

C&C thinking – Book Review



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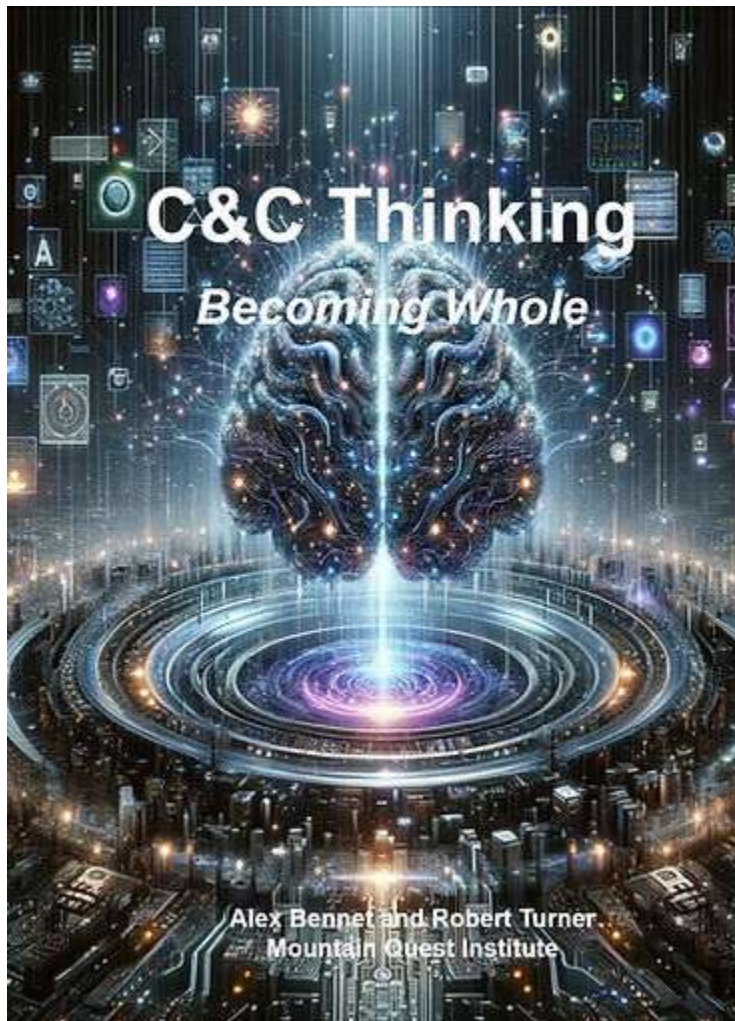
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C&C Thinking: Becoming Whole by Alex Bennet presents effective thinking as the integration of creative idea generation and critical analysis. By systematically combining divergent and convergent processes, individuals and organizations can enhance problem-solving, improve decision-making, and drive innovation through balanced, resilient, and context-aware solutions.





The book "**C&C Thinking: Becoming Whole**" was written by **Alex Bennet** in 2025. I think I served as a trigger for the book's creation. Half a year earlier, I approached Alex and told her about a course we were conducting for KMGN—the Knowledge Management Global Network—and asked her to lead a session on critical and creative thinking in the first fundamentals module. Due to the course's density, we packaged both topics together, and we knew that Alex was the right person to offer this combination. From there, the path to a full book, whose summary is presented here, was natural and swift.

The book covers the following topics:

1. [Introduction: Basic concepts](#)
2. [Creative thinking](#)

3. [Critical thinking](#)
4. [Connecting both synergistically](#)
5. [Typical applications](#)
6. [Looking forward the future with artificial intelligence integration](#)

Introduction: Basic Concepts

Several basic concepts that help understand the content world of creative and critical thinking:

- **Thought:** An idea or perception in an individual's mind.
- **Thinking:** An ongoing, adaptive, and iterative cognitive process of creating, analyzing, and synthesizing ideas. Thought is the product of the thinking process. It is influenced not only by cognition (see below) but also by emotion, curiosity, social interface, education, culture, and internal motivation.
- **Cognition:** Our mental ability to perceive, process, store, and use information. It includes functions such as perception, attention, memory, inference, language, and decision-making.
- **Creative Thinking:** The ability to generate new and original ideas that are information-based and relevant. This ability exists in all of us and is particularly prominent during childhood, but it can continue to be developed. Our capacity for creative thinking stems, to a large extent, from the breadth and diversity of our knowledge.
- **Critical Thinking:** The skill of analyzing and evaluating information, beliefs, perceptions, and behavior, and making objective judgments about them. This skill develops when we begin as children to ask "why?" questions. It reaches maturity in our adolescence. Of course, this too can continue to be developed.
- **Innovation:** The practical application of knowledge and creativity to develop a product or process.

