiguity and phobia, towards catastrophes that still lie unknown.

Practice

The revolution of information that the world is witnessing recently, revealed the excellence of science and technology that man has achieved throughout his history of building the human civilization. It's the revolution of communication that has emerged in the forms of satellite channels, networks, mobile sets, and successive versions of laptops and tablet computers. These are the new features that resulted from the symbolized economy and the development and accelerated activity of the banking system. It represents transparent clarifications by publishing the details of cultural, social and political activities as whole. It's democracy or the direction towards adopting the political paragon of freedom, equity, justice, human rights and international legitimacy.

It's globalization, being the medium to rebuild the international relations from the American unipolar point of view. It's the cultural struggle that presented new struggles and tensions, between the radicals who defend their original mindsets, (**Wenjiang Du, p 313**) considering globalization a grave threat upon their system, and between the modern mindset that believes in plurality, coexistence, and accepting the others, these calls were made by the international community, as a response to the communication's effect of streaming people into one pool, reaching to the extent that our administrative and social relations are attended via screens of computers. It's the era of computer chips, where you find the E- card, E- government and E- markets. This correlation and crosscutting are actual facts we witness, in procedures taken to impose food security and to deal with transportation problems and teaching and training issues, and how to address development as a concept based on follow-up, assessment and setting applicable standards and terms. This is the era of innovation , creativity and open minds, a mindful response to the accelerating tone of building up relations in life that are the natural need in the scope of scientific transformations and (**Saeb Alousi 1985, p 71-79**) development and resulting risks.

There is no place for fear or uncertainty, the mobilizing power for this era is a furious competition and a neither lenient nor stop adventure.

Thinking power

What are the available and possible tools to face this thrust the world is witnessing today? Is it satisfying to merely describe and study the details and their accumulation? Or is it that reality imposes a number of facts that are in the same direction of the new ones. The era of rationality that humanity has first dedicated since the 17th century and according to Toynbee, was principally based upon (**thinking power**). (**Richard Paul, 2007, p 137**)

According to Toynbee, the British historian, man should be keen on developing it, and promoting it through programs and plans that enable it to be part of the societal and cultural system, not merely a slogan, that advocates an emerging idea or trend.

Critical thinking is a skill that could be acquired through continuous hard work, serious follow up, penetrating observation, thoughtful reading, and accumulation of knowledge. Some might be gifted with the sense of critique, through the talent of observation, but it surely would remain short of strict methodology to acquire information or knowledge because criticism by itself is an organized process that reveals defects and excludes them, according to Karl Popper, from this rises the importance of logical conclusion and analyzing given information, in order to be capable of facing the problems resemble the obstacles in the way of scientific research in any field of knowledge , extending to all fields of life. Critical thinking is not an emerging process that lights up in a certain situation, or a temporary desire a man needs to meet to investigate a certain case, but it's a comprehensive path in life, given its role in synthesizing decisions, regardless of time, place or type. It's a humane conduct that a man endorses towards the world that surrounds

him. It's the renewable and intuitive vision that is actively participating in accommodating with the different details, conducts, information, alterations, (**Henry Sussman 2005, p 153**) and developments that the today's world is excessively flushing through the era of information technology and its out of control abundance.

Differentiation

In Arabic as we follow the thread to the origin of the word (criticize) or (naqd), we find that it refers to the process of separating the true coins from the fake ones. In Arabic tongue it is the autonym of falsehood and this term was meant primarily to distinguish the original currency from the fake ones. (the original Arabic version of this book has more details on the Arabic root for Arabic native speakers.)

On the other hand, criticism from a scientific point of view is the rational standard based on concrete foundations of visions, ideas, thoughts, concepts and terms that are commonly in use for a certain subject. The goal is to release scientific thinking, set a comprehensive conduct, and make decisions to prosper knowledge. Exercising critical thinking never seemed to be absent from humane conduct, but as whole, the growth of civilization and development of human activities and behavior, was but only the natural result for the conduct that man has adopted towards increasing cultural, beauty, religious, social and political issues. The starting point was man's endeavor in life by crystallizing questions according to critical status concerning venue and surrounding nature. If it weren't for the critical mentality that man has adopted, we wouldn't have witnessed these architectural monuments, all these magnificent landscapes that were presented to the world in the forms of statues, monuments, murals, decorations and creativity in styles and fashion. Man couldn't have accomplished what he (Azeeza AL-Saeid 1995, p 12) had if it weren't for the gift of differentiation and his intellectual capacity that enabled him to be open towards religion, beliefs, and to adapt himself in linkages with relatives, marriage and family in addition to the feeling of belonging to one's country and the virtue of citizenship. This is also important in our continuous march in (**Michail Hattersley 2009, p 55**) the fields of labor and production therefore differentiation and setting comprehensive conducts towards our surroundings built the tremendous parade of human civilization.

