

# BECOME A FAIRMINDED THINKER

It is possible to develop as a thinker and yet not develop as a *fairminded* thinker. It is possible to learn to use one's skills of mind in a narrow, self-serving way; many highly skilled thinkers do just that. Think of politicians, for example, who manipulate people through smooth (fallacious) talk, who promise what they have no intention of delivering, who say whatever they need to say to maintain their positions of power and prestige. In a sense, these people are skilled thinkers because their thinking enables them to get what they want, but the best thinkers do not pursue selfish goals. They do not seek to manipulate others. They strive to be fairminded, even when it means they have to give something up in the process. They recognize that the mind is not naturally fairminded, but selfish, and they recognize that to be fairminded, they also must develop specific traits of mind—traits such as intellectual humility, intellectual integrity, intellectual courage, intellectual autonomy, intellectual empathy, intellectual perseverance, and confidence in reason.

In this chapter, we introduce what “fairminded” means, and we discuss the traits of mind that accompany fairmindedness. If you are to develop as a fairminded thinker, you will have to “practice” being fairminded. You will have to catch yourself in acts of selfishness and begin to correct your behavior. You will have to become committed to living a rational, compassionate, contributory life, to look outside yourself and see how your behavior affects other people. You will have to decide, again and again, that being fairminded is crucial to your identity as a person.

## WEAK VERSUS STRONG CRITICAL THINKING

Critical thinking can serve two incompatible ends: self-centeredness or fair-mindedness. As we learn the basic intellectual skills that critical thinking entails, we can begin to use those skills in either a selfish or a fairminded way. For example, when students are taught how to recognize mistakes in reasoning (commonly called fallacies), most students readily see those mistakes in the reasoning of others but not in their own reasoning. Using their understanding of fallacies, students develop some proficiency in making their opponents' thinking look bad, but they typically don't use their understanding of fallacies to analyze and assess their own reasoning.

Liberals see mistakes in the arguments of conservatives; conservatives see mistakes in the arguments of liberals. Believers see mistakes in the thinking of nonbelievers; nonbelievers see mistakes in the thinking of believers. Those who oppose abortion readily see mistakes in the arguments for abortion; those who favor abortion readily see mistakes in the arguments against abortion.

We call these thinkers *weak-sense* critical thinkers. We call the thinking "weak" because, although it is working well for the thinker in some respects, it is missing certain important, higher-level skills and values of critical thinking. Most significantly, it fails to consider, in good faith, viewpoints that contradict its own viewpoint. It lacks fairmindedness.

Another traditional name for the weak-sense thinker is *sophist*. Sophistry is the art of winning arguments regardless of whether there are problems in the thinking being used, regardless of whether relevant viewpoints are being ignored. The objective in sophistic thinking is to win. Period. Sophistic thinkers use lower-level skills of rhetoric, or argumentation, by which they make unreasonable thinking look reasonable and reasonable thinking look unreasonable. This form of thinking is evident in the arguments of unethical lawyers, prosecutors, and politicians who are more concerned with winning than with being fair. They use emotionalism and trickery in an intellectually skilled way. Consider the case of Delma Banks, a man convicted of murder in 1980. According to the *New York Times* (Feb. 25, 2004),

The Supreme Court overturned a Texas inmate's death sentence on Tuesday on the ground that the prosecution deliberately withheld evidence that would have made jurors less likely to impose the death penalty had they been aware of it. . . . In her majority opinion, Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg directly rebuked the Texas prosecutors for concealing facts they had a legal obligation to disclose and for permitting the state's witnesses to testify untruthfully. . . . Mr. Banks, who was convicted in 1980 of killing a 16-year-old co-worker at a Texarkana steak house to steal his car, came within 10 minutes of execution last March before the Supreme Court granted a stay and agreed to hear his appeal.

Consider the case of Martin Tankleff, a man convicted of murdering his parents when he was 17 years old. According to the *New York Times* (April 4, 2004),

K. James McCready, a veteran Suffolk County homicide detective, was off duty the morning of Sept. 7, 1988, when his beeper summoned him to a murder scene

at a luxury waterfront home in Belle Terre. Inside was a gruesome sight. Arlen Tankleff had been stabbed and bludgeoned to death. Her brutally wounded husband, Seymour, was unconscious and died weeks later in a hospital. Within hours of surveying the scene, Detective McCready declared the case solved. He singled out the couple's son, Martin, 17, as the prime suspect. In a long interrogation that day, the detective later boasted, he used deception to trick him into confessing. But Mr. Tankleff promptly disavowed the confession, refused to sign it, and the physical evidence did not implicate him. Yet he was convicted in 1990, based on the statement extracted by Detective McCready and his testimony as the star prosecution witness. . . . The Suffolk County system that prosecuted Mr. Tankleff [at that time] was under attack from many quarters as inept and even corrupt. . . . A State Investigation Commission report in 1989 found that the authorities had botched major cases . . . by coercing false confessions, brutalizing suspects, illegally tapping phones, lying on the witness stand, engaging in cover-ups and ignoring, losing or faking crucial evidence.

In both of these cases, we see explicit examples of intellectual sophistry at work—in particular, skillfully hiding or distorting evidence in pursuit of an unjustifiable goal.

## 1.1 *Think for Yourself*

### FINDING EVIDENCE OF INTELLECTUAL SOPHISTRY

**I**n the next week, read articles in newspapers, news magazines, and similar sources for the purpose of identifying intellectual sophistry at work. Look for situations in which someone deliberately hides or distorts information in pursuing a goal. Note whether the person gets away with the sophistry.

Sophistic thinkers succeed only if they do not come up against what we call **strong-sense critical thinkers**. Strong-sense critical thinkers are not easily tricked by slick argumentation, by sophistry and intellectual trickery. The striking characteristic of strong-sense critical thinkers is their consistent pursuit of the fair and just. These thinkers strive always to be ethical—to behave in ways that do not exploit or otherwise harm others. They work to empathize with the viewpoints of others. They are willing to listen to arguments they do not necessarily hold. They change their views when faced with better reasoning. Rather than using their thinking to manipulate others and to hide from the truth (in a weak-sense way), they use thinking in an ethical, reasonable manner. Almost a century ago, William Graham Sumner (1906) depicted strong-sense critical thinkers. He said they

cannot be stampeded . . . are slow to believe . . . can hold things as possible or probable in all degrees, without certainty and without pain . . . can wait for evidence and weigh evidence . . . can resist appeals to their dearest prejudices.

We believe that the world already has too many skilled selfish thinkers, too many sophists and intellectual con artists, too many unscrupulous lawyers and politicians who specialize in twisting information and evidence to support their selfish interests and the vested interests of those who pay them. We hope that you, the reader, will develop as a highly skilled, fairminded thinker, one capable of exposing those who are masters at playing intellectual games at the expense of the well-being of innocent people. We hope as well that you develop the intellectual courage to argue publicly against what is unethical in human thinking. We write this book with the assumption that you will take seriously the fairmindedness implied by strong-sense critical thinking.

