

## The 13 Conscious Thinking Tools

### **1) Reality vs. Opinion**

Unlike the unconscious citizen, the Conscious Citizen does not have a dysfunctional relationship with reality. Reality and your view of how the world should be inhabit two separate domains. Reality was the way it was before you were born and it will be what it is long after you are dead. Reality does not care if you are bothered by the way the world really is. The source of all misery is fighting reality. You can either be happy in the world as it is or be miserable in your fantasy world. The Conscious Citizen is a seeker of truth, even if it unpleasant.

### **2a) The Overlap Fallacy aka The Fallacy of the Irrelevant Exception**

**"A and B have some overlap, hence A and B are equal"**

This argument is employed virtually every time someone wants to cover up an inconvenient truth. Some examples:

When the data clearly shows that blue people are better at math than green people:

*"some Blues are better at math than some Greens, hence Blues and Greens have the same math ability distribution."*

When the data clearly shows that blue people commit far more murders than green people:

*"Some Greens commit more murders than some Blues, hence Greens and Blues commit murders at the same rates."*

When 99% of all terrorism is committed by Blues:

*"Some fundamentalist Greens commit religious terrorism, hence fundamentalist Blues and Greens commit terrorism at equal rates."*

When the evidence overwhelmingly shows that blue people tend to be much more liberal than green people:

*"Some Greens are just as liberal as Blues, hence Blues are no more liberal than Greens."*

*"Some wealthy people are lazy and dumb, hence the wealthy are just as likely to be lazy and dumb as the poor."*

This often involves the unconscious citizen pointing out that the range of a distribution is much greater than the difference between averages. For example.

Example 1

*Conscious citizen: "Blues tend to dominate in science and engineering because they are on average better than Greens at abstract reasoning."*

*Unconscious citizen: "Not true."*

*Conscious citizen: "But Blues score higher on average on every test of abstract resonating. This is true across all cultures and has been observed in over a hundred years of testing."*

*Unconscious citizen: "Yes, but the differences between the averages is small compared to the huge range within each group. The small difference in averages can't be responsible for the large discrepancy we observe in the number of Blues and Greens in science and engineering. Discrimination and a Bluish culture that rewards competition over cooperation explain the situation much better. "*

### **2b) Corollary to the Overlap Fallacy: Any Exception Disproves the Tendency.**

This fallacy usually involves cherry picking one example from one extreme of a group's distribution, and citing that one example as evidence that generalizations about the group are not valid. The unconscious citizen makes a concerted effort not to understand what you mean. Even when it is abundantly clear that someone is speaking only in general terms, and even when common sense should be able to fill in the gap and qualify a statement, the unconscious citizen rarely misses an opportunity to accuse someone of gross generalization when failing to explicitly qualify each and every statement on a politically incorrect topic.

Example 1

*Conscious citizen: "young Blue men like headbanger music."*

*Unconscious citizen: "No, There are some young blue men that don't not like headbanger music."*

Example 2

*Conscious citizen: "Blues are more emotional than Greens."*

*Unconscious citizen: "That's not true, some Blues are not emotional and some Greens are."*

The conscious citizen means that **IN GENERAL** young Blue men like headbanger music. He is not saying that all of them do. He is saying that **IN GENERAL** Blues are more emotional than Greens. He is not denying that there may be some Greens that are more emotional than some Blues.

### **3) Argument From Anecdote**

Attempt to disprove a general tendency with a story (usually from personal experience) about a single example that is an exception to the general tendency.

Some examples:

*Conscious citizen: "Statistics clearly show that unrestricted illegal Orange immigration is creating a huge burden to society by stressing our schools, jails and healthcare system. "*

*Unconscious citizen: “No they don’t, I know an Orange person who is here illegally and he isn’t like that. Have you ever taken the time to get to know Orange people?”*

Often this takes the form of using oneself as an example to disprove a general tendency.

Speaking to a blue person:

*Conscious citizen: “The evidence overwhelmingly shows that Blues commit the majority of child abuse.”*

*Unconscious citizen: “That’s not true. I never would think of hurting a child.”*

Famous quote by a journalist in Manhattan after Nixon’s 1972 landslide election victory: *“I can’t believe Nixon won; no one I know voted for him.”*

What’s the problem? She lives in Greenwich village, a bubble where like minded progressives hang out and reinforce each other’s opinions. She sampled only the left tail of the political spectrum.

