Welcome
to

Writing Philosophy Papers:
A Student Guide

Department of Philosophy
Oregon State University

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* Page numbers refer to the pages in the printed Guide. They are included here to aid in location of assigned reading.

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The Uses of Writing in Philosophy

In philosophy, where thinking is often complicated and abstract, writing is important. The deeper the thought or the further the ideas fly, the more critical it is to have the writing tools that will help you sort things out on paper.

Like all tools, writing tools serve purposes. Roughly speaking, writing in philosophy serves three purposes: clarification, exploration, and communication.

The simple act of writing something down makes thinking easier. You can prove this to yourself by examining your own experience. If someone asks you to figure out how much each apple costs, when apples are $5.48 a dozen . . . or if someone asks you to bring home fourteen different items from the bookstore . . . or if you are trying to express your deepest thoughts to your beloved, what do you do? You pull out a pencil and paper and write something down. "5.48/12." "Pencil lead, aspirin, birthday card, stamps . . . " "When I am with you, I feel as though nothing bad can happen. I feel magical . . . "

The act of writing also provides a concrete way to re-think your thoughts. "Why am I figuring out the cost of an apple rather than an orange?" "Do I need 14 or 16 items from the bookstore? Do I even need to go to the bookstore at all, or can I make do with what I have around the house?" "Why do I have this magical feeling when I am with you but not with our mutual friend?"

Finally, writing is the principal means of communication among philosophers. If you want to demonstrate your understanding to a professor . . . if you want to convince someone that your position is the correct one . . . if you want to relate an abstract idea to your own experience, chances are that you will need to do so in writing.

You will have a much easier time working with philosophical problems if you are handy with the tools philosophers have developed for the above purposes. Indeed, you cannot claim to know how to "do philosophy" unless

you can write philosophical prose.

Writing Philosophy Papers at Oregon State University

Your professors know that you usually do not come into the university already equipped with the skills of philosophical writing. These skills are something that you will need to learn along with the content of the course. We also understand that the skills are incremental; once you master the simpler kinds of writing, you can put these together in more complicated and interesting ways, ultimately to write the most sophisticated philosophical prose. We plan to teach these writing skills step-by-step, teaching the most basic writing skills in lower-division courses, teaching progressively more complex writing skills in more advanced courses, until--when you reach the upper division courses-you are a 'skill-full' writer, ready to write a seminar paper.

This handbook is a student guide to writing philosophy papers. It may well turn out to be your best friend in philosophy. In it, you will find what you need to know in order to write a variety of different forms of philosophical prose. So, when asked to write, for example, a position paper, you can turn to this booklet and find out exactly what the professor means. You will find a definition of each kind of assignment, an explanation of its purpose and audience, a set of criteria by which your professor will evaluate your work, and an example that you can use to envision your end product. You will also find information about the proper form for citations and a list of places (on campus and in books) where you can go for help.

At Oregon State University, we believe in an expanded, "big tent" view of philosophical writing. We believe that **IDEAS MATTER**, that what individuals believe at the deepest levels has a direct effect on the decisions they make about how they should live their lives, that philosophy is therefore as practical as any field of study on campus. Accordingly, we believe philosophical writing can draw on a person's lived experiences and philosophical ideas can inform and improve peoples' everyday lives. You will find that we have included in the handbook, some kinds of writing that push against the conventions of professionalized philosophy in the contemporary Western world. This, we hope you will find, helps make writing philosophy papers interesting and important.

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A Series of Steps

The first piece of advice we want to give you in this handbook is that writing is a process, not a product. A paper is a long-term project, not a last minute grind. The success of your writing requires that you spend time throughout the term on the writing process -- pre-writing, scheduling, researching, preparing a draft, reviewing and revising, and polishing your paper. This section of the handbook introduces you to these elements of the writing process through the conventional expectations of a research paper; however, you will find these elements valuable for other forms of writing you encounter in philosophy classes.

Pre-Writing and Scheduling

First, make sure you understand the assignment. Your instructor is your best writing resource and should provide you with a clear set of instructions for the paper and inform you of the criteria that will be used in its evaluation. Be sure to ask your instructor questions in class or during office hours. To avoid either procrastinating or spinning your wheels, make sure you know:

- The latitude you have on *choice of topic*. Does the professor assign topics, give a list of approved topics, or require approval of student-selected topics?
- The *specific instructions* for paper format, required library research, and appropriate sources and citation format.
- The *audience* to whom you are writing. Should you write the paper so that the topic is accessible to an intelligent adult who has no formal training in philosophy? or for your classmates? or is the audience your professor?

- The *criteria for evaluation* for the paper.

Generating Ideas

People once thought the only way to get an idea was to sit around passively before you began to write, spending some time thinking about your ideas. But over the past two decades, composition teachers have developed a set of techniques for generating a flow of ideas. Each technique involves writing, and each takes advantage of the way the mind works. Three of the techniques are briefly summarized here: brainstorming-clustering, freewriting, and looping.

- *Brainstorming-clustering* begins with the unrestrained offering of ideas and suggestions, in order to generate ideas quickly and uncritically. Individually or in groups, jot down ideas spontaneously, randomly, freely. Ideas are not criticized or praised, just recorded. Then sort the ideas into clusters or subject-areas. This will identify a set of issues from which you can shape a paper.