Be acquainted with yourself

Socrates, the Greek philosopher, started his philosophy lessons with the phrase: come to know yourself. (**James Engell 1989, p 177**) From then it was the launch of organized critical thinking concerning this innovative creation, or in other words: the human's soul, considering it the only means to bond a sound relation with the world surrounding us. Therefore it was like a philosophic leap that enabled thinkers to explain this world. The first spark was to induce the desire for creativity, innovation, action, achievement and exercising results by focusing upon differentiation inside the very soul, where the pursue to compensate between spontaneous logics and the desire to adapt unplanned provisions with the abundant details of our world through a continuous dispute that is based upon interaction across the system of creativity, innovation and renewal.

Critical thinking is the priority which primarily based on exercising true life. In other words criticism addresses the thoughts of exercise itself through (**Peter Morton 2010, p 114**) stressing upon inspecting all the phenomena that surround man. That said, the main approach and solid base for criticism require original procedures for human thinking to produce an active, positive and life interlaced process, not being a superficial, fake or merely a complementary procedure. It's an explanation to all that is deliberated of relations, functions, goals, objectives and facts. It is the means by which we distinguish between what prevails as possible and logic and what we desire to accomplish and achieve. Here, the critical mind emerges as the active part of man's actions and activities that exceeds being simply a complementary moment or step

in a certain process that includes many decided steps that are made to reach a certain goal or to accomplish a certain objective. Man cannot take one step forward or pursue towards a certain goal unless there is an ongoing function circulating inside his mind: where am I? What do I want? Where am I heading to? here, criticism is not a disordered anxiety nor is it a phobia that dominates our human senses; it also isn't a psychic behavior but the core of interactive action to (**William James 2002, p 29**) (produce the ideas required to sustain thinking. It's the trigger, the motor, and the main provider for any possible intellectual activity. For any possible thinking activity, Critical thinking is the active presence in the pulse of life itself, as it manages the active participation in crystallizing the meaning that covers the different aspects of life, regardless of it being natural or theoretical, (**Agenieszka Barszczewska 2011, p 169**) where innovation and creativity would produce renovation and change to all that already exists and prevails, to be innovative in the direction of activation and flourishing, not to be submissive to relations already set by conventional powers that pursue to spread minor ideologies and beliefs.

Mental motivation

Critical thinking is the process of exploring the hideouts of Dogma, those based on submissive (**Nicola Smith 2011, p 122**) obedience and passive acceptance of prevailing and conventional thoughts. It's the mental motivation that is based upon:

- 1- Studying the quality of any idea deeply, depending upon its logical evidence and believing in relative thinking.
- 2- The conditions and the situation that affected the synthesis of a certain idea.
- 3- Its consequences and impact on solid ground. (**Jens Peter 2010, p 312**)
- 4- Exposing the interests and beneficial points for parties supporting the idea and refuse discussion and negotiation.
- 5- Abolishing claims and the calls aiming to (**Hitomi Takemura 2000, p 20**) spread the culture of the herd or absolute approval of radical beliefs that have extreme support for a certain political, religious, or social trend.
- 6- Exposing hidden interpretations that silently sway far from being discussed. Rejecting unipolar thinking or enclosing the thinking process in a certain individual or group.
- 7- Full commitment to progress, change and ongoing transformation of reality through adopting progressive dialogue, that depends upon intellectual evidence.

Freedom

Critical mindsets are based on freedom as a corner stone for freeing man from blind obedience to ready set orders. It's to be organized not irresponsible, (**John Hogan 2005, p 97**) it's being precise not excessive, the type of freedom that provides the suitable environment to prosper innovative and creative thinking that has nothing to do with accusing others of being non-believers, sin committers, betrayers, blackmailers, or accusing them of exercising marginalization or exile, a type of freedom (**Dana Kay Nelkin 2011, p 36**) that would grant individuals liable choices without any external pressure or authoritative command, where obstacles are overcome to reach tangible and theoretical achievements. Man was born free; accordingly he should be fully aware and responsible for his choices. Freedom is a natural right, not in need for further evidence or proof, as it is an original part of the human structure, but at the same time it doesn't mean to contradict reality or losing disciplines, it stops once it confronts others' freedoms, as pointed by Voltaire. It is self reforming as evident in the right of expression, movement, making living, (**Edward Peters 1989, p 341**) transportation and showing opinion. It's also a group reformer in seeking liberty from suppress, exploitation, control and oppression as that exercised by occupying forces upon a certain country

or state. It is the free will that is based on man's making of his own choices concerning life, deciding destiny, acceptance and refusal, a freedom that deals with reality in a rational way, where we find responsible interaction and obedience for laws in return for acquiring man's right in possession, opinion and decision, according to John Luke.