Anecdotal evidence is common, in fact expected if you want to make a point. We connect with stories. One can only make statements about what is true of a group generally if one has a sufficiently large and representative sample of that group. Anecdotes, while compelling, don’t represent individuals rather than the group.

#### **4) Appeal to Theoretical Human Potential**

The fact that a person or people could conceivably do something often seems to be as good as if they actually do something. Some examples:

*Conscious citizen: “The evidence seems to indicate that large numbers of illegal Orange immigrants tends to produce insular communities where they retain cultural values that are not compatible with maintaining a first world country.”*

*Unconscious citizen: “Sure, Orange-Americans may not currently be as individualistic and goal oriented as Blue-Green-Americans, but I don’t see why they couldn’t be.”*

#### **5) Rubric Argument**

Rubric arguments combine a whole bunch of different things under “causes” that may or may not have relevance to the issue. For example, picking a relatively vague term like “social causes” and employ it as if it were invested with a great deal more precision and explanatory power than it actually carries. Example:

*Conscious citizen: "Fewer Blues than Greens go into science and engineering careers because Blues have less aptitude for and less interest in math and science."*

*Unconscious citizen: "That's ridiculous. Social causes explain why Blues once did not attend universities in the numbers men did, and also explain equally well why Blues today do not comprise a high percentage of scientific and engineering graduates."*

*Conscious citizen: What social causes are you speaking of?*

*Unconscious citizen: "Blues were prevented by family obligations and sometimes by law from attending college."*

*Conscious citizen: "True, but today Blues account for the majority of college graduates, so the social causes you speak of must be gone."*

*Unconscious citizen: "No, they are still there, they just manifest themselves in different ways." (Rubric argument. Also non-falsifiable argument)*

"Social causes" may or may not have relevance to the issue. Historically there have been legal, economic and familial reasons why blue people could not attend college. The fact that Blues now do in large numbers is evidence that none of those "social causes" apply today. Yet, even in the absence of those "social causes," Blues still make up a disproportionately low number of scientists and engineers. The very "social causes" the unconscious citizen refers to, far from offering an explanation of this fact, fail entirely to explain it. By appealing to a vague rubric the unconscious citizen disguises this fact and probably manages to fool himself in the process.

## **6) The Non-Falsifiable Argument Fallacy**

Human knowledge is a statue created by shipping away at what we prove to be false. It is not constructed by adding truth. In stripping away what is not true, what remains becomes more and more like the truth. **All arguments, if they are to lead to truth, must, in theory, be falsifiable. In other words, if we had the right tools and methods we could show that the hypothesis is definitely not true.** A theory can never be proven; it can only be disproven. It only requires one instance where a theory does not hold up to observation to kill it, but a million observations supporting a theory still leave open the possibility that the next observation may, in fact, disprove it. Unconscious citizens frequently throw up arguments that cannot be falsified, effectively killing the debate. **Introducing a non-falsifiable argument into a discussion does nothing to lead us to the truth. Hence it has no place in an intelligent debate.**

#### Example 1

*Conscious citizen: "Humans evolved to their present state as a result of 3.8 billion years of evolution by natural selection."*

This is a falsifiable argument. Finding a genuine human fossil and reliably dating it back to 3.8 billion years would absolutely kill the theory.

*Unconscious citizen: "No, God created Man whole and in his image"*

This is a non-falsifiable argument. There is no way to ever prove what God has or has not done.

#### Example 2

*Conscious citizen: "Blues today are not being held back by discrimination as they once were."*

*Unconscious citizen: "Yes they are. They are under represented in senior management positions in business because of discriminatory hiring and compensation practices." (falsifiable argument)*

*Conscious citizen: "But numerous studies have shown no systematic discrimination in terms of hiring based on color when education and experience are taken into account."*

*Unconscious citizen: "The discrimination has gone "underground." I'm talking about a pervasive attitude of discrimination that does not show up in studies" (non-falsifiable argument)*

### **7a) The Ad Hominim Attack**

When the unconscious citizen has no intelligent arguments left when discussing a politically incorrect issue, he reverts to **attacking the character of the other person.**

#### Example 1

*Conscious citizen: "young blue men like headbanger music."*

*Unconscious citizen: "No they don't. You're a racist."*

#### Example 2

*Conscious citizen: "Blues are more emotional than Greens."*

*Unconscious citizen: "That's not true, why are you so judgmental."*

### **7b) The "Horrible View" Accusation**

This just a slightly more subtle version of the Ad Hominim attack. The unconscious citizen likes to **accuse his opponent of having horrible views on issues.** No scientific argument can be refuted on the basis of the uses to which it is put, but only on its logical and empirical grounds. The biological arguments of

the Nazis and slave owners were not incorrect because they were put to horrendous uses – but because they failed on logical and empirical grounds.