- *Freewriting* is simply thinking on the page, recording whatever ideas come into your head. The process itself is simple: get out a blank piece of paper or call up a blank screen. Now, for ten minutes, write without stopping. It does not matter what you write or what you write about as long as you are writing. Freewriting is just that--writing that is free of self consciousness because the writing is for your eyes only; free of the constraints of self criticism because the goal is to come up with lots of ideas, good and bad; free of rules because spelling, grammar, and such are absolutely irrelevant at this point in the process; free of all expectations because surprise, unexpected directions, and arbitrariness are to be valued over a direction or destination.

- *Looping* is a variation of freewriting. The process combines freewriting with analysis in a way that

allows a direction to emerge from the writing. First, freewrite for five minutes. Then, examine what you have written. Find the heart or central concept or most interesting theme of what you have written. Write a sentence that summarizes this theme. Then, freewrite about that topic for five minutes. Examine what you have written. Summarize the central theme of that writing. Continue in this pattern, spiraling through your ideas like a tornado.

Scheduling

Scheduling time throughout the term to work on the paper is what makes writing a *process*. In some classes, the instructor may provide you with a calendar of important "milestones" -- topic selection, thesis statement, library summary -- to help you schedule your work, or your instructor may ask that you submit work at various points in the term to help you avoid the last-minute crunch. But, take the initiative and help yourself by your own scheduling. If you are writing a term-long research paper, for example, you can set guidelines such as:

Week 2 --	selection of topic and instructor approval if required
Week 3 --	summary of library research to date
Week 4 --	developed thesis statement; library research completed
Week 5 --	peer review of your research and thesis
Week 6 --	developed paper outline or structure
Week 7 --	completion of draft of paper
Week 8 --	peer review of draft and revision
Week 9 --	final rough draft; focus on mechanics, grammar, spelling, punctuation, sentence structure
Week 10 --	polished paper and final submission

Research

A research paper requires out-of-class research, almost always at the library, in addition to Web browsing. The research will help you explore your topic through relevant book or periodical readings and will help you focus on a thesis statement--a sentence that tells a reader "what's at stake" in your paper. As you do your research you will learn whether your topic is too broad or too narrow, what the credible sources for your topic are, and what distinguishes professional and popular sources, from primary and secondary literature.

It is especially helpful to write short synopses or *summaries* of your research literature. Summaries will help you develop your topic cumulatively, and you will initiate writing that can eventually be part of your final submission. That is, in writing summaries, you are writing some parts of your term paper as you go.

Paper Structure and Rough Draft

As you develop your research, a skeletal structure of your paper will gradually emerge. It will characteristically include these elements:

- The introduction of your topic and the thesis statement--a statement of what is at stake in resolving a question one way instead of another. In short, the introduction presents the task the paper and uses the thesis statement to preview the content of the paper.

- The body of the paper integrates your library research material, which you've already completed and summarized. You will incorporate material and evidence that support your thesis statement, as well as present counter-arguments or positions that refute your thesis. It is this research material that forms the core of your paper's documentation. Be open minded and even-handed in your treatment of alternative views, presenting them fairly and without misrepresentation. Make sure you avoid jumping to conclusions without evidence, using inflammatory

language, or engaging in attacks on a person's character.

- The conclusion of your paper re-states the problem you've considered, the thesis statement you've advanced, and the evidence you've presented to support your claims. You may suggest new insights into the problem or directions for future papers; this tells the reader that you see your paper as part of an ongoing conversation or quest for philosophic insight, and not the last word on the subject.

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Review and Revision

With your paper outlined and a rough draft prepared, you are now ready to have it reviewed. Ideally, the reviewer will be someone who can best identify with your objectives, namely, a classmate or "peer" reviewer. Sometimes, class sessions may engage in peer review exercises. However, your reviewer may also be a friend, roommate, a parent, and when appropriate, your professor. The Peer Response Form that follows this section may be of help.

The reviewer should look particularly at several items:

- Does the paper adhere to specific instructions on paper format?
- Does the paper follow appropriate citation and documentation formats?
- Does the paper engage the reader's attention?
- Does the paper accomplish its objective?
- Are the arguments clear and fairly presented?

Revising a paper is one of the few things in life in which we get a "second chance." Having placed some distance between you and your paper, and requested and received comments from a reviewer, you are in a position to "re-vision" your writing, seeing it in a new light. Revision then gives you an invitation to clarify, improve, and do your very best writing.

Revisions are required of virtually any professional philosophical paper, so in requesting revisions, your instructor is asking you to undertake a step that is necessary in any philosophy writing. Use the comments of your reviewer as constructive criticism that assists you in polishing your paper. Some revisions will be more extensive than others, requiring major changes in content or organization often, initial or rough drafts of an essay have major problems in focus, argument, evidence, etc., and extensive changes are necessary to develop an acceptable submission. As your paper progresses and you develop more experience as a writer, equally important consideration must be given to grammatic spelling, and stylistic revisions. You will find, whatever the magnitude of revisions requested by others and initiated by yourself, that the revising process sharpens your learning, thinking, and writing skills.

Publishing

At last, you've reached the stage of moving from process to product. If you've taken the time on process, your finished product should be something you are proud to present to your professor as an example of your best work. And think of how much stress you saved yourself by not waiting until the night before deadline!