- **Information:** Content organized as patterns. It constitutes a basic building block in the universe.
- **Knowledge:** The ability (actual or potential) to act effectively based on information. Knowledge has a significant interface with both creative thinking and critical thinking. Knowledge serves not only as input to thinking processes but also helps them become more profound and grounded.
- **Context:** The collection of circumstances, conditions, or information surrounding an event, idea, word, or action, which helps give them meaning. Knowledge is context-dependent; it can assist various cognitive activities, and among other things, it is critical to critical thinking processes. (Bennet suggests in the book a process for understanding context in a given situation.)
- **Continuous and Ongoing Learning:** A new learning concept that deepens, improves, and makes learning more efficient, suitable for a unified world that is chaotic and fluid. It is based on learning as a way of life, encompassing diverse fields through intellectually stimulating tools that foster both mental engagement and a connection to the subconscious. As a foundation, it refers to developing knowledge capacities (see: [Knowledge Capacities](#)).
- **Divergent Thinking:** A cognitive process aimed at generating as many alternatives as possible for a defined need.
- **Convergent Thinking:** A cognitive process aimed at selecting or formulating the optimal solution from a variety of alternatives, for a defined need.
- **Synthesis:** A process of combining different ideas, information, or components to create something coherent and unified.

Creative Thinking

Creative thinking, as mentioned, refers to the ability to generate new and original ideas that are information-based and relevant. It includes the ability to uncover possibilities and perspectives beyond those that are self-evident, and to create connections between concepts that are seemingly unrelated.

Characteristics of Creative Thinking

- Imagination
- Open-mindedness
- Curiosity Risk-taking
- Flexibility
- Determination
- Collaboration
- Problem sensitivity
- Playfulness Intuition
- Divergent thinking
- Emotional awareness

These characteristics align with the 5 experiential learning styles (ICALS model - see summary of the book "[Whole Thought](#)"), and they should be adapted to the content domain, the specific context in which one finds oneself, and the goals one seeks to achieve.

Cultivating Creative Thinking

Basic Tools

- Free brainstorming
- Encouraging and embracing curiosity
- Taking risks and experimenting
- Seeking inspiration in nature

- Taking active and engaged participation in playful thinking activities

Exercises

- **Random word collage creation** - Visual integration of images, colors, and textures
- **Finding non-standard uses for standard objects** (such as a fork)
- **Written brainstorming** - where people anonymously review others' solutions and each proposes a new written solution based on what they reviewed
- **Circle exercise** - People are asked within a short time frame (3 minutes) to turn a page with 30 circles into as many objects or abstract ideas as possible
- **Creating an empathy map** by a team representing their understanding of what users say, think, feel, and do
- **Creating a mind map** [or concept map] to expose different aspects of a topic and connections between and within. Using colors, symbols, and drawings to enrich the map
- **Metaphorical thinking challenge** - Exercise to explain a complex problem or abstract idea without direct discussion of the field, but only using language and examples from other borrowed content worlds
- **Associations** - Selecting a random word from the dictionary, and brief brainstorming on how it can fit and be connected to the problem or project being worked on
- **Role reversal** - Role-playing where each person tries to propose a solution to the problem they're dealing with, from the perspective of another role holder in the organization
- **SCAMPER** - Using the structured brainstorming technique – Substitute, Combine, Adapt, Modify, Put to another use, Eliminate, and Reverse
- **Six Thinking Hats** - Participants wear hats in different colors representing their mode of operation: White - focus on data, information and objectivity;

Red - focus on emotions and intuition; Black - searching for problems, risks and challenges; Yellow - focus on positive, advantages and opportunities; Green - creative thinking; Blue - managing and directing the process

- **Voice map** - Listening to different surrounding voices and creating a map representing the voice through story, symbols, or translation and projection onto the problem being addressed
- **Creating quick sketches** in the context of the problem and possible solutions
- **Story dice** - Rolling dice with pictures on each face and creating a collaborative rolling story according to the dice thrown

Advanced Tools

- Workshops for collaborative problem-solving with cross-disciplinary teams
- Imagination-encouraging game environment
- Adventure planning based on mind mapping
- Workshops for exposing and sharing tacit knowledge based on intuition
- Shared canvas where ideas are uploaded and filtered to select the optimal idea
- Journal where each records ideas and synthesizes them in a creative way
- Collaborative innovation lab

Critical Thinking

Critical thinking, as defined above, refers to the skill of analyzing and evaluating information, beliefs, perceptions, and behavior, and forming objective judgments.