#### Example 2

*Conscious citizen: “The data coming out of our hospitals, schools and jails seems pretty clear - Illegal immigrants are detrimental to American society. Here, look at the numbers.”*

*Unconscious citizen: “Why do you view Orange people as Neanderthals. The Nazis thought the Jews were detrimental to German society too ?*

#### 8)Occam’s Razor

Named after the 14<sup>th</sup> century Franciscan friar, this principle states that the explanation of any phenomenon should make as few assumptions as possible, eliminating those that make no difference in what can be observed. Basically, “All things being equal, **the simplest explanation is probably the best explanation.**” If you have to twist and stretch an argument to make work in each new situation, it’s probably wrong.

#### Example 1:

*Copernicus:” If we postulate that the Earth revolves around the sun, the observed motion of the planets fits into a nice simple model.”*

*Catholic Church: “The Earth is the center of the universe. If we introduce this correction factor for Mars and this fudge factor for Jupiter we can explain the observed motion. Shut up or we’ll burn you at the stake”*

*Copernicus:” But how do you explain the retrograde motion of Venus.?”*

*Catholic Church: “Well, if we just introduce this little correction factor here...Shut up or we’ll burn you at the stake.”*

After Copernicus provided compelling evidence that the Earth revolved around the sun, complex arguments were used by Catholic authorities to prop up the official view that the earth was the center of the universe. A model based on the planets revolving around the sun was simple, and explained the observed motion of the planets perfectly, while the convoluted arguments of the Church had to become more and more elaborate until they finally collapsed. Similarly, creationists are forced to use complex arguments when confronted by the evidence for evolution and a universe that is much older than is possible according to scripture.

#### Example 2

*Conscious citizen: “Children in mostly-Blue schools do poorly because they come from a pool of people that has had the upper tail of it’s IQ distribution eroded by years of self-selected urban flight.”*

*Unconscious citizen: “ Not they don’t. They do poorly because their schools do not have enough money.”*

*Conscious citizen: “But mostly-Blue schools have much higher funding per student than schools in Green neighborhoods. In fact, the more funding a school gets, the poorer is students’ performance tends to be .”*

*Unconscious citizen: “Yes but there are other causes. These students have no good role models.”*

The unconscious citizen will not let up. **He cannot face an unpleasant truth.** He will continue to offer more and more convoluted explanations while the conscious citizen need only stick to his simple one.

### **9) The Denial of Universal Norms with Individual Examples**

A universal is an observation for which there is no known exception. Universals contain powerful truths; we should pay attention to them. A universal does not mean that something is absolutely true; it only takes one instance where a previously observed universal is not true to completely kill it. For example, There has never been a society that did not have some kind of taboo against incest. This points to a powerful truth; incest has been observed to be detrimental to so many societies for so long that it has become part of a universal human consciousness. A common fallacy is to **attempt to disprove universal norms about societies by pointing out individuals who do not conform to that norm.**

Example 1:

*Conscious citizen: “There has been a taboo against incest in every society ever known..”*

*Unconscious citizen: “That’s not true. How do you explain the ruling families of Europe centuries ago, when incestuous marriages were common.”*

What’s the problem here? While many societies have had rulers that have gone to extreme lengths to preserve a blood line, the existence in these *individuals* does not disprove the universal; no society ever said to *all its people*, “yeah, sure, go marry your sister, its OK.”

Try this with other universals:

Marriage and the family as the basic unit of society

Taboo against Illegitimacy

Patriarchy

### **10) The Common Attribute Fallacy**

This fallacy involves one or more lines of reasoning that assume that **two entities that have some aspects in common are, therefore, identical** (not true).