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Peer Response Form

INTRODUCTION

Clearly identifies topic	____strong ____ok ____needs attention
Clearly identifies purpose	____strong ____ok ____needs attention
Clearly forecasts rest of paper	____strong ____ok ____needs attention

Recommendations:

BODY OF PAPER

Transition from introduction	____strong ____ok ____needs attention
Logic of examples	____strong ____ok ____needs attention
Completeness of information	____strong ____ok ____needs attention
Detail provided in examples	____strong ____ok ____needs attention
Critical analysis of issues	____strong ____ok ____needs attention
Constructive explanation	____strong ____ok ____needs attention

Recommendations:

CONCLUSION

Transition from examples/analysis	____strong ____ok ____needs attention
Summation (if appropriate)	____strong ____ok ____needs attention
Conclusions reached and defended	____strong ____ok ____needs attention

Recommendation:

What is the best part of this draft?

As this writer begins to revise, what part of the paper should be looked at first? Why do you say so?

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Assignment ______________________________ Date ____________

Author's Name ____________________________

Draft Read By ____________________________

Directions: Read the rough draft provided to you and respond to it using this sheet. As you read, pay attention to both strengths and weaknesses. If something has been left out of the draft (something you feel needs to be added), note that under recommendations.

Basic Skills in Writing Philosophy

Like baking a pie, planning a vacation, or raising a child, good writing in philosophy requires creativity, thought and a set of basic skills. This section of the handbook identifies and exemplifies eight skills that you will frequently make use of in you r philosophy writing assignments. These include:

1. identifying a philosophical problem;
2. organizing ideas;
3. defining concepts;
4. analyzing arguments;
5. comparing and contrasting;
6. giving examples;
7. applying theory to practice; and,
8. testing hypotheses.

These are valuable skills for learning philosophy as well as writing philosophy. They are important in helping you understand the philosophical writing of others and for composing your own essays and papers. In complete philosophical writing, these skills overlap, intertwine, and co-relate, but for educational purposes we will describe them individually.

The following section on forms of philosophical writing makes constant reference to these skills. If you can master these skills, you will be well prepared for excellent and insightful writing experiences.

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Identifying a Philosophical Problem

Philosophy is a problem solving enterprise. Part of what one learns in becoming a philosopher is to find problems and then to use all the skills at one's disposal to solve them. A philosophy paper without a problem is very much like a body without a head, or perhaps a more accurate metaphor would be a body without DNA -- that is a body whose organizing principle is missing.

So, what is a problem, and particularly a philosophical problem? One answer is that a problem is a question not easily answered. If I ask you "What time is it?" - there is a question which is usually easily answered. You look at your watch and give me the answer. If we start wondering what justice or beauty is, or if we have free will, we may find that these questions are not at all easy to answer. If our goal is to say what justice is, and there are difficulties preventing us from giving an adequate answer, then we have a problem. Some problems are so intractable that they last for centuries -- the problem of evil, the mind/body problem and the problem of induction are some notable examples. Some problems are such that a good philosopher can think them through in an afternoon.

In one sense problems are pretty easy to come by in philosophy. Whenever people hold opposing positions, we are likely to have the problem of determining who has the strongest position. "People have free will." "No! People's actions are completely determined. Free will is an illusion!" Who is right? Well, at this point we need to look at the arguments on behalf of the positions, and we need to evaluate the strength and weakness of the competing positions. What if we find, as is likely the case in the free will debate, that all of the positions have serious weaknesses? That represents a problem on a new level. Now we have to try to determine if there are insoluble difficulties as opposed to solvable difficulties. We need to

start modifying positions to make them stronger.

If you find two commentators seriously disagreeing about how to construe or evaluate an argument in Plato or Hobbes, Rawls or Singer, they cannot both be right. So, your problem then becomes, which of the two commentators has the strongest evidence supporting his interpretation.

One important benefit of acquiring a problem is that it will largely dictate what the parts of your paper are going to be. If you are trying to decide which of two commentators has the right interpretation of an argument, then you are going to have to explain each of their views, in what way they disagree, what the crucial point is for resolving the disagreement, and the philosophical moral to be drawn from the resolution. When you start, you may very well not be entirely sure what the crucial point is, or how you are going to resolve it. Still, without knowing that, you can determine that all of the parts listed above will need to be there in your paper. You can then start working your way from the things which are more easily done - like giving the argument about which the commentators disagree, stating the view of the two commentators, and explaining what is at stake. By doing all this, you may find that you have grasped the treads you need to figure out the solution to the problem. This is where philosophical and reasoning skills as well as creativity come into play.

One of the things you need to learn is how to find a problem which is manageable given the length of the paper you are writing. Problems vary in scope. Questions about justice, free will, causality, personal identity and so forth are very large in scope. These are things about which books are written. To deal with large problems like these, we have to look to see if they have parts, and then look for parts of those parts until we get down to some manageable size. One then deals with the parts and puts them together and until one finally gets the analysis of the large problem one began with.

Generally, in writing a philosophy paper, you will be dealing with much more narrow and specific topics than justice or free will, and with correspondingly narrowed and specific problems. If you find yourself writing a five page paper about six proofs for the existence of God, something is probably wrong. To deal with a single proof you need to explain what the proof for the existence of God is, what the problem is with it that your propose to consider, what the difficulties are, and your proposed solution to those difficulties. Usually you need to narrow the scope. Instead of looking at the problem of free will, you want to look at a particular argument offered by a particular person, and then it may well be possible to narrow the scope even farther. Very likely there is a single premise in that argument which is the crucial premise.