Freedom is the only appropriate surrounding that enables thinking, interaction and guarantees social development. All efforts are in vain if society is not freed as whole, from sectarianism, partisanship, tribal alliances and all other secondary affiliations to remain adhered to the basic and effective belongingness, the state.

Tyranny and absence of freedom had its dire impact upon scientific action in Europe, where the church controlled most of the scientific and intellectual activities, imposing strict supervision upon thinking and innovation, setting the crime of being a disbeliever as a ready allegation against those who care to think, to the extent that trials were set against any attempts in the direction of change (**paul Ehrlich 2000, p395**). The most eminent victims then were, Copernicus, Galileo Galileo, who was forced by the authority of the court to state that earth doesn't turn around itself, and Isaac Newton for his gravity theories and laws.

Any society that respects the freedom of thinking would be apt for carrying its historical consent, with ability of differentiation, innovation and creativity, and to preserve its potentials by promoting and supporting them, through providing reality with deep interpretations and meanings. It would be able to face problems, solve them, and pursue to achieve renewed constructions that reject ready (**Mark Runco 2007, p 12**) taboos, complexities and forbidden lines, a society that is made of ability, capacity, potential and skills. The controversy of integrity between (**freedom of individuals and power of society**), understanding this equation is considered a prerequisite, for a free man is the only one capable of production, accomplishment, thinking, innovation, and the only one who has the ability of exposing and defining defects and corruption, exercising accountability, to achieve a strong, happy and safe society. A free individual equals a society of progress. The environment in this kind of a society promotes innovation, interaction and accomplishment. That's how modern societies were built upon the nonnegotiable concept of the individual's freedom (**RosmaryO'kane 1996, p 72**). The result was producing individuals who have no fear from declaring their rights and preserving them. In those civilized communities, the public inquiry protects the constitution, laws, and civil rights.

Open Society

Critical thinking is always in confrontation with blocked conducts, it's an everlasting invitation for openness and unconditional acceptance of others, as long as we depend logical thinking, analysis and interpretation for assessment. It's an all-inclusive understanding of life without being dragged to the trenches of certain ideologies that claim to be the only means of providing absolute truth, and sound interpretations. Historical practice reveals the extent of obscurity that covered the minds once ideologies manipulated societies. That's how the Nazis' and Fascists' trials went astray, those which by (**Robin Ramsay 2006**) accumulating their fever-like powers, triggered the Second World War, tilting the whole humanity from over the cliff. On the other hand stand the Totalitarian regimes as a barrier confronting the ambitions of their people, jumping to our mind the direct and exposed comparison between the south Totalitarian Korea, and the Southern that was able to rise once again to achieve progress and construct a new political and economic foundation that became very eminent to the whole world, not forgetting the difference between Hong Kong and China. Even when comparison is conducted inside the Communist System itself, we find that Czechoslovakia remained a state with a distinguished experiment within the Warsaw Pact, after the spring events in Prague, 1986. Totalitarian models forge reality, claiming to have achieved power,

extensiveness, success and excellence, a claim that is based upon advertising a false model that is erected upon the ruins of reality with all its details. It's giving superior concern for shining the fronts, the roads leading from and to the airports, and that exaggerated trouble it goes through to bring the Grand Celebrations Arena to the spotlight, the grand hotels that receive delegations from abroad, great care for pictures, signs, and slogans whereas painful details lie underneath, threatening that any will for criticism, analysis or demands for change would face a sound accusation for betrayal, being an outlaw, or simply an agent serving forces targeting the state. In brief it is the culture of conspiracy that aims to cover the mind, where stagnation, blockade, absolute submission for instant desires that are launched by propaganda tools, never ceasing to praise the great and only inspired leader, the best, purest, immortal, flawless and the nearest in description to the Greek gods.

On the other hand we find the model of the open society to be the one defending the prevalence of **(Kathleen Moore 1989, p 103)** intellect and its role in examining reality and assessing the details it witnesses. A society based on the duet **(law and institution)** where the civil society aims to raise public interests and preserving social peace by strengthening the conduct of dealing with details in a lenient manner that expose the good and bad to face the problems practically, depending scientific approach, where we find citizenship and social, political and economic freedoms are fully acknowledged. No more quarantine, oppression, deliberation or gathering people in huge herds for the sake of absolute approval and pleading the historical *long live* and *down with* slogans and others that reveal the will of sacrificing one's blood and soul.

