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An Ideal Critical Thinker and His Fallacies

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Abstract

Critical thinking is supported by a rich and diverse literature, with particularly close ties to argumentation theory and informal logic. It has often been presented in terms of a set of skills and dispositions, with the latter exemplified through the figure of an ideal critical thinker. These accounts of the relevant dispositions are intuitive and tend to emphasize openness, clarity, and a concern for truth. Seemingly running against this impression, it is argued here that an ideal critical thinker can willfully engage in fallacious argumentation. This surprising possibility is grounded in the distinction between thinking and arguing, with the literature on critical thinking being implicitly and rightly limited to the former. The argument draws on an established account of critical thinking dispositions, a simple supporting view of the nature of dispositions, and analogies to familiar phenomena like lying. The result complements existing work on the subject in terms of what a critical thinker should do, contributing to our understanding of the conceptual boundaries of critical thinking and argumentation proper.

Keywords: Critical thinking; dispositions; virtues; fallacies; argumentation

Critical thinking is a complex subject closely related to argumentation theory and informal logic, supported by a rich and often interdisciplinary literature. The standard approach to framing it builds on the skills and dispositions distinction (see, e.g., Baron 1985; Siegel 1988, 2017; Ennis 1987, 2015; cf. Bailin 1999), with accounts of the relevant dispositions often presented through the figure of an ideal critical thinker. These dispositions generally fit what one would expect, involving an understanding of argumentation, an open mind, and a concern for truth. And this positive image of the ideal thinker naturally connotes the idea that they should also be a virtuous arguer, which is strengthened by the close ties between critical thinking and argumentation theory in the literature. Contrary to this impression, I contend that an ideal critical thinker may willfully engage in fallacious argumentation, a possibility that becomes more apparent once we distinguish thinking from arguing. The case is made by appealing to well-established sets of dispositions associated with critical thinking, a simple view of dispositions, and analogies to phenomena like lying. All of this is ultimately an exercise in

conceptual analysis, leading to a surprising result, which in turn helps to further develop critical thinking as a concept. This line of argument contributes to the existing literature not by proposing what critical thinkers ought to do but by clarifying what critical thinking permits, revealing, in the process, something of its conceptual limits.

The paper consists of three sections. The first introduces critical thinking and the dispositions associated with it in the form of the ideal critical thinker. The second section develops the relevant notion of dispositions and the connection to thought. The third section pushes this idea further by exploring the possibility of an ideal critical thinker that engages in fallacious forms of argumentation. The final section presents a brief conclusion.

1. Critical thinking dispositions

Where critical thinking may be thought of as a kind of skill requiring an understanding of logic and argument forms, it has also come to be recognized that critical thinking involves certain dispositions or virtues (see, e.g., Siegel 2017; Ennis 2015; Nieto and Saiz 2011; Hamby 2015; Bailin 1999; Bailin and Battersby 2016a).[1] That is, critical thinking is not just knowledge of different argument types or forms of inference but a disposition to effectively engage with arguments and material, to be disposed to actually think critically, as it were. The skills and dispositions view of critical thinking has come to structure the field, introducing discussion of various relevant skills and abilities, alongside discussion of questions of active engagement, of discursive responsibility, of normative implications, etc., on the side of dispositions.

The literature in the area of critical thinking dispositions is broad, with many distinct positions, nuances, etc. At the same time, it should be recognized that while there are many differing approaches to what comprises this dispositional aspect of critical thinking, they all share the same spirit. That is, where some advocate for intellectual humility, perseverance, and faith in reason (Paul 1993), others do so for open-mindedness, curiosity, and concern for truth and accuracy (Bailin and Battersby 2016b), and others still for objectivity and fair-mindedness (Diestler 2012), receptivity (Norlock 2013), or love of truth (Peters 1972). Though these various positions and contributions are distinct, they are also broadly complementary, with a shared emphasis on openness and commitment to truth, reason, etc. This shared emphasis is perhaps best captured in the representative work of Ennis (1996, see also Ennis 1964, 1987), which we will adopt here as our reference account.