Example

In the sample research paper in this manual the problem is to determine which view of human nature, that expressed by Kao Tzu, Mencius or Hsun Tzu is the strongest. To do this the author must tell us what the three positions are, compare and contrast to try to get at what the significant differences are between the positions, and probe for the weakness and strengths of the competing positions.

Criteria

Problems can be either important or unimportant, they can be huge in scope or very narrowly focused, they can be easily solvable or completely intractable. The best papers will find an interesting and important problem, which is sufficiently focused so that the discussion of it is not superficial, and which presents real and interesting difficulties with which the student grapples. The best papers will have a problem which is convincingly solved. Still, it is sometimes the case that at the end of the day one finds that the one simply cannot solve the problem posed. In cases like this a thorough and convincing discussion of the difficulties may well be more acceptable than some unconvincing and weak gesture at a solution.

Some Additional Examples

Here are some illustrations of significant philosophical problems which may help you grasp the nature of such problems. These problems come from Phl 302, the History of Western Philosophy, and are intended to help students in that course in writing ten to twelve page research papers. These are thus problems for a relatively advanced course. The content of these particular problems may be unfamiliar to you, but it is the structure of the problem rather than the content which is of most importance.

- The Problem of the Incoherent Skeptical Hypotheses
- The Veil of Perception
- Heirloom Causality and the Mind Body problem

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Organizing Your Ideas

If you are writing a very short paper it may be clear what the parts are and how they should fit together. Longer papers very likely will require more thought and effort. Once you have a problem or a thesis, what some of the major parts of your paper need to be may well be clear. Now what you should do is consider what these parts are and how they are going to relate to one another. In other words, you need to decide on the organization of your paper.

You might begin by considering some typical organizational schemes and how the parts you have identified fit into such a scheme. As Jay Rosenberg notes in The Practice of Philosophy (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall), two common forms are the adjudicatory essay and the problem-solving essay.

In an *adjudicatory essay*, the author acts as a third party to a dispute between two parties. The purpose of the article is to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the competing positions. The structure is often:

I. Formulation of the issue/the dispute
II. Exposition of position I
III. Evaluation of position I
IV. Exposition of position 2
V. Evaluation of position 2
VI. Resolution

In a *problem-solving essay*, the author detects or constructs a problem and then proposes a solution. The structure is often:

I. Formulation and analysis of the problem
II. Development of criteria of adequacy for a solution
III. Exploration of inadequate possible solutions
IV. Exposition of the proposed solution

V. Assessment of the adequacy of the proposed solutions
VI. Replies to anticipated criticisms

Depending on the length of the article and the sophistication of the author, III and VI can be missing wholly or in part.

Still such an outline may not determine how the parts of your paper are going to fit together. If these sample organizational schemes do not suit your needs, you might begin by listing the major parts and asking how they are going to function. The major parts might, for example, have a logical connection. If they can be structured as a simple logical argument then it will be clear how the parts relate.

Once you know how the major parts are going to relate to one another, you can turn to a consideration of the structure of each part and ask what they need to achieve the function you have decided they should have.

Once you have reached this point you can very likely start writing an outline. There are a variety of virtues to writing an outline. An outline makes clear what each part is supposed to do and what is supposed to be in it to achieve this purpose. Given this, you can begin by writing the parts which are the easiest, and determine which you need to do research to write and so on. You can use your outline to chart your progress towards the completion of this project.

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Defining Concepts

One great conversation stopper is to ask someone to define a term. Defining turns out to be a difficult activity for a number of reasons. Many terms seem to defy any attempt to state precisely how and when they will apply to things. For example, how would you define "chair" given the inordinately large number of things which might count as a chair? Though hard, defining is extremely important because how we define terms influences the way we experience and understand the world. For instance, think of how your definition of "violence" affects what you think about certain acts.

Many modem philosophers explore definitions. They believe that if you can restructure the definition of a term or concept, you can begin to restructure the practices and beliefs associated with those terms.

There are many kinds of definitions. A **reportive or lexical definition** relates the way a term is ordinarily used. Dictionaries contain such definitions. A **stipulative definition** provides meaning to a new term. For example, it was stipulated that the offspring of a male tiger and a female lion be called a "tigon." A **persuasive definition** is used to alter your attitude towards the object usually associated with the term. For instance, "liberal" might be persuasively defined by some as "drippy-eyed do gooder" and by others as "genuine humanitarian committed to equal opportunity for all." Philosophers consider such persuasive definitions illegitimate.

Professors will seldom ask for the three kinds of definitions just listed.

However, professors will often ask for an **analytical definition**. This kind of definition shows what the conceptual parts of the term are and how these parts are

related to one another. This kind of definition attempts to lay out the conditions under which a term or concept applies to the thing in question. An example is "bachelor" means "adult, unmarried male." Analytical definitions are usually offered with a specific purpose in mind. They attempt to reform ordinary usage of a term. Such reforms can be precising or expansive. An example of a precising definition is Kant's definition of experience as a combination of sense perceptions and certain operations of the mind. In this sense, his use of the term is more specific than the usual sense of "sense perceptions." An example of an expansive definition is when "rights" is used to cover "animal rights." This is expansive because, on traditional theories, only humans were thought to have rights.

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Purpose

An analytical definition can tell us what features are common to all things of a particular class, and it can tell us what features are unique to that class of things. Sometimes, an analytical definition can do both at the same time. In this way, a definition provides a precise description.