Open society is the crosscutting of monopolizing reason where every single thing is subjected to **(Suad Joseph 2000, p 215)** criticism, investigation and discussion. It's the absolute belief and respect for man and his choices, for being mature enough to deserve the right of thinking, criticism and investigation **(Dante Germino 1982, p 148)** to proceed with concrete steps in recognizing one's self far from deliberate directing or binding.

The only binding authority is law, and no loyalty but that dedicated for the institute that achieves organization and has the capacity of power management. A society where transparency, and responsible, free and rational opinion prevails, where we find free transportation, economic activity, adopting education procedures that promote creativity and innovation, discarding ready and copied curriculums.

The open society was first presented as a term by Karl Popper, in his book: *The Open Society and its Enemies*, **(John Dewey 1909, p 82)** borrowing the term from Henri Bergson, the French philosopher, who had a seminar dealing with a comparison between both the open and closed society, the latter that is imposed to the dominance of conventional powers where traditions and concrete beliefs surrender in front of superstitions and distrust when facing any aspect of modernization and civilization. Here we find full rejection of anything new for it might threaten their interests. The society here is built by the bricks of distrust where the sense of danger and the fear of calamities that others might be a source for, is the corner stone for this structure to the extent that some powers have no problem in making up serious situations like triggering a war with neighboring countries to simply mislead their society and directing all its attention and efforts towards defending the homeland and disperse any efforts dedicated for real criticism.

How we think

John Dewey, puts us face to face with critical thinking as an action, describing it as the ability to isolate minute details from a certain experiment, working on comparing the behavior of those actions with one another. **(John Dewey, *How We Think, New York, December 1909, p 82.*)** It's a process of precise investigation, based upon examining, noticing and investigating all possibilities to reach the sound opinion related to a certain phenomena. **(Robert Ennis 1996, p 72)** It's not a mere reaction to a passing event, but a standardization process depending auto correction when releasing an opinion, thus promoting reaction with

different situations. Here we find John Piaget connecting the process of thinking to stages of cognitive development of the human being. Piaget points out the interaction between children and their surroundings, given that time limits are unstable among children and the outstanding differences between the children's surroundings considering them the sources of their skills, he constructed a scheme of four stages which are: **Sensorimotorstage** : the first years of the child's life, where natural reaction take place. The second stage is the **Preoperational stage**: it continues till the child reaches seven years of his age. Here he acquires lingual skills and dominant ideas. The third stage is the **Concrete Operational Stage**: the age of primary school, where the child builds up his social relations and becomes seriously interested in others. The fourth stage is the **Formal Operational Stage**: from eleven until fifteen years old. Here the child depends upon his logical attempt to differentiate between different phenomena. Piaget emphasizes on the importance of noticing the difference between simultaneous auto convictions and between those that are the result of deep communication with one's surrounding. Gradually, a number of duals become more evident in front of us like: (absolute and generalized) and (analyzing and composing). These activities contribute in the education and the process of acquiring knowledge.

Whereas the basis of critical thinking is (analysis and reform) in order to improve ideas and promote them, the primary case here is to create new knowledge, being secluded from prevailing and dominating knowledge. Therefore, Piaget's approach is based upon **a generalization in pursue of finding alternatives based on proof**. On the other hand, Ennis, *Robert H. Ennis, Critical Thinking, Prentice Hall, 1996, p 72*. Erects critical thinking upon the provisions acquired from activating higher cognitive levels, where the endeavor to solve a certain problem takes place, depending the conduct of finding new knowledge, far from what prevails through asking creative and active questions, the questions that emerge by continuing acquaintance of the (**Jon Stratton 1999, p 44**) details that are related to a certain issue or problem, and gathering related information and data. The goal of critical thinking is to (**producing knowledge rather than consuming it**).

Patterns of thinking

Normally, the term critical is interpreted as seeking faults and defects in a certain issue, eventually, exposing them, depending uncertainty, as means of the analytical process. It's the process of depending upon fixed standards where comparison takes place; in pursue that the issue in question would comply with our favorite template, whereas the action of thinking depends (**analysis, composition, reform**) this is as set by : *Bloom Taxonomy, Jon Stratton, Critical Thinking for College Student, Maryland 1990, p44*. According to this, critical thinking is based upon suggested solutions that are set through a precise and scientific assessment of a certain phenomena that is submitted by the examiner of a certain problem. It is an approach for finding a solution via deep and indicative thinking. Here, (**فتحي جروان 1999، ص 27**) several means are involved: intuitive and informative knowledge, comprehension, direct implementation of given data and information, and studying the phenomena in order to understand the relation between its various elements. Then move on to composing its different parts, or creating a totally new template from the said elements, then connecting parts in a certain direction, through investigating the reliability of given facts, where a certain piece of information is the base in seeking accuracy of expression. Investigating the sources of information, and primary perceptions dealt within the research through the strength of evident proofs, then forecasting the consequences of the decision made concerning the phenomena.

