

# Critical Inquiry

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Thinking is driven by questions. Had no questions been asked by those who laid the foundations for a discipline, the field would never have been developed in the first place. Furthermore, every discipline stays alive only to the extent that fresh questions are generated and taken seriously as the driving force in a process of thinking. To think through or rethink anything, one must ask questions that stimulate thought.

Deep questions drive us to delve beneath the surface of ideas; they force us to deal with complexity.

- Questions of **purpose** force us to define our task.
- Questions of **information** force us to look at our sources of information as well as at the quality of our information.
- Questions of **interpretation** force us to examine how we are organizing or giving meaning to information.
- Questions of **assumption** force us to examine what we are taking for granted and how our opinions are informed.
- Questions of **implication** force us to follow our thought patterns through to conclusions.
- Questions of **point of view** force us to examine our perspective and other relevant points of view.
- Questions of **relevance** force us to discriminate what does and what does not bear on a question.
- Questions of **accuracy** and **validity** force us to test for truth and correctness.
- Questions of **precision** force us to give details and be specific.
- Questions of **consistency** force us to check our thinking for contradictions.
- Questions of **logic** force us to consider how we are putting the whole of our thought together, to ensure that it all adds up and makes sense within a system of some kind.

**From the Institute for Critical Thinking, Richard Paul, Ph.D.,  
Director. 1996**