Characteristics of Critical Thinking

- Logical thinking

- Abstract thinking
- Thinking about hypothetical situations
- Ability for systematic formal operational thinking
- Evaluating arguments
- Identifying biases
- Developing informed opinions
- Curiosity and asking questions
- Creativity
- Reflection

These characteristics, unsurprisingly, are also found to be aligned with the five experiential learning styles (ICALS model - see summary of the book "Whole Thought" mentioned above).

Cultivating Critical Thinking

Basic Tools

- Practicing analytical skills (such as debate and thinking games)
- Encouraging intellectual curiosity
- Presenting organizational information as mind maps and conceptual maps
- Evaluating fundamental assumptions
- Routine self-reflection processes
- Applying scientific thinking approaches
- Fixed daily exercise of responding to challenging questions/issues

Exercises

- Continuous learning over time
- Participating in discussion forums
- Journal keeping

- Mentoring, peer feedback
- Mindfulness
- Exposing different perspectives
- Participating in games and activities related to problem-solving

Advanced Tools

- Case studies analysis
- Managing a critical thinking-oriented journal
- Participating in collaborative problem-solving platforms
- Conducting design thinking sprints
- Simulations and role-playing games
- Analysis using a fishbone diagram
- 5 WHYs
- Parallel thinking exercises
- Pros and cons analysis (with a suggestion to "force" an equal amount of pros and cons)
- Reverse brainstorming (discussing how to mess up a situation, and from that learning how to improve it)
- Root cause analysis
- Scenario analysis
- Knowledge café
- Critical thinking matrix
- An activity framework that catalyzes asking questions
- Critical thinking cards
- Structured critical thinking oriented toward future trends

Combining Them Synergistically

From understanding each of the fields of creative thinking and critical thinking, it's clear that not only do they support each other and enable each to function optimally, but their harmonious combination has a synergistic advantage.

Examining the concept of the essence of innovation can teach us about this synergy:

Critical thinking appears to focus on the conscious mind, while creative thinking is primarily rooted in the subconscious. However, the picture is more complex than that: critical thinking helps to delve into the subconscious to extract information stored there, while creative thinking facilitates the creation of new knowledge based on this information and externalizes it to the conscious mind. In this way, innovation processes both utilize and leverage hidden information and knowledge to drive innovation processes.

Together, creative and critical thinking serve in knowledge creation processes where creative thinking suggests directions based on imagination and divergent thinking. In contrast, critical thinking is responsible for orderly, analytical, and convergent thinking:

Exposing and creating ideas - creative thinking; **analyzing and evaluating them** - critical thinking.

Feedback and ideas after experimentation - creative thinking; **integration and synthesis of these** - critical thinking with the aid of creative thinking.

Implementation and reflection - critical thinking; **renewed thinking about new ideas (returning to the beginning of the development cycle)** - creative thinking.

This isn't a matter of choosing one of them. The wisdom lies in leveraging the advantages of each, while recognizing that together they can produce strategic, resilient solutions in an agile way.

It's common to associate creative thinking with right-brain activity, characterized by intuitive thinking, holistic processing, and forming spatial connections. In contrast, critical thinking is linked to logical left-brain activity in its mode of operation. In fact, the situation is more complex since the brain operates through integrative dynamics that enable cognitive functionality. The whole thought builds on the strengths of each hemisphere, creating the power and potential that guide us toward a better world through inclusive and sophisticated thinking processes together.

Creative thinking and critical thinking each support, in different ways, all components of whole thought: practical thinking and cognition, temporal integration, holistic development, and the harmony of knowledge (see the summary of the book "Whole Thought" mentioned above).

Typical Applications

Innovation

Critical thinking and creative thinking, as described above, facilitate innovation by transitioning from information to knowledge to innovation, whether by

adapting existing solutions with modifications in other contexts or by generating new knowledge.

Creative thinking fosters a culture of discovery and experimentation; critical thinking subsequently supports the practical implementation of ideas.

Strategic Thinking

The combination of critical and creative thinking offers a fresh perspective on strategic thinking, providing flexibility and dynamism in dealing with challenges and opportunities.