To think critically in the strong sense requires that we develop fairmindedness at the same time that we learn basic critical thinking skills and, thus, begin to “practice” fairmindedness in our thinking. If we do, we avoid using our skills to gain advantage over others. We treat all thinking by the same high standards. We expect good reasoning from those who support us as well as those who oppose us. We subject our own reasoning to the same criteria we apply to reasoning to which we are unsympathetic. We question our own purposes, evidence, conclusions, implications, and point of view with the same vigor we question those of others.

Developing fairminded thinkers try to see the actual strengths and weaknesses of any reasoning they assess. This is the kind of thinker we hope this book will help you become. From the beginning, then, we are going to explore the characteristics required for the strongest, most fairminded thinking. As you read the rest of the book, we hope you notice how we are attempting to foster strong-sense critical thinking. Indeed, unless we indicate otherwise, from this point forward, every time we use the words *critical thinking*, we mean critical thinking in the strong sense.

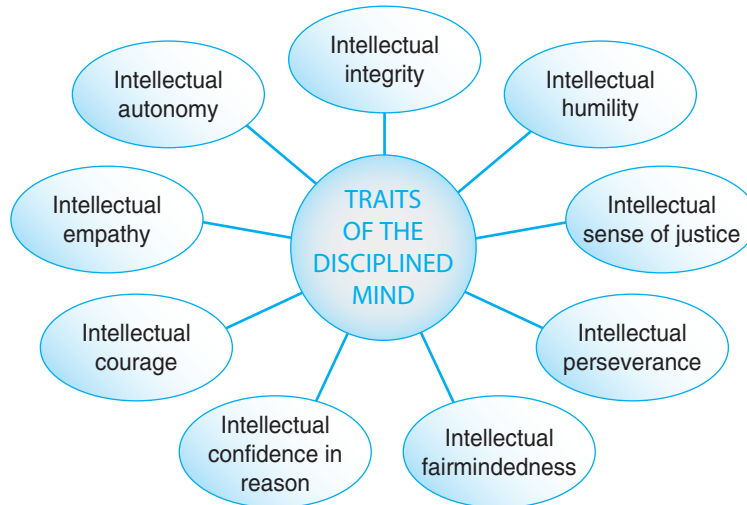
In the remainder of this chapter, we explore the various intellectual virtues that fairminded thinking requires. Fairmindedness entails much more than most people realize. Fairmindedness requires a family of interrelated and interdependent states of mind.

One final point: In addition to fairmindedness, strong-sense critical thinking implies higher-order thinking. As you develop your reasoning abilities and internalize the traits of mind in this chapter, you will develop a variety of skills and insights absent in the weak-sense critical thinker.

As we examine how the various traits of mind are conducive to fairmindedness, we also look at the manner in which the traits contribute to quality of thought (not simply a set of values added to a set of skills). In addition to the fairness that strong-sense critical thinking implies, it also implies depth of thinking and highly insightful thinking. Weak-sense critical thinkers develop a range of intellectual skills (for example, skills of argumentation) and may achieve some success in getting what they want, but they do not develop the traits highlighted in this chapter.

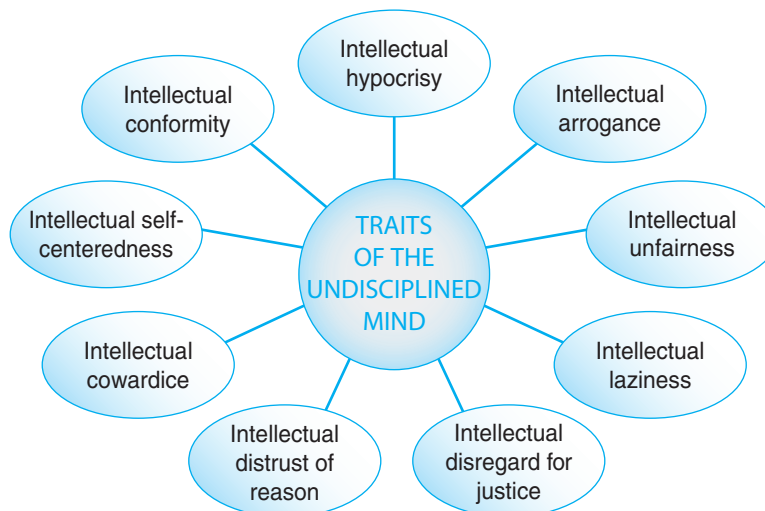
For example, some students are able to use their intelligence and thinking skills to get high grades without taking seriously the subjects they are studying. They become masters, if you will, of “beating the system.” They develop test-taking and note-taking skills. They develop short-term memory skills. They learn

**EXHIBIT 1.1** *Critical thinkers strive to develop essential traits or characteristics of mind. These are interrelated intellectual habits that enable one to open, discipline, and improve mental functioning.*



to appeal to the prejudices of their teachers. They become academic sophists—skilled at getting by and getting what they want. They may even transfer these abilities to other domains of their lives, but they do not develop as fairminded critical thinkers. (For example, see Chapters 12 and 13, on media bias and fallacies.)

**EXHIBIT 1.2** *These are the opposites of the intellectual virtues. Our natural disposition to develop them is an important reason we need to develop countervailing traits.*



Let us now turn to the component traits of the strong-sense critical thinker. In each section, we:

1. introduce an intellectual trait or virtue,
2. discuss the opposite trait,
3. point out how the trait relates to the development of critical thinking, and
4. relate the trait to fairmindedness.

First, though, let us be clear about the concept of fairmindedness.

## WHAT DOES FAIRMINDEDNESS REQUIRE?

To be fairminded is to strive to treat every viewpoint relevant to a situation in an unbiased, unprejudiced way. It entails a consciousness of the fact that we, by nature, tend to prejudge the views of others, placing them into “favorable” (agree with us) and “unfavorable” (disagree with us) categories. We tend to give less weight to contrary views than to our own. This is especially true when we have selfish reasons for opposing views. If, for example, we can ignore the viewpoint of the millions of people in the world who live in extreme poverty, we can avoid having to give up something to help them. Thus, fairmindedness is especially important when the situation calls on us to consider views we don’t want to consider.

Fairmindedness entails the predisposition to consider all relevant viewpoints equally, without reference to one’s own feelings or selfish interests, or the feelings or selfish interests of one’s friends, community, or nation. It implies adherence to intellectual standards (such as accuracy, sound logic, and breadth of vision), uninfluenced by one’s own advantage or the advantage of one’s group.

