

## Some Challenges to Thinking Critically

Chris Heavey

Critical thinking is difficult to teach, probably because we all think we're already pretty good at it.

### Two Different Situations

1. We don't believe we know the answer and we don't have a preference.

- Daniel Kahneman: *Thinking, Fast and Slow* (2011)
- Bat and ball
- The brain has two systems for thinking and solving problems: System 1 and System 2
- "System 1 operates automatically and quickly, with little or no effort and no sense of voluntary control." (p. 20).
- System 1 involves intuition, heuristics, snap judgments, and automatic preferences.
- "System 2 allocates attention to the effortful mental activities that demand it, including complex computations. The operations of System 2 are often associated with the subjective experience of agency, choice, and concentration." (p. 21)
- System 2 is what we associate with conscious reasoning.
- While we think we are mostly System 2, in fact we are mostly System 1.
- Automatic processes rule; we have little if any access to them.

2. We believe we know the answer or we have a preference among possible answers

- Jonathan Haidt: *The Righteous Mind: Why Good People are Divided by Politics and Religion* (2012)
- Righteous: Arising from an outraged sense of justice, morality, and fair play. Self-Righteous: Convinced of one's own righteousness, especially in contrast with the actions and beliefs of others.
- "An obsession with righteousness (leading inevitably to self-righteousness) is the normal human condition" (p. xiii)
- Make large, complex societies possible but also provide the foundation for moral strife
- The rider and the elephant: The mind is divided, like a rider and an elephant, **and the rider's job is to serve the elephant.** (p. xiv) Hume: Reason is the servant of passion.
- The rider is more the press secretary, whose job is to justify the actions of the elephant, than the wise driver. (Split brain evidence.)
- Standards of evidence differs based on how we feel about an idea, person, argument, etc.:
  - Ideas to which we are inclined: Can I believe it (i.e., is there any evidence that I can use to justify believing this)?
  - Ideas to which we are disinclined: Do I have to believe it (i.e., is there any evidence that I can use to reject this belief)?
- Reasons for preferences: Team (tribe); Self-Presentation/Reputation; Morality