WE MAY AGREE THAT WE WANT STUDENTS TO BE CRITICAL THINKERS . . .

• But what precisely do we mean by that?

WE MAY AGREE THAT WE WANT STUDENTS TO BE CRITICAL THINKERS . . .

• But how do we get them to be able to "challenge their own assumptions and arguments" ???
• How do we give students "the ability to distinguish, . . . what is parochial from what may be commended as a norm for others, what is arbitrary and unjustified from that which may be justified by reasoned argument?"

WE MAY AGREE THAT WE WANT STUDENTS TO BE CRITICAL THINKERS . . .

• But what do we mean when we say we want kids to have "a built-in, shockproof bullcrap detector"???

IS SOCRATIC QUESTIONING REALLY A WAY TO EXPAND STUDENTS' THINKING? OR IS ITS CROSS-EXAMINATION STYLE MORE REMINISCENT OF BULLYING?

Philosophers and educators have occasionally recommended the teaching of logic as a means to critical thinking.

But it is questionable to suppose that the formal study of logic will improve ordinary logical thinking.

Robert Ennis argues, instead, for something called, "Informal Logic."

• He defines this as the proficiencies, tendencies and good habits of "rational thinkers."

PROFICIENCIES OF RATIONAL THINKING:

• Observing,
• Inferring,
• Generalizing,
• Conceiving & stating assumptions & alternatives,
• Offering a well-organized or well-formulated line of reasoning,
• Evaluating statements & chains of reasoning,
• Detecting standard problems.

Richard Paul offers another set of criteria for "critical thinking" vs. "faulty thinking":

• Clear vs. unclear,
• Precise vs. imprecise,
• Specific vs. vague,
• Accurate vs. inaccurate, and
• Fair vs. biased.

A GREAT DISTINCTION RICHARD PAUL MAKES IS BETWEEN:

• Critical thinking in the weak sense -- where one can challenge the assumptions and arguments of an opponent,
• And critical thinking in the strong sense -- where one can challenge one's own assumptions and arguments

RICHARD PAUL FELT THAT YOU COULD IMPROVE CRITICAL THINKING THROUGH A "PUBLIC TEST," I.E., THROUGH DIALOGUE WITH OTHERS. But what if the others are less skillful at critical thinking than you are?

John McPeck, on the other hand, argues that you cannot do critical thinking outside of a particular domain of knowledge,

• Such as mathematics,

John McPeck, on the other hand, argues that you cannot do critical thinking outside of a particular domain of knowledge,

• Science,

John McPeck, on the other hand, argues that you cannot do critical thinking outside of a particular domain of knowledge,

• Or history.

BECAUSE THESE DISCIPLINES ARE THE FRUITS OF CRITICAL THINKING IN ALL THE PROBLEM-DOMAINS OF HUMAN EXPERIENCE.

THEREFORE --

• Students must learn what it means to make a valid mathematical, scientific or historical argument.
• They must learn how to apply such arguments to everyday problems.
• They must learn to adopt an attitude of reflective skepticism toward claims in a given field.
• They must learn the technical language of the field & the accepted criteria for its use in argumentation.

IS MCPECK'S DEFINITION OF CRITICAL THINKING EXCLUSIONARY?

• Does it disqualify from critical thinking anyone not trained in the academic disciplines?
• Must it be seen as exclusionary?

JANE ROLAND MARTIN ASKS: IS CRITICAL THINKING ALWAYS AN UNALLOYED GOOD? Or might it turn people into mere analytical spectators in the face of injustice or pain?

DO CRITICAL THEORISTS MAINTAIN THEIR CRITICAL STANCES AFTER THEY HAVE OVERTHROWN THEIR OPPRESSORS?

One of Paolo Freire's great disappointments was that the newly liberated so often turned around and acted like the former oppressors.

IS THERE A MORAL ASPECT TO CRITICAL THINKING? ????

SOME SAY TEACHERS HAVE A MORAL OBLIGATION TO RESPECT THEIR STUDENTS' RATIONALITY.

Then how ought a teacher to act with students who hold racist, sexist, or similarly repulsive views?