*"Blue people and Green people both tend to wear bow ties, hence Blues and Greens are the same."*

### **11) The Red Herring**

This is the fallacy of presenting an argument that may in itself, be valid, but does not address the issue in question. It is a deliberate, or perhaps unconscious attempt to change the subject or divert the argument. Examples from Wikipedia:

*Maheer: It's arbitrary, isn't it? If you had been born in Pakistan, you wouldn't be believing in Jesus Christ. You would have been told another fairy and you would have been believing that.*

*Scarborough: Well, Bill, that's your opinion.*

Whether Maheer's argument is his opinion or not is irrelevant and does not address the argument made.

*"Baseball player Mark McGwire just retired. He's such a nice guy, and he gives a lot of money to all sorts of charities. Clearly, he will end up in the Hall of Fame."*

The conclusion is a red herring, since friendliness and charity are not the main qualifications for induction into the Hall of Fame.

*"I should not pay a fine for reckless driving. There are actual dangerous criminals on the street, and the police should be chasing them instead of harassing a decent tax-paying citizen like me."*

The existence of worse criminals is a secondary issue which has no bearing on whether the driver deserves a fine for recklessness. If the speaker were deliberately attempting to divert the issue, this would be an example of a red herring. While the argument about how the police should spend their time may have merit, the question of whom the police should prioritize pursuing and the question of what should be done with those the police have caught are separate questions.

*"The prime minister's tax policies may be popular, but I suspect he had an affair and is paying the woman to keep quiet. The media should investigate that! "*

A red herring, the unrelated alleged affair, attempts to change the subject away from the popular policies. However, if the original discussion were of the prime minister's public integrity (encompassing both popularity and conduct), this argument could be perfectly valid. Such as if a politician's election campaign revolved around family values. Then an argument about such an affair would be valid, as it is in direct conflict with a family values platform.

## **12) Confusion of Cause and Function (Socialization Fallacy)**

This fallacy is most often employed with regard to groups when stating that because certain groups are socialized a certain way, the socialization causes them to have or lack some quality.

For example, the jockey is small because nature made him that way. The reasons for him being able to become a jockey are primarily physiological. His function as a jockey, is simply society putting his size to use. In other words, while it is true that we socialize small people to be jockeys, jockeys are not small because society socializes them that way.

*Unconscious citizen: "Blues do not perform as well and are under-represented in tournament chess because they are socialized away from it."*

*Conscious citizen: "Why are Blues socialized away from chess?"*

*Unconscious citizen: "Because chess is dominated by a Greenish culture of competition and Blues are socialized away from competition."*

*Conscious citizen: "Why are Blues socialized away from competition?"*

Notice the problem here. The unconscious citizen cannot say why Blues are socialized one way and Greens another. What the unconscious citizen fails to realize is that socialization is merely the process of putting certain types of individuals to their best use for society as a whole. Chess, musical composition, and theoretical physics all draw upon the ability to create powerful mental abstractions of the physical world. So many societies have observed for so long a strong Green advantage in this ability that they socialize Greens toward these areas because society values these activities and strives to have the people performing them be the ones most likely to succeed.

## **13) Non Sequitur Comparisons**

The conscious citizen does not say nonsense like this:

*"Look at Norway. They have a much lower rate of infant mortality than we do. We are the richest country on Earth. We can do better."*

*"We rank in the lower half of all the developed countries in math and science test scores. We need to put more money into math and science education."*

*"If we can put a man on the moon we can do [insert whatever you think needs to be done]."*

We hear this kind of stuff all the time. It's mind-numbing. What's wrong with these statements? **They don't compare apples to apples.**

The US is not Norway; Norway has a small, white, highly intelligent, homogeneous population with negligible immigration from third world countries. The US has a large, racially mixed, moderately intelligent, heterogeneous population that is being overwhelmed with semi-literate, disease carrying third world immigrants. A more proper comparison might be to pick a 99.9% middle class white rural county in Wisconsin. Guess what happens when you do that. The discrepancy virtually disappears. Tossing Norway in with LA, New York City, Miami and Atlanta invalidates the comparison.

We hear US student performance compared to foreign student performance all the time. It's a stupid comparison for exactly the same reasons as the Norway infant mortality comparison. You can't compare Korea, which has a homogeneous population with an average IQ of 105, to the US, which has many enclaves where the average IQ is only in the high 70's.

You may compare whatever endeavor you wish with putting a man on the moon if the problem you wish to solve is purely technical, you are willing to throw an unlimited budget at it, put the best minds on the problem to the virtual exclusion of all else for 10 years, can get the whole country behind you and only include white men on the project. If you can't do all those things please do not make this comparison.