Ennis introduces his position by appealing to an ideal critical thinker as a framing device and pairing it with a set of dispositions that this ideal thinker embodies – something that is also found in other similarly influential works, for instance that of

[1]In what follows, only dispositions will be discussed. As Bailin and Battersby put it, "the aspect that is captured in the notion of virtue that is missing in the notion of disposition is that of valuing or appreciating. A virtue is not just a tendency to behave in a certain way but a tendency to do so based on an appreciation or valuing of the enterprise" (2016a: 368). Interpreted in this way, the same arguments developed below could be adapted to virtue approaches. That being said, there are significant extensions and complications to be found in moving the discussion to virtues if one is committed to a unity of virtues thesis (see Wilson 2021). There are also potential positive applications of the arguments presented here if adapted to virtues, for instance, as reinforcing distinctions between critical thinking virtues and argumentative virtues (see, e.g., Cohen 2009; Aberdein 2010). Engaging further with virtues would, however, go beyond the intended scope of the present work, though it does invite further investigation. I would like to thank an anonymous reviewer for raising these points.

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Perkins *et al.* (1993), who also appeal to an ideal thinker in presenting their set of dispositions for "good thinking." The framing device is a familiar one in discussions of dispositions across subject matters and contexts, as it provides an intuitive way of talking about dispositions, which are otherwise intangible, involving diffuse patterns of behavior or other phenomena. We will be working within this framing device of an ideal thinker. And we will pair it with the set of dispositions that Ennis develops, with his set being particularly influential in the literature, and it also having been developed, at least in part, in dialog with the work of Perkins *et al.* (1993) and others (e.g., Glaser 1984; McPeck 1990).

He argues that an ideal critical thinker ought to exhibit the following:

1. Care that their beliefs be true, and that their decisions be justified; that is, care to "get it right" to the extent possible, or at least care to do the best they can. This includes the interrelated dispositions to do the following:
   a. Seek alternatives (hypotheses, explanations, conclusions, plans, sources), and be open to them;
   b. *Endorse a position to the extent that, but only to the extent that, it is justified* by the information that is available;
   c. *Be well-informed;* and
   d. Seriously consider points of view other than their own.
2. Represent a position honestly and clearly (theirs as well as others). This includes the dispositions to do the following:
   a. Be clear about the intended meaning of what is said, written, or otherwise communicated, seeking as much precision as the situation requires;
   b. Determine, and maintain *focus* on, the conclusion or question;
   c. Seek and offer *reasons;*
   d. Take into account the *total situation;* and
   e. Be reflectively aware of their own basic beliefs. (Ennis 1996: 171)[2]

These two sets are intuitive and effective in characterizing the ideal critical thinker on just about any account that appeals to dispositions. It is very natural to think of critical thinking as having to do with caring that one's beliefs be true, of seeking alternatives and being open to them, of seriously considering other points of view, representing positions honestly and clearly, and so on. This set of dispositions circumscribes the ideal critical thinker, defining what dispositions they ought to exhibit, and in the process defining what they should not, or cannot be like.

[2]Note, this elides the third set of humane dispositions: "3. Care about the dignity and worth of every person. This includes the dispositions to:

   a. Discover and listen to others' views and reasons.
   b. Take into account others' feelings and level of understanding, avoiding intimidating or confusing others with their critical thinking prowess; and
   c. Be concerned about others' welfare" (Ennis 1996: 171).

While these are of course potentially significant here, Ennis himself observes that "the disposition to care about the dignity and worth of every person (3) is not required of critical thinking by definition . . . I call it a 'correlative disposition,' by which I mean one that, although not part of the definition of *critical thinking,* is desirable for all critical thinkers to have" (1996: 171). It is not included here as it is not constitutive of critical thinking as such.

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2. Dispositions and silence

This brings us to the matter of how dispositions are to be understood here. The treatment they receive in the context of critical thinking is relatively simple. As Ennis puts it, "roughly speaking, a disposition is a tendency to do something, given certain conditions. The brittleness of glass is a standard example of a disposition: a tendency to break into a number of pieces when struck" (1996: 166). Perkins, Jay, and Tishman introduce a more complex picture of dispositions that involves inclinations and sensitivities, but their characterization of dispositions as such is also similarly simple, "dispositions are behavioral tendencies: the tendency to cheat or play straight, the tendency to be bold or cautious, the tendency to give thinking time, to consider broader perspectives, to seek evidence vigorously, and so on. Dispositions can concern thinking (as the last three mentioned do) or other matters" (1993: 2).