Why would we want to know which features are common and which are unique? If we wish to say that something is, say, a house, it is important to know what is common and what is unique to different houses. If we include a feature not unique to only houses, we may have to call something a house even thought we do not want to. For instance, if we define house as 'shelter,' a cave would qualify as a house. Most people would not agree, considering our definition too expansive.

Method

To construct an analytical definition, you must search for the necessary and sufficient conditions of a concept. A "necessary" condition is one without which something cannot be what it is. For example, if something is not a

living creature, it cannot be a mammal. So being a living thing is a necessary condition for being a mammal. A "sufficient" condition specifies one way of being that thing. For example, "having the flu" is a sufficient condition for "feeling miserable." If you want to feel miserable, having the flu will do the job.

The most rigorous definitions give both necessary and sufficient conditions for being whatever is being defined. Such definitions may be found in logic and mathematics, and in some of the most developed sciences like physics and chemistry.

Some terms seem to defy definition in terms of necessary and sufficient conditions. For these terms a definition is a listing of the family resemblance among objects referred to by the term. The idea is that one member of a family will have the same nose as another member, but not the same eyes or mouth, while some other member will have the same mouth, but not the same eyes or nose. Thus, there is no single (necessary) feature which can be found in all of the family members.

Throughout history, philosophers have labored to understand what counts as a good definition. The above only scratches the surface of the historical conversation about definitions.

For example, the philosopher John Locke recognizes that there are a variety of competing definitions of the word 'man,' *in the ordinary usage of his time*. Some might think that a man is an intelligent being who can reason and talk. Or some might think that being a man has to do with having the physical structure of a man. Locke gives a variety of interesting arguments to analyze the definition of 'man.' Would we call an intelligent talking parrot that can reason and discourse a man? Would we refuse to call something which clearly has a man's form but does not talk or reason a man? Locke thinks we would not call the parrot a man and we would call the creature with a man's form a man. Thus Locke is giving arguments to show that a living animal with a particular shape provides both necessary and sufficient conditions for being a man. Thus Locke is fixing

the loose usage of these terms, reforming our language, using philosophical arguments to do so.

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Characteristics of a Good Definition

A good definition is neither too broad nor too narrow. An example of a definition that is too broad is "a human is a featherless biped." Defined in this way, human would include too much (for example, plucked chickens). An example of a definition that is too narrow is "a human is a rational creature." This excludes many beings whom we would want to call human (for example, babies).

How does one tell if the definition is too broad or too narrow? This is not easy, particularly with concepts that display family resemblances rather than rigorous necessary and sufficient conditions. Also, broadness or narrowness may vary with the context. What I call a 'house' may be fine for my purposes but not for census takers. In any case, philosophers love to point out that conditions which we have heretofore regarded as necessary and/or sufficient really, truly are not.

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ANALYZING ARGUMENTS

An argument involves offering reasons for holding that some controversial claim is true. The giving and analyzing of arguments is an activity which occurs in many academic disciplines and in many walks of life, but it is particularly important in philosophy. This is because philosophers are almost always dealing with controversial matters where reasons need to be offered for claims which many would reject-- "Free will is an illusion," "God exists," "justice is not the interest of the stronger." Thus it is difficult to overstate the importance of giving and being able to analyze arguments in philosophy.

While the basic account of what an argument is is fairly simple, there is so much to be said about the different kinds of argument and the evaluation of arguments, that an entire branch of the philosophical enterprise--logic--is devoted to this subject.

In this section of our handbook we can only give the most rudimentary features of analyzing arguments. We urge you to take logic or cntical thinking classes which will improve your skills in giving and analyzing arguments. This is one important way in which you can develop your skills in reasoning and thus in writing philosophy.

To analyze something is to break it up into its constituent parts in order to understand it. An analytic chemist may take an unknown substance and figure out what it is by breaking it up into elements. A political analyst studies the details of an election to explain who voted for what and why. A logical analyst divides an argument into its parts in order to gain a better understanding of the argument as a whole. The skill of argument analysis thus involves a careful and thorough examination of a philosophical concept or of specific wntings, and a thoughtful exposition of the material.

Method

Argument analysis is a four-step process that leads to an understanding of an argument. These are the steps:

1. Identify the issue.
2. Identify the claim that is defended.
3. Identify the reasons used to defend the claim.
4. Represent the structure of the argument.

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Identifying the Issue

Who wrote this? Why did the author bother? What was at stake? What difference does it make? Who listened? Who cared? The first step of argument analysis is to address questions like these by identifying what is at issue in the argument. The issue is the single point in question or matter in dispute. In an argument analysis, the issue should always be stated as a question. "Has the economic status of women deteriorated over the last decades more than the economic status of men?" is an example of an issue.

Notice that an issue is not the same as a topic. A topic is usually a noun or a noun phrase: "The economic status of women." "The drinking age." "Abortion." "Pepsi." Stating the topic may delineate the area of discussion, but it does not focus attention on the precise question to be resolved by the argument.

Identifying the Claim that is Defended

The second step of argument analysis is to identify the claim that is defended. That claim is called the conclusion. Once you have identified the issue, finding the conclusion of an argument is a straightforward step; the conclusion is the answer to the question raised as the issue of the argument.

The conclusion is what the writer wants the audience to come to believe, some claim about what is true or what is right or what is to be done.

