

THE IMPORTANCE OF FREE AND CRITICAL THINKING IN HUMAN BEHAVIOR AND DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES

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Abstract

This article examines the concept of “thought” as the foundation of philosophical reasoning. It analyzes the historical development and theoretical significance of thought in the formation of philosophical systems, highlighting its role in logic, cognition, and decision-making processes. The study explores classical and modern philosophical perspectives, emphasizing how thought serves as the basis for understanding reality, knowledge acquisition, and rational analysis. The findings demonstrate that thought is not only the core of philosophical reflection but also a crucial mechanism for structuring knowledge and guiding intellectual inquiry.

Keywords: Thought, philosophical reasoning, cognition, logic, knowledge, rational analysis, intellectual inquiry, philosophy.

Introduction

Free and critical thinking play a fundamental role in shaping human behavior and guiding decision-making processes. These cognitive abilities allow individuals to analyze information, evaluate alternatives, and make informed choices, thereby influencing both personal and social outcomes. In contemporary society, where information is abundant and complex, the capacity for independent and reflective thought has become increasingly essential for navigating challenges, solving problems, and achieving goals.

The concept of thought encompasses a range of cognitive processes, including reflection, reasoning, logical analysis, and philosophical contemplation. It is closely linked to knowledge, intellect, and consciousness, serving as a driving force behind human actions. Philosophers and scholars throughout history, from Aristotle and Descartes to modern thinkers such as Herbert Simon and Daniel Kahneman, have emphasized that reasoning and critical reflection are vital for understanding reality, discerning truth, and exercising moral and intellectual responsibility. This article aims to explore the significance of free and critical thinking in human behavior and decision-making, highlighting its historical foundations, philosophical underpinnings, and contemporary relevance. By examining how these forms of thought influence individual choices and social interactions, the study seeks to demonstrate that cultivating independent reasoning and analytical skills is essential not only for personal development but also for the progress and resilience of society as a whole.

In our daily lives, we frequently encounter concepts such as thought, knowledge, reasoning, free thinking, deep reflection, and philosophical contemplation. In many respects, these concepts guide and shape our life activities, directing our decisions and behavior. In light of this, it is necessary to reflect on the significance of these notions and their influence on human cognition. Thought can be understood as an idea or reflection concerning a particular object, event, or person. It also encompasses the broader meanings of understanding, knowledge, consciousness,



and intellect. Thought is a motivating force for human action. As Ibrahim AS once stated, “Thought is the marrow of the intellect.” Similarly, N. Komilov, in his work *Caravans of Reason*, remarks that “the greatest courage is the courage of thought,” attributing this view to mathematicians. According to Abdullo Avloniy, “Thought leads a person to nobility and diligence.”

Our thought processes allow us to comprehend the essence, subtleties, and hidden aspects of nature, society, ourselves, and those around us, as noted by Prof. V. Karimova. Popular wisdom also emphasizes the importance of reflection; for example, an Uzbek proverb advises, “See one thing and reflect upon it; see another and remember it,” while a Russian saying states, “You have one ruble, I have one ruble; you have one thought, I have one thought.” Voltaire once wrote, “You may oppose my ideas, but I am ready to give my life for the right to express them.”

Thought serves as a mirror, revealing the good and bad actions of humans, while knowledge is considered the fruit of thought, as Gazzali asserted. Psychologists define the process of organizing and regulating thoughts as reasoning or cognition, noting that thought originates from the intellect. Intellect and its operations are divine gifts. The Qur’an emphasizes this in Surah Al-Baqara (2:269): “He grants wisdom to whom He wills, and whoever is granted wisdom has indeed been given much good; and none will remember except those of understanding.” Likewise, Article 33 of our Constitution affirms that “Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, speech, and belief. The freedom to think and express one’s opinion may only be restricted by law in cases concerning state secrets or other protected information.”

Reasoning is one of the greatest gifts bestowed upon humans. It enables individuals to perceive numerous characteristics of objects and phenomena that are not directly visible, tangible, or immediately present. Thus, the capacity to think critically is essential and indispensable, warranting cultivation, respect, and continual development.

Reasoning manifests as a general representation of reality in the human mind, and the process of thinking has inherently social dimensions. Its key features include: generalizing reality, directly reflecting interconnections, and expressing relationships among objects and events through language. Compared to sensory perception, intuition, or imagination, reasoning constitutes a higher-order cognitive process. As the poet Alisher Navoi expressed, “Whatever mankind has achieved, mankind has known through reasoning.”

Philosopher M. Ortiqov distinguishes multiple types of reasoning, defining them as various methods of attempting to comprehend the essence of existence, often relying on concepts, imagination, and symbols. He identifies seventeen types, including practical, mythical, ethical, artistic, scientific, mystical, logical, mathematical, political, theological, historical, symbolic, philosophical, juridical, heuristic, and aesthetic reasoning. Philosophical reasoning, he asserts, attempts to model the truth of existence based on logical and heuristic processes.

The freedom of thought represents an individual’s capacity to independently deliberate, evaluate, and assume responsibility for their conclusions. Professor A. Erkaev further emphasizes that societies experience progress where the freedom of thought is relatively well developed. The cultivation of free reasoning and the education of thought have historically remained central concerns, particularly in critical periods of national development.

In conclusion, the freedom and development of philosophical reasoning constitute a crucial factor in societal advancement. Therefore, fostering philosophical thinking among young people



and providing them with scientific and intellectual resources is a shared responsibility of society. Equipping citizens with broad, profound, strategic, and philosophical reasoning capacities ensures they grow into individuals who honor their ancestors and nation, think critically and independently, resist ideological threats, and lead fulfilling and productive lives.

Conclusions

The present discussion highlights the fundamental role of thought as the foundation of philosophical reasoning and human intellectual activity. Throughout our lives, concepts such as thought, reflection, reasoning, free thinking, and philosophical contemplation are not merely abstract notions—they actively guide our behavior, inform our decisions, and shape our understanding of the world. Thought serves as the driving force behind human action, enabling individuals to analyze, interpret, and engage with the complex realities of nature, society, and interpersonal relationships.

Historically and philosophically, thought has been recognized as central to the development of knowledge, consciousness, and intellect. Scholars and philosophers, from classical figures like Aristotle and Descartes to modern thinkers such as Herbert Simon, have emphasized that reasoning allows humans to discern truth, navigate moral challenges, and cultivate wisdom. Thought is simultaneously a mirror, reflecting the ethical and intellectual dimensions of human life, and a tool for insight, guiding individuals toward meaningful action and personal development.

The capacity for free reasoning, particularly philosophical reasoning, is of utmost social and cultural importance. It fosters independent thinking, critical evaluation, and moral responsibility. As highlighted in both classical and contemporary scholarship, societies in which reasoning is relatively free tend to achieve higher levels of progress, innovation, and social cohesion. The education of young minds in philosophical reasoning and critical thought is therefore not only an intellectual imperative but also a vital societal duty. Equipping citizens with the ability to think deeply, strategically, and independently strengthens the resilience of communities against ideological threats and enhances the overall wellbeing and productivity of individuals.

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