These are familiar treatments, appearing to draw on classic accounts of dispositions (see, e.g., Goodman 1955; Quine 1960; Ryle 2009) and avoiding the technical depth found in more recent work on dispositions, involving finks, categorical properties, and the like (see, e.g., Handfield and Bird 2008; Kittle 2015; Martin 1994; cf. Martin and Heil 1999). These simple characterizations are fitting, considering the context of the critical thinking literature and its expected practical applications in pedagogy and everyday practices.

Where we will introduce a bit of nuance here is to notice that critical thinking dispositions have to do specifically with thinking, which shapes the domain of the dispositions at issue rather than our technical interpretation of the nature of dispositions. To use the contrast drawn by Perkins et al. above, critical thinking dispositions have to do with "the tendency to give thinking time, to consider broader perspectives" rather than the tendency to cheat, or to be bold or cautious. This appears clear in our reference account, as Ennis emphasizes things like considering points of view, representing positions, being clear about intended meanings, etc. The idea that critical thinking dispositions have to do with thinking is perhaps unsurprising, but it is also significant and will ultimately prove consequential.

We can illustrate how all of this is supposed to work with an example, one that also accentuates the sense in which these dispositions are mental. Imagine a thinker that is always silent because they are, for whatever reason, always an observer and never an interlocutor. They observe other people arguing and making claims, but they are never part of any of these interactions. Assume that they satisfy all of the dispositions at issue – that is, our silent thinker (1) cares about their beliefs and "getting it right," they are open to alternatives, endorse positions, and are well-informed. They also (2) represent positions honestly and clearly and are always clear about the intended meaning of what is said, determine and focus on the conclusion, seek reasons, and so on. They do all of this privately, considering alternatives and even representing positions to themselves. Finally, assume that our silent thinker has also mastered all of the relevant skills so that they can and do precisely map out arguments, understand the nuances of different interpretations, and consider everything one could expect them to consider, doing so in great depth. Our imagined person certainly seems to fit the pre-theoretic, intuitive idea of a critical thinker, and moreover, they satisfy the set of dispositional criteria at issue. In short, this silent figure is a (very quiet) ideal critical thinker.

While they do not talk or engage in argumentation, we assume them to be expertly thinking through material, and they satisfy the mechanics of the basic dispositional picture we have been given. That is, the stimulus or condition is observing an argument,

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and upon observing it, they are disposed to think about it critically, and in fact do think about it critically. Moreover, given that they do not do anything aside from observing and thinking, it demonstrates the sense in which the dispositions at issue are specifically tied to mental activity, to thinking.

Importantly, this is not the observation of a latent disposition – it is not that our thinker *would* think critically were they given the right stimulus (cf. a window would break were it struck, though it has never been struck). They are doing the thing the disposition requires; they are being exposed to the right stimulus, and they are doing precisely what we are expecting them to do – they are thinking, and critically at that.

3. Misanthropic tendencies

Now we can push our case further. Suppose that our silent thinker is finally brought into a conversation. Assume it takes place in the context of a purely verbal exchange with no real stakes.[3] Someone turns to them and presents an argument. In the moments following the utterances from their interlocutor, the silent thinker works through what has been said. They see it from every relevant perspective, plumbing each argument, recognizing what would be right, what would be wrong, what would be fallacious, and so on. They are, in that moment, exhibiting all of the dispositions of an ideal critical thinker, indeed – because they are one, as we have already established.

Our silent thinker then turns to respond. They speak, and to our surprise (horror?), we hear them deploy a fallacy. Suppose they present what sounds to us to be a subtle equivocation, such that they effectively strawman their opponent. We discover that our thinker feels an inexplicable compulsion to engage in fallacious argumentation, analogous to the way that some people feel compelled to lie for no clear purpose or gain. Where the compulsive liar knows what they are saying is not true, and knows that they should not be doing what they are doing, they do so anyway. Our thinker similarly knows what they are doing, and knows that they should not be doing it.

