Critical thinking implies communicability. Now communicability obviously implies a community of men who can be addressed and who are listening and can be listened to. To the question, Why are there men rather than Man? Kant would have answered: In order that they may talk to one another. For men in the plural, and hence for mankind--for the species, as it were, that we belong to--"it is a natural vocation...to communicate and speak one’s mind"--a remark I have quoted before. Kant is aware that he disagrees with most thinkers in asserting that thinking, though a solitary business, depends on others to be possible at all:

It is said: the freedom to speak or to write can be taken away from us by the powers-that-be, but the freedom to think cannot be taken from us by them at all. However, how much and how correctly would we think if we did not think in community with others to whom we communicate our thoughts and who communicate theirs to us! Hence, we may safely state that the external power which deprives man of the freedom to communicate his thoughts \textit{publicly} also takes away his freedom to \textit{think}, the only treasure left to us in our civic life and through which alone there may be a remedy against all evils of the present state of affairs.

We can look at this factor of publicity, necessary for critical thinking, from still another viewpoint. What Socrates actually did, when he brought philosophy from the heavens down to earth and began to examine opinions about what went on between men, was that he extracted from every statement its hidden or latent implications; that is what he midwifery actually amounted to. As the midwife helps the child to come to light to be inspected, so Socrates brings to light the implications to be inspected. (That is what Kant did when he complained about “progress”: he extracted the implications of this concept; that is what we did here when we protested against the organic metaphor.) Critical thinking to a very large extent consists of this kind of “analysis.”
This examination, in turn, presupposes that everyone is willing and able to render an account of what he thinks and says. Plato, having gone through the school of Socratic midwifery, was the first to write philosophy in the way we still recognize as philosophy and what later, with Aristotle, became the treatise. He saw the difference between himself and the “wise men” of old, the Presocratics, in the fact that they, wise thought they were, never gave an account of their thoughts. There they were, with their great insights; but when you asked them a question, they remained silent. *Logon didonai,* “to give an account”—not to prove, but to be able to say how one came to an opinion and for what reasons one formed it—is actually what separates Plato from all his predecessors. The term [“*Logon didonai*”] itself is political in origin: to render accounts is what Athenian citizens asked of their politicians, not only in money matters, but in matters of politics. They could be held responsible. And this—holding oneself and everyone else responsible and answerable for what he thought and taught—what was transformed into philosophy that search for knowledge and for truth that had sprung up in Ionia. This transformation had already come about with the Sophists, who have regularly been called the representatives of Enlightenment in Greece; it was then sharpened into a method of question and answer by Socrates’ midwifery. This is the origin of critical thought, whose greatest representative in the modern age, perhaps in all postclassical ages, was Kant, who was entirely conscious of its implications. In one of his most important reflections, he writes as follows:

*Quaestio facti,* the question of fact, is in which way one has first obtained a concept; *quaestio juris,* the juridical question, is with what right one possesses this concept and uses it.

To think critically applies not only to doctrines and concepts one receives from others, to the prejudices and traditions one inherits; it is precisely by applying critical standards to one’s own thought that one learns the art of critical thought.

And this application one cannot learn without publicity, without the testing that arises from contact with other people’s thinking. In order to show how it works, I shall read to you two personal passages from letters Kant wrote in the 1770s to Marcus Herz:
You know that I do not approach reasonable objections with the intention merely of refuting them, but that in thinking them over I always weave them into my judgments, and afford them the opportunity of overturning all my most cherished beliefs. I entertain the hope that by thus viewing my judgments impartially from the standpoint of others some third view that will improve upon my previous insight may be obtainable.

You see that impartiality is obtained by taking the viewpoints of others into account; impartiality is not the result of some higher standpoint that would actually settle the dispute by being altogether above the mêlée. In the second letter, Kant makes this even clearer:

[The mind needs a reasonable amount of relaxations and diversions to maintain its mobility] that it may be enabled to view the object afresh from every side, and so to enlarge its point of view from a microscopic to a general outlook that it adopts in turn every conceivable standpoint, verifying the observations of each by means of all the others.

Here the word “impartiality” is not mentioned. In its stead, we find the notion that one can “enlarge” one’s own thought so as to take into account the thoughts of others. The “enlargement of the mind” plays a crucial role in the Critique of Judgment. It is accomplished by “comparing our judgment with the possible rather than the actual judgments of others, and by putting ourselves in the place of any other man.” The faculty that makes this possible is imagination. When you read the paragraphs in the Critique of Judgment and compare them with the letters just quoted, you will see that the former contain no more than the conceptualization of these very personal remarks. Critical thinking is possible only where the standpoints of all others are open to inspection. Hence, critical thinking, while still a solitary business, does not cut itself off from “all others.” To be sure, it still goes on in isolation, but by the force of imagination it makes the others present and thus moves in a space that is potentially public, open to all sides; in other words, it adopts the position of Kant’s world citizen. To think with an enlarged mentality [Ein erweiterte Denkungsart’], means that one trains one’s imagination to go visiting. (Compare the right to visit in Perpetual Peace.)
I must warn you here of a very common and easy misunderstanding. The trick of critical thinking does not consist in an enormously enlarged empathy through which one can know what actually goes on in the minds of others. To think, according to Kant’s understanding of enlightenment, means Selbstdenken, to think for oneself, “which is the maxim of a never-passive reason. To be given to such passivity is called prejudice,” and enlightenment is, first of all, liberation from prejudice. To accept what goes on in the minds of those whose “standpoint” (actually, the place where they stand, the conditions they are subject to, which always differ from one individual to the next, from one class or group as compared to another) is not my own would mean no more than passively to accept their thought, that is, to exchange their prejudices for the prejudices proper to my own station. “Enlarged thought” is the result of first “abstracting from the limitations which contingently attach to our own judgment,” of disregarding its “subjective private conditions..., by which so many are limited,” that is, disregarding what we usually call self-interest, which, according to Kant, is not enlightened or capable of enlightenment but is in fact limiting. The greater the reach—the larger the realm in which the enlightened individual is able to move from standpoint to standpoint—the more “general” will be his thinking. The generality, however, is not the generality of the concept—for example, the concept “house,” under which one can then subsume various kinds of individual buildings. It is, on the contrary, closely associated with particulars, with the particular conditions of the standpoints one has to go through in order to arrive at one’s own “general standpoint.” This general standpoint we spoke of earlier as impartiality; it is a viewpoint from which to look upon, to watch, to form judgments, or, as Kant himself says, to reflect upon human affairs. It does not tell one how to act. It does not even tell one how to apply the wisdom, found by virtue of occupying a “general standpoint,” to the particulars of political life. (Kant had no experience of such action whatsoever and could have had none in the Prussia of Frederick II.) Kant does tell one how to take others into account; he does not tell one how to combine with them in order to act.