For example, consider the following passage written in 1958 in Clinton, Tennessee by a schoolteacher whose newly integrated classroom had just been destroyed by dynamite:

> *Integration will work. It is already working in many places. It will continue to work because it is just and right and long overdue.*

The issue, will integration ever work? was an issue of great urgency and greater doubt. The teacher's answer: Yes, integration will work. This is her conclusion, what she is trying to make the reader believe. The other statements tell her reasons for believing that the conclusion is true.

Unhappily, it is not always this easy to identify the conclusion of an argument. A variety of strategies can be used to find the conclusion of an argument when the argument itself does not make its conclusion clear. First, look at the first and last statements in a passage. Most often, but emphatically not always, the conclusion is one of these. Second, look for words that function as signposts. Some words and phases such as therefore, thus, hence, for this reason, consequently, and it follows that exist for the sole purpose of calling attention to conclusions. Third, in the absence of such clues you can probably identify the conclusion by looking for the most controversial statement. It makes sense that a statement generally accepted as true will be used most effectively as a premise and that the conclusion will be the statement most in need of support.

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Identifying the Reasons Used to Defend the Claim

The third step in argument analysis is to identify the statements that give reasons for believing that the claim is true. The supporting statements, the reasons, are called premises. In a well-written passage, the premises will be marked by signposts that make clear the supporting job done by the statements. Words such as since, because, and for tell the reader that the

sentences that follow are intended to serve as premises. When signpost words are missing, the argument analysis is more difficult because the reader faces the tasks of looking carefully for those statements that provide reasons for thinking the conclusion is true and untangling them from the sentences that are not part of the argument.

Representing the Structure of the Argument

A vanety of metaphors expresses the relationship among the statements in an argument. Some say that the premises "lead to" the conclusion or that the conclusion "follows from" the premises. Others say that a conclusion "rests on" the premises. Many of the metaphors are architectural: The premises "support" the conclusion. The premises provide a "foundation" or a "base" for the conclusion.

What is meant is that the premises are related to the conclusion in such a way that the premises provide good reasons for believing that the conclusion is true. Invoking the architectural metaphor, this relationship between the statements of an argument may be called the logical structure of the argument. There are a variety of ways to represent the structure of an argument. The technique recommended here is called "standard form." An argument is in standard form when its premises are numbered and stacked on top of a horizonal line; the order of the premises does not matter. The conclusion is written beneath the line and is preceded by three dots in the shape of a pyramid, the symbol for therefore.

Logicians draw a clear distinction between the content of an argument and its structure. The content has to do with the truth of the premises. Is it true that morality requires free will? If not, then any argument which uses the claim that morality requires free will as a premise to support some other conclusion, will not be a good argument. The form or structure of an argument is also important. The form of a deductive argument can tell us if the conclusion really follows from the premises. If the form is one which logicians have determined is truth preserving, then all is well (at least if the premises are true). If not then there is good reason to hold that the argument is defective. One good reason to study logic is to learn the difference between good and bad argument forms.

But even without studying logic it can be very useful to sort out the parts of an argument and to try to determine what the relation of those parts are to one another.

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Consider, for example, this argument:

> *Her team of lawyers has decided that it will not be possible for Rita Collins to argue successfully that she killed her husband in self-defense. Her husband beat her, kicked her in the stomach, threatened her with a knife, not once, but over a period of twenty years. But she shot him while he slept, and the standard principle in the law of self-defense is that the danger must be immanent, leaving no reasonable alternative to lethal defensive force.*

If the argument is analyzed and represented in standard form, it becomes much clearer. In this clearer form, the student can more reliably assess the truth of its content and the validity of its form.

1) If a killing is an act of self-defense, then it must take place when death is immanent and there is no other alternative.
2) Rita's act of killing did not take place under these conditions
Rita's act is not an act of self-defense.

Now that we see what the argument consists of, we can start asking questions: Did Rita really have reasonable alternatives? Is this the proper definition of self-defense? Does the conclusion follow from the premises?

Page 25 : Comparing and Constrasting

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COMPARING AND CONTRASTING

Many features of philosophical thought invite comparison and contrast. A writing assignment may ask you to compare and contrast:

- The ideas of specific philosophers; or
- Philosophical traditions; or
- Ideas of philosophers in a single philosophic tradition; or
- Different interpretations of a philosophic concept, such as justice.

Any assignment that requires you to "compare and contrast" is concerned with recognizing similarities and differences in important philosophical concepts or philosophers, and illustrating the significance of both what is common and what is different.

Method

- Be familiar with the concepts, ideas, arguments, or philosophers you are comparing and contrasting.
- Identify the dissimilarities. Dissimilarities might occur over the premises or conclusions of an argument, the definitions of a concept, or the evidence used to support the conclusions or positions.
- Identify similarities that occur at a very general level. Even though different philosophers might offer rival conceptions of justice, for example, they are in agreement at least that justice is an important concept. As you move from general areas of argument to ever more specific and particular levels, differences will become more prominent and similarities will subside.
- Your essay should present a continual back-and-forth process of comparison and contrast. This will prompt you and the reader to new insights.

Example

An excellent example of a compare-and-contrast method is the research paper on p. 82 of this handbook. The four steps described above are clearly present:

1. The author has done sufficient background research in ancient Chinese philosophy so that an informed comparison of the views of three philosophers on human nature can be developed.
2. The author illustrates the specific disputes of these philosophers as to whether human beings are inherently good, evil, or neutral.
3. The author describes the general questions that each philosopher is addressing. That is, there is agreement on the issues at stake, even though answers may differ.
4. The author continually unfolds the companson through tracing the evolution of the philosophical dispute.