The contrast should be clear. The silent thinker clearly satisfies the description of an ideal critical thinker, but the moment they actually engage in argumentation, that intuition seems to vanish. It seems that our critical thinker ceases to be ideal. I would argue that this is, however, too quick a conclusion, and our intuitions need tempering. In the moments preceding when our thinker uttered the fallacy, they did qualify as an ideal critical thinker, and they did so because of the thinking they were inclined to do. Nothing has changed in that regard when they opt for their fallacy, and if anything, their ability to opt for a fallacy may be construed as indicative of and even dependent upon the kinds of dispositions at issue. The *intentional* deployment of a fallacy like a strawman requires an understanding of the other position, of what is relevant to that position, etc. And if we assume that they produce a *sophisticated* fallacy, with the subtle equivocation being very clever or difficult to recognize, their intentionally producing it may itself signal just how expert they are in thinking through material. In that sense, we might think of the fallacies at issue as sophisms as opposed to paralogisms, following the traditional distinction between the two (see Aberdein 2016; Stevens 2024; cf. Walton 1995).

All of this is to say that where the thinker was thinking through everything expertly in the moments prior to producing the fallacy, they may also be exercising the same skills

[3]This should be assumed throughout for the sake of simplicity. The case being made here does not require consideration of special circumstances.

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and dispositions in engaging in their argumentation, only that their well-informed, well-thought-through material is ultimately being used for perverse ends. Moreover, this is not an appeal to a fink that masks their dispositions, or some antidote affecting them (see Fara 2005; Bird 1998). It is not that they are disposed to be critical thinkers up until the moment they open their mouths to speak, with the act of speaking somehow blocking their basal dispositions. We can recognize the relevant thinking is still taking place as they engage in their choice of fallacious argument, and even that the right dispositions are still in place.

What this observation comes to is that our silent thinker remains an ideal critical thinker when they finally engage in an argument and start producing fallacies. This is amusingly unintuitive on its face, but it is conceptually consistent. The crucial distinction is that critical thinking is about thinking, not about arguing, advancing discursive ethics, or obeying communicative norms. Though critical thinking may plausibly entail an *understanding* of argumentation, discursive ethics, and communicative norms, it does not entail a disposition to *engage in* virtuous argumentation, or to do anything in particular *vis-à-vis* others, as is evidenced by the strong intuition that our silent thinker qualifies as ideal, despite being completely passive.

To better develop this idea, we can turn to a series of counterarguments, as many will look at the proposition of an ideal critical thinker that actively produces fallacies with incredulity, and in addressing particular points, we can better flesh out the concept. The first will examine the specific dispositions at issue and whether our thinker violates them, the second will examine the interface between overt behavior and underlying dispositions, and the third will consider whether one can reject our thinker as being less ideal than one that does not advance fallacies.

3.1. Specific dispositions

The dispositions in our reference account are the first place to turn in situating the case, as ultimately it is conformity to these sets describing the ideal critical thinker that determines whether our agent is ideal or not, intuitions aside. And it would be fair to expect that our odd thinker and their fallacies will surely violate at least some of them.

The first set of dispositions tells us that the ideal critical thinker should care that their "beliefs be true," and they should seek alternatives and be open to them. One might contend that our imagined thinker does not care that their beliefs be true, given how they engage in argumentation. Further, if they do not engage in what we would consider a sincere form of exchange, they do not seem to be seeking alternatives and remaining open to them.

The response is simple enough: their violating argumentative norms does not imply that they do not care that their beliefs be true. There is no strict correspondence between our concern that our own beliefs be true and our overt behavior, as perhaps best evidenced by the case of lying, which requires us to assert something that we believe not to be true (see, e.g., Carson 2012; cf. Saul 2012),[4] and which may precisely be motivated by our commitment to our beliefs being true. A murderer may violate communicative norms in lying to investigators and might violate argumentative norms too, but that does not mean that they do not care about their beliefs being true (quite the contrary). Even a pathological liar with no clear motivation would presumably care about the truth of their belief that a given meal is safe to eat, even if they tell anyone that will listen that it is

[4]For more on lying, see Fallis (2010), Lackey (2013), and Jary (2018), among others.

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poisoned, contrary to their belief. On reflection, it is difficult to imagine an individual acting in any rational capacity that would not care that their beliefs be true, and there is no reason to believe that our thinker suffers from this underlying indifference. If anything, their thinking through the material implies that they do care, presumably coming to certain beliefs in the process of breaking down the argument, irrespective of how they decide to respond.

