Date: 3rd September 2023
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**CT800 Week 2 Assignments**

**2) Think for Yourself Activity 1.1:**

Problems that exist with my thinking:
(Note: Interestingly all “assumptions”)

1. One problem with my thinking is the assumption that there is a “right” way of doing things
	* This is a problem because it subliminally makes me think that the way other people are doing things is different from my way of doing things, and therefore wrong.
	* If I adequately addressed this problem, the quality of my life would improve in a way that makes me more curious – and therefore more capable of dealing with other people. In some spiritually inclined books I’ve already read that all understanding is metaphorical and that there is no “Right or Wrong Way of doing things” – only the two dimensions “conscious” - “unconscious” / “fair” – “unfair”.
	* Note: I think that I’ve adopted this way of thinking through my interest in science (especially Physics) which aims to reason up from First Principles / Axioms
2. One problem with my thinking is the assumption that knowledge about the world can substitute my reasoning
	* This is a problem because the world is very complex – too complex for me to understand everything in its entirety and smallest detail. Also, by outsourcing my ability to reason for myself, my creative ability declines which is necessary to create knowledge in the first place and push the boundaries of current understanding.
	* If I adequately addressed this problem, the quality of my life would improve in a way that gives me confidence throughout everyday life. Furthermore, I can envision that I could develop a unique, and therefore valuable character trait.
	* Note: Although knowledge is extremely important, there is an overabundance of knowledge these days – especially due to Artificial Intelligence. I really don’t want to lose autonomy over my thinking by outsourcing it to others.
3. One problem with my thinking is the assumption that I need an “Information edge” over others to ensure “winning” (Derived from the prior)
	* This is a problem because I’ve already learned that one can self-corrupt. Having read about social power dynamics (Robert Greene, Niccolo Machiavelli), I’ve become very sensitive to the potential of self-corruption at the expense of others.
	* If I adequately addressed this problem, the quality of my life would improve in a way that lets me go about life in a more relaxed manner. Although I think that competition is necessary, I don’t need to develop into a monster that lives at the expense of others.
	* Note: I am aware that there is no end to “winning” (whatever that means; getting the money, status, sexual companionship, …) and that one needs to transcend himself by helping others in order to live a fulfilled life. This attitude might stem from my interest in the Investment Markets in which you aim to front-run Information (arbitrage)
4. One problem with my thinking is the assumption that I just need to view the world differently to ensure behavior change (almost like Self-Hypnosis)
	* This is a problem because modern Neuroscience has it that personality change is induced by behavior first – thoughts, emotions, and perceptions later (Neuroplasticity).
	* If I adequately addressed this problem, the quality of my life would improve in a way that aligns thoughts with actions – creating an integrated approach to life and therefore giving me much more confidence and room for development.
	* Note: There is this stoic notion of Armchair Philosopher vs. Warrior Philosopher with the first being a sole theorist and the latter actually applying wisdom to everyday life. Personally, I favor the second one much more.
5. One problem with my thinking is the assumption that the quality of my life would massively change if I just adopted a different mindset (derived from the prior)
	* This is a problem as “quality of life” is a multidimensional equation with thoughts laying the foundation and behavior leading to the outcome.
	* If I adequately addressed this problem, the quality of my life would improve overall. As stated in the previous point, one fares much better when aligning thought with action (Cognitive Consonance)
	* Note: There is a book called “The Myth of Mental Illness” (popular in the psychoanalytic sphere) that argues that mental health mainly results from having a life that caters to a variety of endeavors/buckets of life and not so much from a genetical predisposition or illness. In fact, what we call “illness” in this regard is rather a symptom of simply living a bad life (“bad” meaning unidimensional). What I find hard about this is knowing what the buckets of life actually are which is why I purchased a compendium about Positive Psychology that illustrates what aspects of life lead to well-being.
6. One problem with my thinking is the assumption that I just need to listen to “smart” people long enough to fully adopt their way of thinking (almost like imitation)
	* This is a problem because it a) subliminally takes responsibility and work off my shoulders and b) strips me of autonomy over myself.
	* If I adequately addressed this problem, the quality of my life would improve in a way that lets me build a world-view based on my own experiences rather than those of others.
	* Note: From an early age, I observed other people and their “mistakes” with the aim of not repeating them (for example: Debt, Relationships, Health, and Career). I think that one does not have to experience all failures to learn from them (i.e. compulsive smoking). Although this might be a good approach for going about life, I’d much more focus on what I enjoy doing and build from there than subtracting from life every “mistake” other people make and thereby limiting my experience. This might be a fear of failure, but I know that failure is inevitable at some point.
7. One problem with my thinking is the assumption that I’m maybe just too young to have developed far enough to adopt Critical Thinking Skills (Thought while writing the previous ones)
	* This is a problem because it is not true. I am just a little bit intimidated by the fact that other people in this course have much more life experience than me as a 22-year-old which causes a mild case of Imposter Syndrome. But I know that I can learn everything with hard work, persistence, and the adoption of a Growth Mindset.
	* If I adequately addressed this problem, the quality of my life would improve dramatically as I would have approval that my way of thinking is effective for creating a good life.
	* Note: I sometimes question whether I’m actually viewing the world through an effective lens. At this point in life, I think that I don’t have enough data points to conclude whether my thinking is effective or not which is why I signed up for this course in the first place. I seek confirmation that the “software” I’m running on is actually going to deliver the results I want out of life.

