

## Breadth

Questions focusing on making thinking broader include:

- Do we need to consider another point of view?
- Is there another way to look at this question?
- What would this look like from a conservative standpoint?
- What would this look like from the point of view of ...?

A line of reasoning may be clear, accurate, precise, relevant, and deep but lack breadth. Examples are arguments from either the conservative or the liberal standpoint that get deeply into an issue but show insight into only one side of the question.

When we consider the issue from every relevant viewpoint, we think in a broad way. When multiple points of view are pertinent to the issue, yet we fail to give due consideration to those perspectives, we think myopically, or narrow-mindedly. We do not try to enter alternative, or opposing, viewpoints.

Humans are frequently guilty of narrow-mindedness for many reasons: limited education, innate sociocentrism, natural selfishness, self-deception, and intellectual arrogance. Points of view that significantly disagree with our own often threaten us. It's much easier to ignore perspectives with which we disagree than to consider them when we know at some level that to consider them would mean being forced to reconsider our views.

Let's say, for example, that you and I live together and that I like to play loud music, which annoys you. The question is: *Should I play loud music in a room when you are present?* Both your viewpoint and mine are relevant to the question. When I recognize your viewpoint as relevant and then intellectually empathize with it—when I enter your way of thinking to understand it—I will be forced to see that imposing my loud music on you is unfair and inconsiderate. I will be able to imagine what it would be like to be forced to listen to loud music that I find annoying. However, if I don't force myself to enter your viewpoint, I do not have to change my self-serving behavior. One of the primary mechanisms the mind uses to avoid giving up what it wants is unconsciously to refuse to enter viewpoints that differ from its own.

## 5.8 Think for Yourself

### THINKING BROADLY ABOUT AN ISSUE

Consider the question: Is abortion morally justified? Some argue that abortion is not morally justifiable, and others argue that it is. Try to state and elaborate on each of these points of view in detail. Articulate each point of view objectively, regardless of your personal views. Present each point of view in such a way that a person who actually takes that position would assess it as accurate. Each line of reasoning should be clear, accurate, precise, relevant, and

## Logic

Questions that focus on making thinking more logical include:

- Does all of this fit together logically?
- Does this really make sense?
- Does that follow from what you said?
- How does that follow from the evidence?
- Before, you implied this, and now you are saying that. I don't see how both can be true.

When we think, we bring together a variety of thoughts in some order. When the combined thoughts are mutually supporting and make sense in combination, the thinking is logical. When the combination is not mutually supporting, is contradictory in some sense, or does not make sense, the combination is not logical. Because humans often maintain conflicting beliefs without being aware that we are doing so, it is common to find inconsistencies in human life and thought.

Let's say we know, by looking at standardized tests of students in schools and the actual work they are able to produce, that students are often deficient in basic academic skills such as reading, writing, speaking, and the core disciplines such as math, science, and history. Despite this evidence, teachers frequently conclude that they don't need to change their instruction to improve student learning (and in fact nothing is fundamentally wrong with the way they teach). Given the evidence, this conclusion seems illogical. The conclusion doesn't seem to follow from the facts.

Let's take another example. Say that you know a person who has had a heart attack, and her doctors have told her she must be careful about what she eats to avoid problems in the future. Yet she concludes that what she eats really doesn't matter. Given the evidence, her conclusion is illogical. It doesn't make sense.

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## 5.9 Think for Yourself

### RECOGNIZING ILLOGICAL THINKING

**I**dentify a newspaper article that contains an example of illogical thinking—thinking that doesn't make sense to you.

1. State the issue the thinking revolves around.
2. State the thinking you believe is illogical and why you think it is illogical.
3. State some implications of the illogical thinking. What are some consequences likely to follow from the illogical thinking?