Page 27 : Giving Examples

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Giving Examples

An example is a specific instance of a general principle or abstract concept, often drawn from a student's own experience. The example provides an accessible, understandable instance of a general idea that may be hard to understand in the abstract.

Purpose

An example can be used to clarify a principle, to answer a question, to give substance to an abstract concept. In addition, examples can demonstrate understanding: if you can give an example, you probably understand the concept. Examples are a way that students can link the abstract notions of philosophy to their own experiences.

Criteria for Evaluation

- Is the example "on point"? -- that is, is the example truly an instance of the general principle?
- Is the example instructive? -- that is, can another person learn from the example?
- Does the example demonstrate understanding of the abstract principle or concept?

Example

John Stuart Mill says that "the sole end for which mankind are warranted, individually or collectively, in interfering with the liberty of action of any of their number, is self-protection.... His own good, either physical or moral, is not a sufficient warrant." Give examples to show what the principle means.

> *Suppose that your teammate decides to bash you with a baseball bat. You are entitled to*

> *interfere with your teammate's freedom of movement in order to protect yourself, or you may call in the police to protect you, by (say) taking away the bat or handcuffing the teammate to a fence. This is an example of a case in which people may interfere with another's freedom because their own safety is threatened.*
>
> *Suppose, however, that you decide to ride a motorcycle without a helmet, a particularly stupid and dangerous decision. Suppose also that riding without a helmet doesn't risk harming anyone but you, although it does pose a substantial risk to your skull. According to Mill, the State of Oregon 's police force may not interfere with your decision, even for your own good. This is a case in which a person's own good does not justify interference.*

The two examples are "on point," that is, each is relevant and illustrative of a specific part of Mill's principle. The examples are instructive in that they expand on details of the principle. The examples do demonstrate an understanding of a general principle. That handcuffing a teammate to a fence is an instance of "interfering with the liberty or action" of a person really shows an understanding of what Mill means by that phrase. Of course, whether any understanding is the strongest interpretation is a matter open to discussion. Yet when students ably demonstrate how they understand a claim or principle, there is value in their work.

Using Examples

In philosophy, using an example well involves three steps:

1. State the point.
2. Give an example that illustrates the point (following the evaluative criteria above.)

3. Explain. Say precisely what it is in the example that you think well illustrates the point. Say how the example and the point are connected.

Consider an instance from an essay that sets out to use an example but does not take the third step.

> *A common view about human nature has it that people are essentially self-interested; that is, everything we do is motivated to gain some benefit for ourselves. This view is commonly known as Philosophical Egoism. I disagree with this view. Some things that people do are not done in order to receive a benefit at all. Take for example, procrastination. Obviously we do not always act in our own self-interest. So Philosophical Egoism is wrong.*

An example of a behavior that is claimed to be not self-interested is given here, procrastination. But the lack of explanation makes the example unclear and unconnected from the point. As writers, we cannot expect that our readers will understand what we do not tell them. The author of the above proceeds as if every reader will just get the relevance of the example. Compare this to an instance that does provide a thoughtful explanation of the example.

> *A common view about human nature has it that people are essentially self interested; that is, everything we do is motivated to gain some benefit for ourselves. This view is commonly known as Philosophical Egoism. I disagree with this view. Some things that people do are not done in order to receive a benefit at all. In fact, I think a strong tendency in people is to act in ways precisely designed to do ourselves harm. For example, most of us have some experience with procrastination. Suppose Shelly has a reading assignment due in her history class. She sits down to get started and suddenly decides that her desk is too messy. So she sets about cleaning up the mess. Next come the desk drawers with papers, bills, letters, and who*

knows what to be sorted out for re-filing or the trash. Soon the trash can needs to be taken out. This reminds Shelly that tomorrow is trash day, so she gets busy sorting out the recycling and getting the trash in order. This leads to cleaning the kitchen, bedroom, and living room. At last when all this is done, it is late and Shelly is tired and so gives herself a break with a glass of white wine and Favorite TV show that just happens to be starting just now. Three hours later, Shelly is ready for bed. With a guilty glance at the history text, she sighs, "Guess I'll just have to get up early to do it "

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In this example, Shelly avoids reading the history text by a complex strategy of procrastination. The main thing to notice is this. Shelly did not clean up the house because she enjoyed doing so. In fact it is clear that Shelly does not find cleaning up enjoyable at all. Rather it is part of a pattern of procrastination. She replaced one unpleasant activity with another --- with the net result being of negative value to her. Shelly wants to do well in the course and so wants to keep up on the readings (even though she finds them unpleasant to read) Shelly's procrastination did not benefit her and was not designed to. The sole purpose of the procrastinating behavior was to avoid reading the text which she knows is not in her best interest. Shelly acted in a way that was designed to act against her interest. I think this happens often to people in a variety of ways. Our propensity to self-sabotage (against one 's own self-interest) is as complex and strong as is our selfish and self-interested behavior.

This author focuses sharply on the details of procrastination that make it a valuable example here. As a result, this use of example stands as a well- reasoned position. The effective use of examples brings power to writing, but only

if the author makes the effort to show how the example is to be understood.