The opposite of fairmindedness is *intellectual unfairness*. To be intellectually unfair is to lack a sense of responsibility to represent accurately and fairly viewpoints with which one disagrees. When we are intellectually unfair, we almost always see ourselves as right and just. Our unfair thoughts and actions typically have an element of self-deception. We justify ourselves, rationalize our behavior, convince ourselves that we are “right.”

Because each of us is naturally egocentric, each of us falls prey to unfair thinking. Indeed, egocentrism (and therefore unfair thinking) is the natural state of the human mind—a point to be developed when we deal with human irrationality (Chapter 11). We simply want to stress here that the traits discussed in this chapter can *never* be fully achieved by the human mind. No one is always fairminded; the mind is naturally too egocentric, too self-interested. Any progress toward fairmindedness is a constant inner struggle, a struggle to be faced each and every day, but the reward is a mind that is self-disciplined, that cannot easily be manipulated, that is able to see the truth, and that strives at all times to think fairly.

Achieving a truly fairminded state of mind, then, is an ideal we never fully achieve. Fairmindedness requires us to be, simultaneously, intellectually humble,

intellectually courageous, intellectually empathetic, intellectually honest, intellectually perseverant, confident in reason (to be persuaded by good reasoning), and intellectually autonomous. Unless this family of traits functions in an integrated constellation, fairmindedness is incomplete.

However, these traits, singly and in combination, are not commonly valued. They are rarely discussed in everyday life and are rarely taught. They are not discussed on television. They are not part of the school curriculum. They are not assessed in standardized testing. Yet, each of them is essential to fairmindedness and inherent in strong-sense critical thinking. Let us see how and why this is so. We begin with the fairminded trait of intellectual humility.

## Intellectual Humility: Strive to Discover the Extent of Your Ignorance

To explain intellectual humility in brief:

To be intellectually humble is to develop knowledge of the extent of one's ignorance. Thus, intellectual humility includes an acute awareness that one's native egocentrism is likely to function self-deceptively (to tell the mind that it knows more than it does). It means being aware of one's biases and prejudices as well as the limitations of one's viewpoint. It involves being keenly aware of the extent of one's ignorance when thinking through any issue, especially if the issue is emotionally charged. Intellectual humility depends on recognizing that one should not claim more than one actually knows. It does not imply spinelessness or submissiveness but rather the lack of intellectual arrogance, pretentiousness, boastfulness, or conceit. It requires identifying and assessing the foundations of one's beliefs, looking especially for those that cannot be justified by good reasons.

The opposite of intellectual humility is *intellectual arrogance*, a natural tendency to think one knows more than one does know. Intellectual arrogance involves having little or no insight into self-deception or into the limitations of one's point of view. Intellectually arrogant people often fall prey to their own bias and prejudice and frequently claim to know more than they actually do know.

When we think of intellectual arrogance, we are not necessarily implying a person who is outwardly smug, haughty, insolent, or pompous. Outwardly, the person may appear humble. For example, a person who uncritically follows a cult leader may be outwardly self-deprecating ("I am nothing. You are everything."), but intellectually, he or she believes what does not make sense to believe and is at the same time fully confident in his or her beliefs.

Unfortunately, we are all capable of believing we know what we don't know; our own false beliefs, misconceptions, prejudices, illusions, myths, propaganda, and ignorance seem to us as the plain, unvarnished truth. What is more, when challenged, we often resist admitting that our thinking is "defective." We then are intellectually arrogant, even though we might feel humble. Rather than recognizing the limits of our knowledge, we ignore and obscure those limits. From such arrogance, much suffering and waste result.



For example, when Columbus “discovered” North America, he believed that enslaving the Indians was compatible with God’s will. He did not inwardly—as far as we know—recognize that only through intellectual arrogance could he believe he was privy to “God’s will.” Consider the following excerpt taken from Howard Zinn’s *A People’s History of the United States* (1995):

The Indians, Columbus reported, “are so naïve and so free with their possessions that no one who has not witnessed them would believe it. When you ask for something they have, they never say no. To the contrary, they offer to share with anyone. . . .” He concluded his report by asking for a little help from their Majesties, and in return he would bring them from his next voyage “as much gold as they need . . . and as many slaves as they ask.” He was full of religious talk: “Thus the eternal God, our Lord, gives victory to those who follow His way over apparent impossibilities.” . . . Columbus later wrote, “Let us in the name of the Holy Trinity go on sending all the slaves that can be sold.” (pp. 3–4)

Intellectual arrogance is incompatible with fairmindedness because we cannot judge fairly when we are in a state of ignorance about what we are judging. If we are ignorant about a religion (say, Buddhism), we cannot be fair in judging it; if we have misconceptions, prejudices, or illusions about it, we will unfairly distort it. We will misrepresent it to discount it. Our false knowledge, misconceptions, prejudices, and illusions will keep us from being fair. We will be inclined to judge too quickly and be overly confident in our judgment. These tendencies are all too common in human thinking.

Why is intellectual humility essential to higher-level thinking? In addition to helping us become fairminded thinkers, knowledge of our ignorance can improve our thinking in a variety of ways. It can enable us to recognize the prejudices, false beliefs, and habits of mind that lead to flawed learning. Consider, for example, our tendency to learn superficially: We learn a little and (by nature) think we know a lot; we get limited information and hastily generalize from it; we confuse memorized definitions with deep learning; we uncritically accept much that we hear and read—especially when what we hear or read agrees with our intensely held beliefs or the beliefs of groups to which we belong.

The discussion in the chapters that follow encourages intellectual humility and will help raise your awareness of intellectual arrogance. See if you, from this moment, can begin to develop in yourself a growing awareness of the limitations of your knowledge. Work on detecting your intellectual arrogance in action (which you should be able to see daily). When you do detect it, celebrate that awareness. Reward yourself for finding weaknesses in your thinking.

Consider *recognition* of weakness an important strength, not a weakness. As a starter, answer the following questions:

- Can you construct a list of your most significant prejudices? (Think of what you believe about your country, your religion, your friends, and your family, simply because others—parents, friends, peer group, media—conveyed these to you.)
- Do you ever argue for or against views when you have little evidence upon which to base your judgment?



- Do you ever assume that your group (your family, your religion, your nation, your friends) is correct (when it is in conflict with others) even though you don't have enough information to determine that it is correct?

## 1.2, 1.3 *Think for Yourself*

### INTELLECTUAL HUMILITY

**N**ame a person you think you know fairly well. Make two lists. In the first list, include everything you know for sure about the person. In the second list, include everything you know you don't know about him or her. For example, "I know for sure that my grandmother liked to cook, but I'm also sure that I never really understood what her fears and personal desires were. I knew many superficial things about her, but about her inner self I knew little." Be prepared to back up what you claim with an explanation of your thinking.