Critical thinking offers a thinking framework in several ways:

- By challenging fundamental assumptions
- By examining data, identifying patterns, and evaluating alternatives
- By identifying risks and failures in strategic plans
- By promoting decision-making through improved effective weighing of pros and cons

Creative thinking has been gradually recognized over the years as having value for the field of strategic thinking as well, through:

- Vision formulation
- As a basis for innovation and innovative ways of action
- In flexibility and adaptability
- In developing scenarios in forward-looking strategic planning
- As a tool for developing organizational intelligence

Problem Solving

In problem-solving processes, critical thinking provides a foundation for analysis, breaking down a problem into its components, and evaluating evidence. Creative thinking serves primarily as a tool for generating diverse solutions and innovative approaches to achieving optimal outcomes.

Decision Making

In the reality of complex decision-making, striking a balance between creative thinking and critical thinking is crucial. Critical thinking is a vital tool for identifying biases and assumptions that can negatively influence the decision-making process, as well as for making informed decisions based on data, information, and objective reasoning.

Creative thinking offers fresh perspectives and enables the discovery of less obvious solutions. It encourages looking beyond the obvious while adopting less standard thinking approaches.

Cross-Disciplinary Collaboration

Cross-disciplinary collaboration is now considered a cornerstone in both innovation processes and problem-solving.

Critical thinking ensures that collaboration and the exchange of ideas take place in an environment where knowledge and ideas are evaluated objectively, as well as the possible difficulties that may arise. Critical thinking ensures that collaborative efforts are not based only on passion for joint work and intuition but are supported by data, evidence, and valid logical arguments.

Creative thinking encourages the discovery of diverse perspectives and the creation of new connections between ideas. Creative thinking drives teams to dream of possibilities and not stop at conventional boundaries. It challenges the status quo and pushes teams toward breakthrough developments.

Resilience

Resilience is our ability to recover quickly from challenges and adapt to changes.

Critical thinking is a fundamental tool for resilience, as it equips individuals and organizations with the skills necessary to systematically analyze and understand complex situations, assess the nature and intensity of challenges, and effectively evaluate alternative actions.

Creative thinking enables us to function flexibly and adapt ourselves to changing situations. It also helps us discover non-standard solutions and innovative action approaches to better deal with the constraints we encounter.

Together, they enable us to prepare to deal with challenges effectively in the short term and also adapt ourselves in the long term to changes that follow.

Leadership

Critical thinking enables leadership to make informed decisions and analyze data and information effectively. In this way, they ensure that the leader's development direction is on a track that is stably anchored in reality.

Creative thinking, in contrast, catalyzes vision and innovation. It drives leaders to think beyond the boundaries of current circumstances and dream of new possibilities.

Conflict Resolution

Critical thinking contributes significantly to conflict resolution, as it facilitates the logical analysis of root causes leading to conflict, as well as the orderly and clear evaluation of alternative actions and their implications.

Creative thinking plays a vital role in suggesting new perspectives for understanding conflict, as well as new and innovative action approaches that find common ground and perhaps even shared interests for the different parties.

Looking Forward with Artificial Intelligence Integration

Artificial intelligence can mimic some of the basic operations we perform in critical and creative thinking processes:

- **Critical thinking:** data analysis, pattern recognition, logical inference, hypothetical examination, simulations, feedback, and multi-faceted evaluation.
- **Creative thinking:** combination and synthesis; pattern-based innovation; adaptations to changing situations.

The integration of artificial intelligence in critical or creative thinking processes can either suppress or enhance and elevate these processes. On the one hand,

there is a risk in blindly relying on AI, both because of the errors involved in its responses and because it can suppress our human capabilities. On the other hand, artificial intelligence offers endless opportunities to leverage human capabilities through its ability to process large amounts of data, identify patterns, and generate numerous ideas quickly.

Here are several typical uses of generative artificial intelligence that can help advance critical and creative thinking:

1. Iterative dialogue, where AI becomes a partner for intellectual brainstorming
2. Generating many ideas quickly
3. Filtering ideas according to various parameters
4. Simulating scenarios and role-playing games
5. Requesting feedback on ideas, drafts, and thoughts
6. Getting different perspectives on an idea or other matter at hand
7. Integrating a multidisciplinary approach to topics at hand
8. Understanding the implications of trends through creating potential future scenarios

It's worthwhile to invest time, thought, and training in:

- Understanding human strengths and AI strengths, to leverage the strengths of each, not the opposite
- Defining goals and measuring outputs of collaborative work processes
- Context-dependent implementation of AI outputs and products
- Creating a collaborative human-machine working environment

The journey toward a future-oriented mindset requires repeated adaptations, as well as considerable courage to venture into unknown territories. By leveraging artificial intelligence as a thinking and acting partner with us, rather than instead

of us, we can enhance our thinking processes and expand the horizons of what is perceived as possible. In this way, we prepare and shape ourselves for the future, both known and unknown.