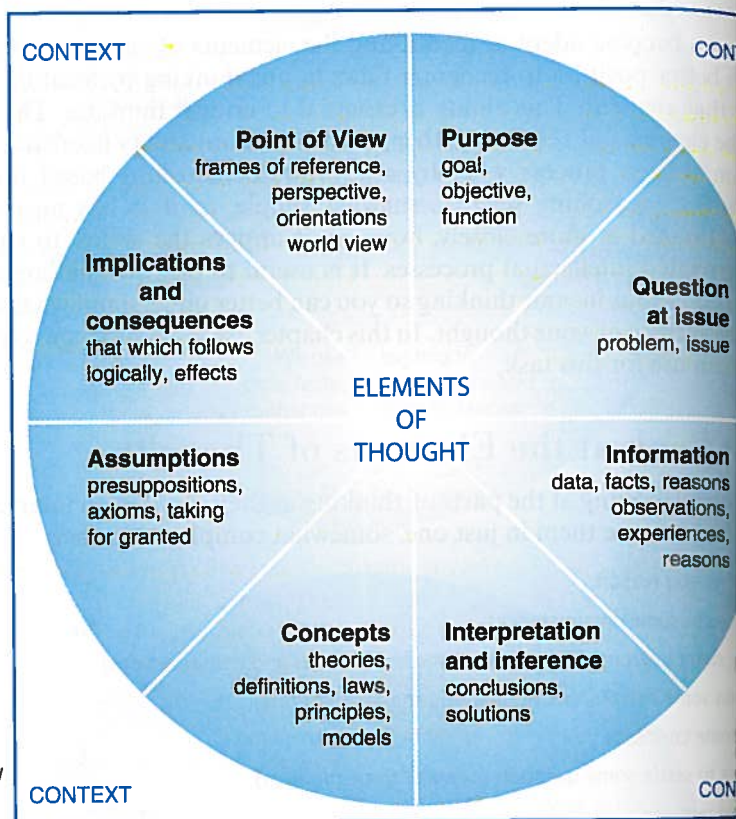


FIGURE 4.4 All thinking is defined by the eight elements that comprise it.

Eight basic structures are present in all thinking: Whenever we think, we think for a purpose within a point of view based on assumptions leading to implications and consequences. We use concepts, information, and theories to interpret data, facts, and experiences to answer questions, solve problems, and resolve issues.

Thinking, then:

- generates purposes
- raises questions
- uses information
- uses concepts
- makes inferences
- makes assumptions
- generates implications
- embodies a point of view



Let us now examine, at least provisionally, each of these crucial concepts. We will be using them throughout this book, so it is essential for them to become a comfortable part of your own critical thinking vocabulary. As you read the initial explanations, see whether you can elaborate upon them in your own words with an example drawn from your own experience.

By reasoning, we mean to make sense of something by giving it some sense in one's mind. Virtually all thinking is part of our sense-making activities. We see dark clouds in the sky, scratching at the door and think, "It's the dog." We see dark clouds in the sky and think, "It looks like rain." Some of this activity operates at a subconscious level. For example, all the sights and sounds about me have meaning for me without my explicitly noticing that they do. Most of our reasoning is unspectacular.