### RECOGNIZING SUPERFICIAL LEARNING

**I**ntellectual humility involves the ability to distinguish between learning that is deep and learning that is superficial. In this activity, we ask you to test your ability to do this. Think of a course you completed in which you received a high or fairly high final grade. On a blank sheet of paper, write and elaborate on, without consulting any sources, answers to the following questions: What is (name of subject—for example, history, biology)? What is the main goal of studying this subject? What are people in this field trying to accomplish? What kinds of questions do they ask? What kinds of problems do they solve? What sorts of information or data do they gather? How do they go about gathering information in ways that are distinctive to this field? What is the most basic idea, concept, or theory in this field? How did studying this field change your view of the world?

If you find it difficult to answer these questions, consider the hypothesis that you might have received your high grade by cramming for tests or by some other means of superficial learning. Are you able to identify the difference between what you have learned superficially and what you have learned deeply?

## Intellectual Courage: Develop the Courage to Challenge Popular Beliefs

A second trait of fairmindedness is intellectual courage.

Having intellectual courage means facing and fairly addressing ideas, beliefs, or viewpoints even when this is painful. It means closely examining beliefs toward which one has strong negative emotions and to which one has not given a serious hearing. An important part of intellectual courage is recognizing that ideas that society considers dangerous or absurd are sometimes rationally justified (in whole or in part) or simply matters of subjective taste. Conclusions and beliefs inculcated in people by society are sometimes false or misleading.

To determine what makes sense to believe, one must not passively and uncritically accept what one has learned. Having intellectual courage is especially important because ideas considered dangerous or absurd may hold some truth, and ideas strongly held by social groups to which we belong may hold some distortion or falsity. To be fairminded thinkers in these circumstances, we must develop intellectual courage, recognizing that the penalties society places on us for nonconformity can be severe.

The opposite of intellectual courage, *intellectual cowardice*, is the fear of ideas that do not conform to one's own. If we lack intellectual courage, we are afraid to give serious consideration to ideas, beliefs, or viewpoints that we perceive as dangerous. We feel personally threatened by some ideas when they significantly conflict with our personal identity. We are unwilling to examine our beliefs—an indication that there may be some problem with the justifiability of those beliefs.

Each of the following ideas or its opposite is “sacred” in the minds of some people:

- Being a conservative/being a liberal
- Believing in God or disbelieving in God
- Believing in capitalism or believing in socialism
- Believing in abortion or disbelieving in abortion
- Believing in capital punishment or disbelieving in capital punishment

No matter what side we are on, we often say of ourselves: “I am a(an) \_\_\_\_\_ [insert sacred belief here; for example, I am a Christian. I am a conservative. I am a socialist. I am an atheist].”

Once we define who we are through an emotional commitment to our beliefs, we are likely to experience inner fear when those beliefs are questioned. Giving into this fear is the first form of intellectual cowardice. Questioning our beliefs seems to mean questioning who we are as persons. The intensely personal fear we feel keeps us from being fair to opposing beliefs. When we “consider” opposing ideas, we subconsciously undermine them, presenting them in their weakest forms so we can reject them. We need intellectual courage to overcome self-created inner fear—the fear we ourselves have created by linking our identity to a specific set of beliefs.

Another important reason to acquire intellectual courage is to overcome the fear of rejection by others because they hold certain beliefs and are likely to reject us if we challenge those beliefs. This is where we invest others with the power to intimidate us. Many people judge themselves according to the views of others and cannot approve of themselves unless others approve of them.

The best thinkers do not connect their identities to their beliefs.

Fear of rejection often lurks in the back of their minds. Few people challenge the ideologies or belief systems of the groups to which they belong. This is the second form of intellectual cowardice. Both forms make it impossible to consider either our own or others' ideas fairly.

Instead of forming one's identity according to one's personal beliefs, it is far better to define oneself according to the *processes* by which one formulates beliefs. This is what it means to be a critical thinker. Consider the following resolution.

I will not *identify* with the content of any belief. I will identify only with the way I come to my beliefs. I am a critical thinker and, as such, am willing to examine my beliefs and abandon

any that cannot be supported by evidence and rational considerations. I am ready to follow evidence and reason wherever they lead. My true identity is that of being a critical thinker, a lifelong learner, a person always looking to improve my thinking by becoming more reasonable in my beliefs.

When we refuse to connect our identity with our beliefs, we become more intellectually courageous and, by implication, more fairminded. We are no longer afraid to consider beliefs that are contrary to our present beliefs. We are not afraid to be proven wrong. We freely admit to having made mistakes in the past. We are happy to correct any mistakes we are still making: “Tell me what you believe and why you believe it, and maybe I can learn from your thinking. I have cast off many early beliefs. I am ready to abandon any and all of my present beliefs that are not consistent with the way things are.” Given this definition, how many people do you know who have intellectual courage?

The best thinkers follow evidence and reason wherever they lead.

## 1.4, 1.5 *Think for Yourself*

### INTELLECTUAL COURAGE I

**S**elect one group to which you belong. Complete the following statements:

1. One main belief common to members of this group that might be questioned is ... (here you want to identify at least one belief that may lead group members to behave irrationally)
2. This belief might be questioned because ...
3. I would or would not be able to stand up to my group, pointing out the problems with this belief, because ...

### INTELLECTUAL COURAGE II

**T**ry to think of a circumstance in which either you or someone you know defended a view that was unpopular in a group to which you belonged. Describe the circumstances and, especially, how the group responded. If you can't think of an example, what is the significance of that realization?

## Intellectual Empathy: Learn to Enter Opposing Views Empathically

Now let's consider another trait of mind necessary to fairmindedness, intellectual empathy.

To have intellectual empathy is to put oneself imaginatively in the place of others on a routine basis, so as to genuinely understand them. It requires one to reconstruct the viewpoints and reasoning of others accurately and to reason from premises, assumptions, and ideas other than

one's own. This trait requires the motivation to recall occasions when one was wrong in the past despite an intense conviction of being right and the ability to imagine being similarly deceived in a case at hand.

The opposite of intellectual empathy is *intellectual self-centeredness*, thinking centered on self. When we think from a self-centered perspective, we are unable to understand the thoughts, feelings, and emotions of others. This, unfortunately, is the natural state of the human mind. From this perspective, most of our attention is focused on ourselves. Our pain, desires, and hopes are most pressing. The needs of others pale in significance to our own needs and desires. We are unable to consider issues, problems, and questions from a viewpoint that differs from our own and that, when considered, would force us to change our perspective.

How can we be fair to the thinking of others if we haven't genuinely tried to understand their thinking? Fairminded judgment requires a good-faith effort to put oneself into the situation or perspective of another person (or other sentient creature). It requires an appreciation of the different contexts and situations within which varying perspectives emerge. Human thinking derives from the conditions of human life, from very different contexts and situations. If we do not learn how to take on others' perspectives and to accurately represent their views, we will not be able to judge their ideas and beliefs fairly. Trying to think within the viewpoint of others is not easy, though. It is one of the most difficult skills to acquire.