**5) Statements for each Intellectual Virtues:**

**Intellectual Humility**

a. I understand Intellectual Humility to mean being conscious of one’s ignorance leading to self-deceptive thoughts and behavior patterns.

b. In other words one has to develop an awareness of the extent to which one does not know things. Wisdom begins with admitting what you don’t know and that the world is nuanced and complex.

c. An example of someone exhibiting Intellectual Humility would be not drawing any final conclusions about the character traits of a person based on superficial signs.

**Intellectual Integrity**

a. I understand Intellectual Integrity to mean adherence to the same rules of thinking and behavior as one poses to others.

b. In other words it means being accountable for holding oneself to standards that make you act in accordance with your thinking and to not say one thing and do the other. It means coherence and consistency in thought and behavior.

c. An example of someone exhibiting Intellectual Integrity would be to tell the truth when having relationship issues (“or at least not lie” ~ Jordan Peterson) and not actively trying to twist the fabric of reality.

**Intellectual Empathy**

a. I understand Intellectual Empathy to mean the ability to think within mental constructs different from what construct one thinks in at the moment.

b. In other words it does not mean to feel what other people are feeling but to be able to hold another person’s thoughts in mind and reason up from there without the need to adopt that way of thinking.

c. An example of someone exhibiting Intellectual Empathy would be recalling past states of conviction and the ability to admit that one was being misled.

**Intellectual Perseverance**

a. I understand Intellectual Perseverance to mean having the mental stamina (grit) and persistence to work through cognitively demanding problems.

b. In other words it means the ability to work through frustration and the willingness to not give up when one doesn’t come to an answer right away. It demands readiness to work through confusion and uncertainty.

c. An example of someone exhibiting Intellectual Perseverance would be not making a hasty decision about whether it is better to shut down the global economy in the face of a virus.

**Confidence in Reason**

a. I understand Confidence in Reason to mean that one knows that the quality of one’s own life and the life of others is dependent on reasoning based on facts.

b. In other words it means to believe in evidence, not faith. On the flip side, it also entails being content with being unconfident whenever one does not know that something is the case which can be linked back to Intellectual Humility. It is “okay” if somebody doesn’t know something for sure; there’s nothing wrong with that.

c. An example of someone exhibiting Confidence in Reason would be a physicist holding on to our current understanding of astronomy in a room filled with Flat-Earthers.

**Intellectual Autonomy**

a. I understand Intellectual Autonomy to mean that one is able to think for oneself.

b. In other words it does not mean to close oneself off to other opinions or contradictory evidence (see Confidence in Reason), but to come to a final conclusion on one’s own terms and not outsource one’s conclusions.

c. An example of someone exhibiting Intellectual Autonomy would be to consult several credible sources of virologists, epidemiologists, and do some general research before deciding whether to get vaccinated or not.

**Intellectual Courage**

a. I understand Intellectual Courage to mean facing opposing opinions and world-views and holding them in the realm of possibility, no matter how “wonky” they might appear on the surface.

b. In other words it means to have the courage to face uncanny truths and accept the way things are, even if that might hurt one’s feelings. It traces back to Intellectual Humility that one has to accept that the world is nuanced and every theory might hold some element of truth, even if it’s just a small part.

c. An example of someone exhibiting Intellectual Courage would be to confront moral judgment based on religious concepts.

**6) Journal Entry: Activity / Inactivity of Intellectual Virtues in daily life**

**Situation**

Whenever I talk to somebody about the topic of Cryptocurrencies, I’m either confronted with an emotional response that “this is all a scam” or people who are interested yet skeptical.

This shows me that there are people who act according to Intellectual Courage and people who do not.

People who have a strong emotional response to this topic usually argue that “they” (whoever “they” is) came up with all this technology to make windfall profits for those who are “tricked” into believing that this is “going to change the world”. Such people speak in absolutes without really knowing what the history behind this emerging technology is and why it exists in the first place. They flock to buzzwords like “Darknet”, “Illuminati” or “Mafia” to sign off and generalize this topic as shady or untrustworthy.

**Response**

What I usually do in such a situation is to either mention that there are sources that one can consult for further information or simply ask questions to lead such people to their own conclusions. I usually do the prior when the emotional response is so heavy that I feel physically threatened and the latter whenever I can sense some interest from that person in the topic.

**Analysis**

To be honest, I sometimes fall into the habit of thinking that I’m intellectually superior to others just because I’ve done some more research than them. Even though I might be more educated on the topic, that doesn’t mean that I’m “better” than anybody else – whatever that might mean. Confidence in Reason entails that it is “okay” if someone does not know something. Sometimes I act in a way to show intellectual dominance to prove myself and show that I’m valuable in receiving attention. I do that because I don’t want to be signed off as a “stupid” young man. Also, the stress response I feel to such people might be due to the fact that I’m invested in some Crypto-Projects and don’t want them to fail – which is why I might sometimes close myself off to evidence pointing in the opposite direction than what I’d “like” to hear.

**Implications**

I need to be more of a leader (in the positive sense). I need to develop emotional intelligence and leadership skills that cater to whatever stage of understanding my opposite is at. I need to detach from other people’s approval of me and suppress the urge to show dominance at the expense of others. Although I sometimes see it as necessary, I don’t want this to become automatic behavior.