This leads into the question of whether they are seeking alternatives and remaining open to them. It appears plausible to say that the speaker internally seeks alternatives when developing their view of what has been said, and is even open to what the other is saying, despite their then moving to produce a fallacy. While producing a fallacy is not conducive to good feedback or discourse, there is nothing inconsistent with someone seeking alternatives and having a disposition to do so without any special appeal to the input of others through feedback or discourse. Case in point, our silent thinker never spoke, and so never sought to actively encourage feedback, but they qualify as an ideal critical thinker nonetheless. Similarly, being open to other views is not predicated on how we engage with them, even if our engagement is often indicative of our attitude. One can be open to a position and yet reject it. And it is perfectly consistent to imagine someone taking a position seriously, being open to it in that sense, and precisely because they take it seriously, reaching for fallacies to obstruct it, as we might see in political discourse. While that sort of exchange might suggest that the speaker is not open to the opposing view, that is far from given on conceptual grounds.

The second set of dispositions tells us that the ideal critical thinker should represent positions honestly and clearly, focusing on the conclusion, considering the total situation, etc. The immediate thought is that if our thinker is intentionally equivocating to subtly misrepresent their interlocutor, then they must be violating this set. However, there is an answer here, insofar as we keep in mind that these are mental dispositions associated with thinking.

While the thinker is outwardly misrepresenting the other, they are presumably representing the position honestly and clearly to themselves. That is, in order to produce their fallacy intentionally, as has already been noted, they must have a good understanding of what is being said. From that perspective, we have the grounds to say that some sort of effective representation is taking place, even if not the one being presented to others. Now pair this with the example of the silent thinker. That they never speak makes no difference to whether they may be thought of as having represented the positions in play honestly and clearly; by thinking through everything that has been said and mapping out the views of the speakers, they presumably do just that, only that they do it mentally, privately.

It is that specific mental sense of representation that our fallacy-producing thinker engages with, and insofar as it was sufficient when they were silent, it should remain sufficient now that they have chosen a particular response. Put differently, the mental dispositions at issue are satisfied, irrespective of what the speaker goes on to produce. Make no mistake, there is misrepresentation taking place, but it is not material. The analogy of the liar is again useful here, as it seems obvious that an ideal critical thinker is not absolutely precluded from lying, even if lying is always a matter of producing a misrepresentation. It would be very strange to say that the ideal critical thinker cannot lie on the grounds of public misrepresentation, as there are certainly cases in which lying is the most reasonable thing to do (even while caring about the truth), which on its own is sufficient to show that the disposition at issue does not extend to every representation produced by the critical thinker. Though couched in a different context, something

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similar is being said here, though the underlying point is that in neither case, whether producing a strawman or lying, is the misrepresentation material to the thinking taking place in the head of the subject.

These are the potentially difficult points of the sets of dispositions due to Ennis, with the other subdispositions being satisfied straightforwardly enough. What is needed here is just a clearer understanding of what it means to care that our beliefs be true, what seeking and being open to alternatives entails, and a proper framing of the relevant sense of representation when discussing thinking.

3.2. Overt behavior

Granted that our thinker exhibits the relevant set of dispositions, one might take issue with the dissociation between dispositions and overt behavior. Recall the claim that critical thinking does not entail a disposition to engage in virtuous argumentation, with the silent thinker being appealed to as an example where the individual is entirely passive and yet readily understood as satisfying the relevant dispositions. This dislocation between thought and overt action might be confronted by the observation that overt behavior may be indicative of underlying dispositions, in that someone who engages in virtuous argumentation might thereby demonstrate that they have the relevant critical thinking dispositions. Our thinker is no longer passive but engaging in fallacious argumentation, and so we might take that as evidence against their having the relevant dispositions (setting aside the possibility of finks, etc.).

However, as is noted above, that may itself be indicative of skillful thought on their part, as the intentional production of a sophisticated fallacy may be construed as depending on the same set of underlying dispositions. Moreover, that this behavior is obviously problematic does not necessarily bear on anything relevant to the discussion, as dispositions are often insensitive to the ends to which they are put, and this appears to be one of those cases.

A simple analogy illustrates the relevant point. Consider the dispositions of a hard worker. It goes without saying that someone may be a hard worker, whatever that entails, regardless of whether their work is something we take to be positive or negative and problematic. A hard-working doctor in that regard is no different than a hard-working confidence man or burglar. Insofar as the dispositions of the ideal critical thinker are about thinking, and thinking undergirds the fallacies they put forward, the same can be said here. Hard work can be put to good ends but also bad ends, and the same is true for critical thinking, and many other dispositions relating to a person's character or patterns of thought, for that matter.