To develop your ability to empathize with others intellectually, practice using the following strategies:

1. During a disagreement with someone, switch roles. Tell the person, "I will speak from your viewpoint for 10 minutes if you will speak from mine. This way, perhaps we can understand one another better." Make sure you are representing one another's viewpoint accurately.
2. During a discussion, summarize what another person is saying, using this structure: "What I understand you to be saying is \_\_\_\_\_. Is this correct?"
3. When reading, say to yourself what you think the author is saying. This will enable you to bring ideas concretely into your mind so you then can think accurately within the author's viewpoint. Only then are you in a position to critique the author's viewpoint.

## 1.6, 1.7 *Think for Yourself*

### INTELLECTUAL EMPATHY I

**T**ry to reconstruct in your mind the last argument you had with someone (friend, parent, intimate other, supervisor). Reconstruct the argument from your perspective as well as from that of the other person. Complete the statements below. As you do, take care that you do not distort the other person's viewpoint. Try to enter it in good faith, even if it means you have to admit you were wrong. (Remember that critical thinkers want to see the truth in the

situation.) After you have completed this assignment, show it to the person you argued with to see whether you have represented that person's view accurately.

1. My perspective was as follows (state and elaborate your view in detail):
2. The other person's view was as follows (state and elaborate the other person's view in detail):

## INTELLECTUAL EMPATHY II

**T**hink of an international political leader who is represented negatively in the news (for example, Castro in Cuba). Gather enough information about that person to be able to explain how he or she might defend himself or herself against the charges made in characterizing that person as "evil." Then ask yourself if you have ever seriously considered the possibility that any of the "enemies" of the United States might be more justified in opposing us than we are in opposing them. If you have never heard the defense of a national "enemy" from that person's point of view, how might that affect your ability to empathize with that person?

## Intellectual Integrity: Hold Yourself to the Same Standards to Which You Hold Others

Let us now consider the trait of intellectual integrity.

Intellectual integrity means striving to be true to one's own disciplined thinking and holding oneself to the same standards that one expects others to meet. For example, it involves holding oneself to the same rigorous standards of evidence and proof to which one holds one's antagonists. It means practicing daily what one advocates for others. It requires honestly admitting discrepancies and inconsistencies in one's own thought and action and identifying inconsistencies within one's thinking.

The opposite of intellectual integrity is *intellectual hypocrisy*, a state of mind unconcerned with true honesty and often marked by unconscious contradictions and inconsistencies. Because the mind is naturally egocentric, it is naturally hypocritical, yet at the same time skillfully able to rationalize whatever it thinks and however it leads us to act. Because of its innate need to project a positive image, the *appearance* of integrity is important to the egocentric mind. Therefore, we actively hide our hypocrisy from ourselves, and although we expect others to adhere to much more rigid standards than the standards we impose on ourselves, we see ourselves as fair. Although we profess certain beliefs, we often fail to behave in accordance with those beliefs.

Suppose I were to say to you that our relationship is really important to me, but you find out that I have lied to you about something important to you. My behavior lacks integrity. I have acted hypocritically. Yet, in my own egocentric, self-serving mind, I have rationalized my lying by telling myself things such as, "It's better that she not know. It will only upset her, and it won't help our relationship.

The issue isn't that important anyway. It's really no big deal." When I rationalize in this way, I can hide my hypocrisy from myself, which is vitally important. Although I have acted dishonestly, I can tell myself that everything I have done is the best thing to do in the situation. In short, I can appear *right* in my own mind.

To the extent that our beliefs and actions are consistent, we have intellectual integrity. We practice what we preach, so to speak. We don't say one thing and do another.

Clearly, we cannot be fair to others if we are justified in thinking and acting in contradictory ways. By its very nature, hypocrisy is a form of injustice. If we are not sensitive to contradictions and inconsistencies in our own thinking and behavior, we cannot reason well through ethical questions involving ourselves. We will distort other viewpoints to come out ahead.

Consider this political example: From time to time, the media disclose highly questionable practices by the CIA. These practices run anywhere from documentation of attempted assassinations of foreign political leaders (say, attempts to assassinate President Castro of Cuba) to the practice of teaching police or military representatives in other countries (say, in Central America or South America) how to torture prisoners to get them to disclose information about their associates. To appreciate how such disclosures reveal hypocrisy, we have only to imagine how we would respond if another nation were to attempt to assassinate our president or train American police or military in methods of torture. Once we imagine this, we recognize a basic inconsistency in our behavior and a lack of intellectual integrity on the part of those who plan, engage in, or approve of this kind of behavior.

All humans sometimes fail to act with intellectual integrity. When we do, we reveal a lack of fairmindedness on our part, and a failure to think well enough to detect internal contradictions in our thought or life.

## 1.8 *Think for Yourself*

### INTELLECTUAL INTEGRITY

**D**iscuss a dimension of your life that you suspect holds some inconsistencies or contradictions (where you probably are not holding yourself to the same standard to which you hold someone else). Think of a situation in which your behavior contradicts what you say you believe. This might be in an intimate relationship, for example. Complete the following statements:

1. The context within which I fail to have intellectual integrity is . . .
2. In this context, I would (or do) expect others to behave as follows (though I am not willing to behave in the same way myself) . . .
3. The reason I fail to have intellectual integrity in this situation is . . .
4. To change this situation, I need to . . .

## Intellectual Perseverance: Refuse to Give Up Easily; Work Your Way through Complexities and Frustration

Let us now consider intellectual perseverance.

Intellectual perseverance is the disposition to work one's way through intellectual complexities despite frustrations inherent in the task. Some problems are complicated and cannot be solved easily. One has intellectual perseverance when one does not give up in the face of complexity or frustration. The intellectually perseverant person understands that carefully and methodically reasoning through complex issues and problems takes precedence over coming to conclusions quickly. Intellectual perseverance involves adhering to rational principles firmly despite the natural tendency to go with first impressions and simplistic answers. It also entails a realistic sense of the need to struggle with confusion and unsettled questions over an extended time to achieve understanding or insight.

The opposite of intellectual perseverance is *intellectual laziness*, demonstrated in the tendency to give up quickly when faced with an intellectually challenging task. The intellectually indolent, or lazy, person has a low tolerance for intellectual pain or frustration.

Intellectual perseverance is essential to almost all areas of higher-level thinking because virtually all higher-level thinking involves some intellectual challenges. Without intellectual perseverance, those challenges cannot be overcome. Intellectual perseverance is required for high-quality reasoning in math, chemistry, physics, literature, art—and indeed any domain. Many students give up during early stages of learning a subject. Lacking intellectual perseverance, they cut themselves off from the many insights available to them only when they are willing to think through a subject. They avoid intellectual frustration, no doubt, but they end up with the everyday frustrations of not being able to solve the complex problems they face.

Students often lack intellectual perseverance for at least two important reasons.