Principles of Thinking

On the top of the list of the principles and provisions that should be adopted in the critical thinking process, is **Clarity**, this is very important in the comprehension process to name its objectives and required

outcomes, subsequently having the ability to judge the subject. The second thing is its **Credibility**, for not all that is clear could be considered sound. Critics might be manipulated by far too clear idea accompanied with effective demonstration, but it has no reliable grounds. **Depending Precise Treatment** by focusing on the core subject and avoiding repetition and excess information that is considered useless, where connected ideas persist in a unified context, where no contradiction can access the process of dealing with (**Wayne Martin 1997**)the idea as whole, so here we point out that connection is an eminent manifestation of critical thinking. A deep approach is required in dealing with the subject excluded from being superficial, but on the contrary it needs to be dealt with in a deep and an effort consuming conduct. The phenomena is studied **comprehensively**, where details and its various sides are covered, the sides that are considered the text's core. so all are addressed and not one single part could be neglected or excluded from critical thinking. Critical thinking is a comprehensive process targeting all details of a given phenomena, in order to synthesize the final opinion or judgment.

One of the most important pillars of critical thinking is logical relations, in order to define the nature of relations between introductory and resulting parts of text, and between mere ideas and proof, being the main road for fortifying a certain idea and making thoughts more profound.

Importance of Critical Thinking

Importance of critical thinking becomes evident through activating intellectual activity, and by abiding knowledge to serve reality. Critical thinking is not an isolated stock of information that has no connection with every day vital issues, but rather it is based on a mindset that notices, follows, and analyses, composes and reforms the very core of reality. It promotes knowledge by refusing compensation but instead it's a direct confrontation with the problem through an endless endeavor to find options and alternatives that are strictly logical and precisely scientific. A thinking process that seeks sound relations by which it would contribute in developing the right opinion. An opinion that is excluded from the possibility of being misled by traditional styles of thinking or ready concepts, or falling as victim of extremism for the benefit of a certain block or trend, but rather reform would be set in accordance with logical relations and cognitive concepts, the right decision in the right time and place. It is also considered a corner stone of the information and communications revolution, where the abundant intellectual outcome is invading the minds by advertising for certain directions and ideas through digital technology, media and signs, to the extent that the human mind has been imprisoned by advertisement corporate and bodies in different aspects from policy to economy and society in a direction to create consuming human beings, who are submissive to continuous flashlights and images that are released with certain messages. It seems that efforts are worthless in adopting critical thinking in facing this restless campaign.

Skills of critical thinking

First: being reasonable, depending common sense in dealing with the phenomena, investigating its reliability through possible practical methods, by dealing with the text seriously and accurately, to name the piece of information that could be subjected to thorough study and investigation and leaving generalized theories aside. Sinking deep to reach consistency, and studying it deeply especially (**David Knight 2003, p 100**) in that relating to sources and mentioned information, to follow accuracy in thoughts and statements made and that could be strictly criticized, with no compensation what so ever. Clarity is sought in a given text, where criticism is built upon clarity unveiling all kinds of ambiguity. It is a pursue to exclude any defect concerning the process of acquiring knowledge. Therefore many misleading facts should be exposed in addition to any kind of past judgment concerning a certain trend or direction that is in the case of neglecting logical proof and evidence or scientific provisions that support a certain idea.

Second: building ideas. Critical thinking is based upon coherent structure of an idea. Where rationality and unified context is depended as base for composing scientific material, it is a comprehensive and holistic addressing to the text elements; it is a unified unit that is organized within a unified context that is totally clear. No excess stuffing is found, but on the contrary, always depending on the core idea and neglecting lingual additives or any unnecessary engagements that might affect the very given text.

Third: Critic's character: giving priority to logic before any other details, an open mind to receiver other people's opinions without terms, conditions, limits, or obstacles, a mindset that considers dialogue as a superiority that is basically built upon intervention of thoughts and minds, a mindset that abides itself far from being dedicated for confrontation by steaming controversy that eventually abolishes any other side but itself , A mind that aims to reinforce the practical bases of scientific terminology in an Endeavour to escape being scattered or controlled by what is considered typical and wide spread. This can only be achieved by promoting critical and rational investigation which preserves its path far from emotional or the impact of secondary affiliates.

Footnote:

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