The dissociation between dispositions and behavior is of course not complete. There are complex cases that would raise many more questions about someone's disposition toward work than the doctor and the confidence man. For instance, if someone were demonstrably lazy, or if they had never worked before, these would be significant to the discussion. Critical thinking dispositions are similar in that regard. If we stipulated that the "thinker" did not think at all, or thought in an incoherent flood of propositions and inferences, then they would presumably not have these dispositions – this behavior (or lack thereof) at a mental level would be relevant. The argument, however, is that someone may think through something, exhibit the relevant mental dispositions in the process, and demonstrate no overt behavior whatsoever, as in the case of the silent thinker. And similarly, one may put that thinking to positive or negative use by engaging with others in virtuous or vicious argumentation, with it having no special bearing on

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one's critical thinking dispositions either way, much like one being a tireless doctor or an irrepressible confidence man makes no difference to the disposition that one has toward work.

3.3. Ideal thinkers

Finally, granted that our thinker exhibits the relevant set of dispositions, and granted that how they choose to respond might make no difference to those dispositions, one might turn to the notion of what makes an ideal thinker ideal. It is tempting to raise comparative arguments here, like those found in the Christian tradition concerning perfection and various properties (see, e.g., Gale 1993; Rogers 2022). One might argue that if we had two thinkers that were exactly alike except that one engaged in virtuous argumentation and the other engaged in fallacious argumentation, the former would be preferable and thus more ideal than the latter, and so that only the former and not the latter should be considered ideal.

It goes without saying that we would all prefer to be around the virtuous version of the thinker. But while we might prefer virtue, it is not for any reason having to do with critical thinking. We might prefer a version of this critical thinker that is not only virtuously inclined but that is also beautiful, or has an attractive voice. We might prefer a critical thinker that has a good sense of humor, or perhaps a critical thinker that is always happy to lend us some money. None of these things has anything to do with critical thinking, and their discursive choice similarly has no bearing on their ability to think, even if it bears on how they interact with us. There are a plurality of distinct ideal critical thinkers. Some are short, some are tall, some are rich, some are poor, some are misanthropically attracted to equivocations – but they are all equally ideal critical thinkers, assuming they conform to the relevant dispositions, and that much we are indeed assuming.

As long as there is no principled reason to assume there is only one ideal critical thinker, or that the construct cannot have superfluous properties, there is nothing precluding this line of argument. It points to what is relevant to an ideal critical thinker, and what is not. And it is this sort of possibility that leads to the conceptual insight of this work into critical thinking as such, pointing to the surprising conclusion that an ideal critical thinker can go around producing fallacious arguments. More generally, the possibility of formulating sets of dispositions and corresponding ideal critical thinkers grounds the broader literature on critical thinking, with differing accounts pointing to different constructs, albeit differing in relevant features. Our emphasis here, in contrast, is not on relevant features, but irrelevant ones – like a penchant for equivocation.

For as close as critical thinking and argumentation are to one another as fields, there is an interesting gap between them insofar as critical thinking is about thinking and argumentation is about much more, including inference patterns and interacting with others. Where an understanding of inference patterns and consideration of others are essential to critical thinking in shaping its dispositions, it does not extend to arguing and the exchange involved in argumentation proper. As noted earlier, it is easy to fall into this idea that an ideal critical thinker should observe argumentative proprieties when engaging with others, but that is just the difference between what we might call the critical thinker and the critical speaker, or critical arguer. They are conceptually distinct competences, and recognizing this is to better understand what critical thinking consists in, as distinct from the broader work surrounding argumentation theory.

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4. Conclusion

This work aimed to show that the ideal critical thinker may, somewhat counterintuitively, engage in fallacious argumentation, and that this possibility is both coherent and conceptually interesting, at least as far as the notion of critical thinking is concerned. By drawing a distinction between thinking and arguing, and by attending closely to the nature of critical thinking dispositions as mental tendencies, we arrive at a clearer picture of what critical thinking involves – and what it does not. The dispositions in question concern how we engage with material at the level of thought, not how we choose to interact with others. That the ideal critical thinker might lie, equivocate, or otherwise mislead does not undercut their standing as ideal, as long as the relevant mental dispositions remain intact. This observation not only complements existing accounts but also sharpens the conceptual boundaries of critical thinking in the context of dispositions, marking off its scope from that of argumentation theory and communicative norms more broadly.

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