1. The mind is naturally averse to intellectual difficulties. It much prefers things to be easy, and it will take the simplest route to an answer when it can. This is the natural egocentric state of the mind.
2. Intellectual perseverance is rarely fostered in school. Instead, students are often encouraged to complete tasks quickly. Those who finish first are seen as the smartest and brightest. Slowly and carefully working through tasks is not usually valued. Consequently, students conclude that quickness is what matters most in *learning*. Those who are not able to finish tasks quickly come to view themselves as inadequate, stupid, inferior. Yet the most important questions we will reason through in our lives most likely will be complex and, therefore, will require not speed but diligence and intellectual discipline. The thoroughness and attentiveness we bring to the process will determine whether, and to what extent, we can answer the questions.



Intellectually quick students are often the same students who give up when the intellectual task becomes difficult. They see themselves as capable of getting the “right” answer quickly and without intellectual pain. When the “right” answer does not come immediately and painlessly, they frequently blame the teacher for giving a “dumb assignment.” Indeed, these students often fail to recognize that every question doesn’t have a “right” answer; some instead have only better and worse answers, and there is no effective way to work through these complex questions simply and easily.

How does a lack of intellectual perseverance impede fairmindedness? Understanding the views of others requires intellectual work. It requires intellectual perseverance—insofar as those views differ from ours or are complex in nature. If we are unable or unwilling to work through the views of others, to consider the information they use and how they interpret that information, to look closely at their beliefs and analyze those beliefs for ourselves, to understand what they are trying to accomplish and how they see the world, we will not be able to think fairly within their viewpoint.

For example, suppose we are Christians wanting to be fair to the views of atheists. Unless we read and understand the reasoning of intelligent and insightful atheists, we cannot be fair to those views. Some intelligent and insightful atheists have written books to explain how and why they think as they do. Some of their reasoning is complicated or deals with complex issues. It follows that only those Christians who have the intellectual perseverance to read and understand atheists can be fair to atheist views. Of course, a parallel case could be made for atheists’ understanding the views of intelligent and insightful Christians.

## 1.9 *Think for Yourself*

### INTELLECTUAL PERSEVERANCE

**M**ost people have much more physical perseverance than intellectual perseverance. On the one hand, most are ready to admit “No pain, no gain!” when talking about the body. On the other hand, most give up quickly when faced with a frustrating intellectual problem. Thinking of your own responses, especially in classes, how would you evaluate your own intellectual perseverance (on a scale of 0–10)? Explain to a classmate how you would support your score. On what do you base your conclusion?

### Confidence in Reason: Respect Evidence and Reasoning and Value Them as Tools for Discovering the Truth

Confidence in reason is another trait of fairmindedness.

Confidence in reason is based on the belief that one’s own higher interests and those of humankind at large are best served by giving the freest play to reason, by encouraging people to come to their own conclusions through the use of their own rational faculties. It is based on the

belief that, with proper encouragement and cultivation, people can learn to think for themselves; form insightful viewpoints; draw reasonable conclusions; think clearly, accurately, relevantly, and logically; persuade each other by appeal to good reason and sound evidence; and become reasonable persons despite deep-seated obstacles in human nature and social life.

When one has confidence in reason, one is *moved* by reason in appropriate ways. The very idea of reasonability becomes one of the most important values and a focal point in one's life. In short, to have confidence in reason is to use good reasoning as the fundamental criterion by which to judge whether to accept or reject any belief or position.

The opposite of confidence in reason is *intellectual distrust of reason*. Undisciplined thinkers feel threatened by good reasoning. By nature, people are not adept at analyzing their views. Yet, we tend to have complete confidence in our own views. The more we analyze our views, the more we see problems in our views and the less we want to hold on to views we have not analyzed. Without confidence in reason, people naturally will have confidence in the *truth of their own beliefs*, however flawed those beliefs might be. It is as if the mind engages unconsciously in something like the following inner dialogue:

“I have formulated many beliefs throughout my life that I have not analyzed. If I were to *own* the beliefs I am often driven by, I would be appalled. Yet I cling to my beliefs because it would be too time-consuming and painful to analyze them closely. So I will just hang on to all of my beliefs, and everything will work out okay in the end.”

In many ways, we live in an irrational world—a world surrounded by curious forms of irrational beliefs and behaviors. For example, despite the success of science in providing plausible explanations based on careful study of evidence gathered through methodical and disciplined observations, many people still believe in unsubstantiated systems such as astrology. When faced with a problem, many follow their natural impulses. For example, they may follow leaders whose only claim to credibility is skill in manipulating a crowd and whipping up enthusiasm. Fewer people seem to recognize the power of sound thinking in helping us solve our problems and live a fulfilling life. Few, in short, have genuine confidence in reason. Instead, people tend to have uncritical or *blind* faith in one or more of the following, often resulting from irrational drives and emotions:

1. Faith in charismatic national leaders (Think of leaders able to excite millions of people and manipulate them into supporting unjust wars or even [such as Hitler] to support genocide of an entire religious group.)
2. Faith in charismatic cult leaders
3. Faith in the father as the traditional head of the family (as defined by religious or social tradition)
4. Faith in institutional authorities (police, social workers, judges, priests, evangelical preachers, and so forth)
5. Faith in spiritual powers (such as a “holy spirit” as defined by various religious belief systems)

6. Faith in some social group, official or unofficial (faith in a gang, in the business community, in a church, in a political party, and so on)
7. Faith in a political ideology (such as right-wing fundamentalism, left-wing fundamentalism, communism, capitalism, Fascism)
8. Faith in intuition
9. Faith in one's unanalyzed emotions
10. Faith in one's gut impulses
11. Faith in fate (some unnamed force that supposedly guides the destiny of all of us)
12. Faith in social or legal institutions (courts, schools, business community, government)
13. Faith in the folkways or mores of a social group or culture
14. Faith in one's own unanalyzed experience (faith in the idea that one's interpretations about past experiences are the only *right* and *true* way to interpret those experiences)
15. Faith in people who have social status or position (the rich, the famous, the powerful)

Under certain conditions, confidence in reason may be compatible with some of the above. The key factor is the extent to which the form of faith is based on sound reasoning and evidence. The acid test, then, is: Are there good grounds for having that faith? For example, it makes sense to have faith in a friend if that friend has acted consistently as a friend over an extended time. But it does not make sense to have faith in a new acquaintance, even if one is emotionally attracted to that individual and that person professes his or her friendship.

As you consider your own thinking on the nature of different kinds of faith, and the extent to which you have appropriate confidence in reason and evidence, ask yourself to what extent you can be moved by well-reasoned appeals. Suppose you meet someone who shows so much of an interest in your boyfriend or girlfriend that you feel intensely jealous and negative toward that person. Would you shift your view if you knew that the person you are negative about is actually exceptionally kind, thoughtful, and generous? Could you shift your view even when you really would want your boyfriend or girlfriend to reject this person in favor of you? Would you be moved by reason if you thought your boyfriend or girlfriend would be *happier* with another person than with you? Have you ever given up a belief you held dear because, through your reading, experience, and reflection, you were persuaded that it was not reasonable to believe as you did? Are you ready and willing to admit that some of your most passionate beliefs (for example, your religious or political beliefs) may not be reasonable?

A direct relationship exists between confidence in reason and fairmindedness. One cannot be fairminded and yet be blind to the importance of *reason*. If I profess to be fairminded, yet I am unwilling to consider good reasons with which I disagree, I demonstrate a mind that lacks confidence in reason and is not fairminded. Fairmindedness often requires one to consider reasoning not yet before

considered, to consider that reasoning in good faith, and to change one's reasoning when faced with better reasoning, reasoning that is more logical, accurate, justifiable. All of this presupposes confidence in reason, confidence that when we place good reason at the heart of our thinking, we will do a better job of thinking.

## 1.10 *Think for Yourself*

### CONFIDENCE IN REASON

**T**hink of a recent situation in which you felt yourself being defensive, and you now realize that you were not able to listen to an argument you disagreed with, although the argument had merit. In this situation, you apparently could not be moved by good reasons. Briefly write what happened in the situation. Then write the reasonable arguments against your position that you were not willing to listen to. Why weren't you able to give credit to the other person's argument? In answering this question, see whether you used any of the list of sources of faith people usually rely on. In originally reasoning through the issue, were you relying on some form of blind faith?

## Intellectual Autonomy: Value Independence of Thought

The final intellectual trait we will consider is intellectual autonomy.

Intellectual autonomy means thinking for oneself while adhering to standards of rationality. It means thinking through issues using one's own thinking rather than uncritically accepting the viewpoints of others. Intellectually autonomous thinkers do not depend on others when deciding what to believe and what to reject. They are influenced by others' views only to the extent that those views are reasonable given the evidence.

In forming beliefs, critical thinkers do not passively accept the beliefs of others. Rather, they think through situations and issues for themselves. They reject unjustified authorities while recognizing the contributions of reasonable authority. They carefully form principles of thought and action and do not mindlessly accept those presented to them. They are not limited by accepted ways of doing things. They evaluate the traditions and practices that others often accept unquestioningly. Independent thinkers strive to incorporate insightful ideas into their thinking, regardless of whether the society within which they live consider those ideas acceptable or appropriate. Independent thinkers are not willful, stubborn, or unresponsive to the reasonable suggestions of others. Independent thinkers are self-monitoring thinkers who are sensitive to mistakes they make and problems in their thinking. They freely choose the values by which they live.

Of course, intellectual autonomy must be understood not as a thing in itself. Instead, we must recognize it as a dimension of our minds working in conjunction with, and tempered by, the other intellectual virtues.

The opposite of intellectual autonomy is *intellectual conformity*, or intellectual dependence. Intellectual autonomy is difficult to develop because social institutions, as they now stand, depend heavily on passive acceptance of the status quo, whether intellectual, political, or economic. Thinking for oneself almost certainly leads to unpopular conclusions that are not sanctioned by the powers that be, whereas there are many rewards for those who simply conform in thought and action to social expectations.

Consequently, large masses of people are unknowing conformists in thought and deed, like mirrors reflecting the belief systems and values of those who surround them. They lack the intellectual skills and the incentive to think for themselves. They are intellectually conforming thinkers. As long as people uncritically accept cultural values, as long as they conform to beliefs they have not analyzed for themselves, they cannot be intellectually free.

Even those who spend years acquiring a PhD may be intellectually dependent, both academically and personally. They may uncritically accept faulty practices within their disciplines, uncritically defending these practices against legitimate critics. Despite all their years of school, they may yet be enslaved by social conventions and rules. They may have little or no insight into the human harm and suffering caused by these social rules.

One cannot be fairminded and lack intellectual autonomy because independent thinking is a prerequisite to thinking within multiple perspectives. When we intellectually conform, we are able to think only within “accepted” viewpoints; to be fairminded is to refuse to accept beliefs uncritically without thinking through the merits (and demerits) of those beliefs for oneself. When we attempt to think within other viewpoints without the virtue of intellectual autonomy, either we are too easily swayed by those viewpoints (because we are unable to see through manipulation and propaganda) or we distort the viewpoints (because those viewpoints don’t conform with the belief system we have uncritically formulated).

## 1.11, 1.12 *Think for Yourself*

### INTELLECTUAL AUTONOMY I

**B**riefly review in your own mind some of the many influences to which you have been exposed in your life (influence of culture, family, religion, peer groups, teachers, media, personal relationships). Try to discriminate between those dimensions of your thought and behavior in which you have done the least thinking for yourself and those in which you have done the most thinking. What makes this activity difficult is that we often perceive ourselves as thinking for ourselves when we are actually conforming to others. What you should look for, therefore, are instances when you actively questioned beliefs, values, or practices to which others in your “group” were, or are, conforming.

By the way, don’t assume that teenage rebellion against parents and school authorities (if you engaged in it) was necessarily evidence of independent thought. Teen rebellion is often

simply the trading of one form of conformity (e.g., to parents) for another (conformity to peer group). Be prepared to explain how you arrived at your conclusions about your current extent of intellectual independence.

## INTELLECTUAL AUTONOMY II

In analyzing some of the beliefs you have come to accept, complete the following statements:

1. One belief I have been taught by my culture about the way people should behave in groups is ...  
I have been taught this by (whom?) ...  
In analyzing this belief, I do/do not think it is rational because ...
2. One belief I have been taught within or about religion is ...  
I have been taught this by (whom?) ...  
In analyzing this belief, I do/do not think it is rational because ...
3. One belief I have been taught by my parents is ...  
In analyzing this belief, I do/do not think it is rational because ...
4. One belief I have learned from my peer group is ...  
In analyzing this belief, I do/do not think it is rational because ...
5. One belief I have been taught by teachers is ...  
In analyzing this belief, I do/do not think it is rational because ...

## RECOGNIZE THE INTERDEPENDENCE OF INTELLECTUAL VIRTUES

The traits of mind essential for critical thinking are interdependent. Consider intellectual humility: To become aware of the limits of our knowledge, we need the intellectual courage to face our own prejudices and ignorance. To discover our own prejudices, in turn, we often must intellectually empathize with and reason within points of view with which we fundamentally disagree. To achieve this end, we typically must engage in intellectual perseverance because learning to enter a point of view empathically against which we are biased takes time and significant effort. That effort will not seem justified unless we have the necessary confidence in reason to believe we will not be tainted or “taken in” by whatever is false or misleading in the opposing viewpoint.

Furthermore, merely believing we won’t be harmed by considering “alien” viewpoints is not enough to motivate most of us to consider them seriously. We also must be motivated by an intellectual sense of justice. We must recognize an intellectual responsibility to be fair to views we oppose. We must feel obliged to hear them in their strongest form to ensure that we are not condemning them out

of ignorance or bias. At this point, we come full circle to where we began: the need for intellectual humility.

To begin at another point, consider intellectual integrity or good faith. Intellectual integrity is clearly a difficult trait to develop. We are often motivated—usually without admitting to or being aware of this motivation—to set up inconsistent standards in thinking. Our egocentric or sociocentric tendencies, for example, make us ready to believe positive information about those we like and negative information about those we dislike. Likewise, we are strongly inclined to believe what serves to justify our selfish interests or validate our strongest desires. Hence, all humans have some innate mental tendencies to operate with double standards, which is typical of intellectual bad faith. These modes of thinking often correlate quite well with getting ahead in the world, maximizing our power or advantage, and getting more of what we want.

Nevertheless, it is difficult to operate explicitly or overtly with a double standard. We therefore need to avoid looking at the evidence too closely and scrutinizing our own inferences and interpretations too carefully. At this point, a certain amount of intellectual arrogance is quite useful. I may assume, for example, that I know what you're going to say (before you say it), precisely what you are really after (before the evidence demonstrates it), and what actually is going on (before I have studied the situation carefully). My intellectual arrogance makes it easier for me to avoid noticing the unjustifiable discrepancy between the standards I apply to you and the standards I apply to myself. Not having to empathize with you makes it easier to avoid seeing my self-deception. I also can maintain my viewpoint more easily if I don't feel a need to be fair to your point of view, and a little background fear of what I might discover if I seriously consider the consistency of my own judgments can be quite useful. In this case, my lack of intellectual humility, empathy, and fairmindedness supports my lack of intellectual integrity.

Going in the other direction, it will be difficult to use a double standard if I feel a responsibility to be fair to your point of view, to see that this responsibility requires me to view things from your perspective empathically, and to do so with some humility, recognizing that I could be wrong and you right. The more I dislike you personally, or feel wronged in the past by you or by others who share your way of thinking, the more pronounced in my character must be the trait of intellectual integrity and good faith to compel me to be fair.

## 1.13 *Think for Yourself*

### A COMMITMENT TO SELF-TRANSFORMATION

**T**o what extent would you like to become a person whose characteristics are defined by the intellectual traits explained in this chapter? How important is that goal to you? Discuss your commitment, or lack thereof, with a classmate. In this activity, honesty is the key.



**EXHIBIT 1.3** *Natural versus critical thinking*

- As humans we think; as critical thinkers we analyze our thinking.
- As humans we think egocentrically; as critical thinkers we expose the egocentric roots of our thinking to close scrutiny.
- As humans we are drawn to standards of thinking unworthy of belief; as critical thinkers we expose inappropriate standards and replace them with sound ones.
- As humans we live in systems of meanings that typically entrap us; as critical thinkers we learn how to raise our thinking to conscious examination, enabling us to free ourselves from many of the traps of undisciplined, instinctive thought.
- As humans we use logical systems whose root structures are not apparent to us; as critical thinkers we develop tools for explicating and assessing the logical systems in which we live.
- As humans we live with the illusion of intellectual and emotion freedom; as critical thinkers we take explicit intellectual and emotional command of who we are, what we are, and the ends to which our lives are tending.
- As human thinkers we are governed by our thoughts; as critical thinkers we learn how to govern the thoughts that govern us.

**EXHIBIT 1.4** *Developing Intellectual Virtues Requires Routinely Asking These Questions of Yourself*

Intellectual humility – Knowledge of ignorance, sensitivity to what you know and what you do not know

- What do I really know (about myself, about the situation, about another person, about my nation, about what is going on in the world)?
- To what extent do my prejudices or biases influence my thinking?
- To what extent have I been indoctrinated into beliefs that may be false?
- How do the beliefs I have uncritically accepted keep me from seeing things as they are?

Intellectual courage – The disposition to question beliefs you feel strongly about

- To what extent have I analyzed the beliefs I hold?
- To what extent have I questioned my beliefs, many of which I learned in childhood?
- To what extent have I demonstrated a willingness to give up my beliefs when sufficient evidence is presented against them?
- To what extent am I willing to stand up against the majority (even though people might ridicule me)?

(continued)

**EXHIBIT 1.4** *Continued*

**Intellectual empathy** – Awareness of the need to actively entertain views that differ from your own, especially those you strongly disagree with

- To what extent do I accurately represent viewpoints I disagree with?
- Can I summarize the views of my opponents to their satisfaction?
- Can I see insights in the views of others and prejudices in my own?
- Do I sympathize with the feelings of others in light of their thinking differently than me?

**Intellectual integrity** – Holding yourself to the same intellectual standards you expect others to honor (no double standards)

- Do I behave in accordance with what I say I believe, or do I tend to say one thing and do another?
- To what extent do I expect the same of myself as I expect of others?
- To what extent are there contradictions or inconsistencies in my life?
- To what extent do I strive to recognize and eliminate self-deception in my life?

**Intellectual perseverance** – The disposition to work your way through intellectual complexities despite frustrations

- Am I willing to work my way through complexities in an issue, or do I tend to give up when I experience difficulty?
- Can I think of a difficult intellectual problem in which I have demonstrated patience and determination in working through the difficulties?
- Do I have strategies for dealing with complex problems?
- Do I expect learning to be easy, or do I recognize the importance of engaging in challenging intellectual work?

**Confidence in reason** – Based on the belief that one's own higher interests and those of humankind at large are best served by giving the freest play to reason

- Am I willing to change my position when the evidence leads to a more reasonable position?
- Do I adhere to principles of sound reasoning when persuading others of my position, or do I distort matters to support my position?
- Do I deem it more important to win an argument or to see the issue from the most reasonable perspective?
- Do I encourage others to come to their own conclusions, or do I try to force my views on them?

**Intellectual autonomy** – Thinking for oneself while adhering to standards of rationality

- To what extent am I a conformist?
- To what extent do I uncritically accept what I am told by my government, the media, my peers?
- Do I think through issues on my own, or do I merely accept the views of others?
- Having thought through an issue from a rational perspective, am I willing to stand alone despite the irrational criticisms of others?

## CONCLUSION

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**T**True excellence in thinking is not simply the product of isolated intellectual skills. Inevitable problems arise in the thinking of persons who, without knowing it, lack intellectual virtues. These people frequently display the traits of the undisciplined mind. To the extent that we are motivated unconsciously to believe what we want to believe, what is most comfortable to believe, what puts us in a good light, what serves our selfish interest, we are unable to function as rational persons. As you work through this book, we hope you find yourself thinking through and beginning to internalize the essential traits. See how well you are able to resist the external influence of the conformist thinkers around you and the internal influence of the egocentric thinker within you.