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Applying Theory to Practice

Philosophy does not occur in a vacuum. It examines problems and issues encountered in everyday experience. Philosophers develop models or theories to address these perplexities of life. A theory presents generalizations for the purpose of clarification, criticism, explanation, justification or decision making. The question of whether a given philosophical theory is complete or adequate can be resolved by the skill of testing hypotheses (see next section). The skill of "application" is required when a theory is connected to real life situations. The application of theory to practice is a fundamental way by which philosophical ideas matter in the practical world.

Purpose

The purpose of applying theory to practice is to come to some decision about what to believe or do in a real-life situation, a decision that is based on careful thought about the concepts that underlie the practice.

Criteria of Evaluation

A successful application of theory to practice has these characteristics:

1. It carefully identifies and isolates a problem to be addressed.

2. It shows a clear understanding of the theory that is being applied to the practical situation.

3. It pays careful attention to the details of the situation, and asks questions about important facts that are not known.

4. It comes to some conclusion about what to do or believe, a conclusion that can be supported by the theory.

5. The decision is, itself, practical; that is, it can be implemented given the circumstances of the situation.

Example

At Oregon State University, students are required to dissect live rabbits as part of an animal physiology lab.

A student objected to the practice, saying that to engage in the dissection violated her moral beliefs against inflicting pain on innocent beings.

Descartes's theory of animal minds posits that animals have no consciousness. They are automatons whose bodies work like clocks. They have no capacity for feeling pain or suffering.

Given this theory, the student's objection has no force. We might agree that it is wrong to inflict suffering, but, on Descartes' view, the rabbits will not experience pain, and so there is no ground for objection. The student will need to put forward an alternative theory of animal consciousness to make her argument work. Until she does that, the dissections should go forward.

See also Case Studies, p. 71; Analyzing Arguments, p. 21; Affirmation Essays, p. 55; and Refutations, p.60.

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Testing Hypotheses

Purpose

Hypothetical reasoning typically comes into play in order to solve a problem. We want to explain something, or to successfully predict what will happen. Hypothetical reasoning can sometimes give us a good explanation, and the ability to successfully predict what is going to happen. This kind of reasoning (the hypothetical-deductive method) is a useful tool in philosophy.

Method

Hypothetical reasoning involves deriving and testing the consequences of some supposition -- that is, a claim supposed to be true for the purposes of the inquiry. The basic idea is to test the truth of the supposition by seeing whether consequences which follow it turn out to be true or false.

In order to employ this method of reasoning the consequences must follow from the hypothesis and they must be testable. This means there must be some way to determine that the consequences are either true or false. This requires that the consequences be clear, and specific. (Note the differences between "The Martians will land somewhere, some time." and "The Martians will land in the middle of the Corvallis court house lawn at 2:00 P.M. on Monday, December 4, 1995." One reason for carrying out experiments in science is to try to determine if the predictions of a particular hypothesis are confirmed or not. Experiment, in this case, is a form of hypothesis testing.

If the consequences of the supposition turn out to be false, then the supposition itself must be either false or incomplete. If the consequences turn out to be true we

have a weak confirmation of the truth of the hypothesis being tested.

Criteria of Evaluation

You must be able to:

- Distinguish a hypothesis from its consequences.
- Distinguish which consequences are predicted by several hypotheses and which consequences are unique to a single hypothesis.
- Show that consequences which are determinate and specific enough to be tested in some way really follow from the hypothesis being tested.
- Find ways to test those consequences.

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Example

We will take a philosophical theory like Act Utilitarianism and treat it as an hypothesis. Act Utilitarianism claims that one's acts are right if they produce the greatest good for the greatest number of people. So, we are going to apply this theory to a particular act. The hypothesis predicts that if the act is one done for the greatest good of the greatest number of people we will count it as right.

> *Albert, young, healthy, happy and innocent, has checked into the hospital for a routine though extensive check up. Down in the E.R., a whole convoy of ambulances arrive with a series of accident victims from a giant freeway pile up. It turns out that many of the victims could be saved by the replacement of a single organ. Unfortunately none of these organs are available. The E.R. doctor, as it turns out, is an Act Utilitarian, and he thinks of Albert. He thinks, "I could go upstairs and cut up Albert and give his healthy organs to a number of these accident victims. If I do cut Albert up, one will die and (if all goes well) six will live." So*

> *cutting Albert up conforms to the principle of the greatest good for the greatest number. The E.R. doctor is deriving consequences for this particular case from the theory or hypothesis of Act Utilitarianism. Now, if you are convinced (as almost all of us are) that were the doctor to go up and cut up Albert, he would be committing a murder, and hold the judgement that this is wrong act; there is something wrong with the theory which says that to act morally is to do whatever act causes the greatest good for the greatest number.*

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The point is to illustrate how one can refute a philosophical theory by considering the consequences which follow from it. To see this, just consider what you would say about the theory if the doctor's reasoning turned out to be exactly right -- cutting up Albert does produce the greatest good for the greatest number. You would have to say that this theory treats murder in this case as moral. But we are convinced that killing Albert is murder, and that murder, particularly in this case, is immoral. So the theory is giving the wrong decision in this case. So, the theory must be false or in need of serious modification.

Here is another, more extended example.

THE DEBT OF JUSTICE

In The Republic *a dialogue by Plato, Socrates begins a discussion with several people at a party about what they believe "justice" is. He gets several answers, the first of which comes from the party host, Cephalus. Cephalus gives a long answer citing his honesty and wise management of money. Socrates interprets this answer to mean that justice is "to speak the truth and to pay your debts." That is, if you are honest in dealing with others and pay back what you owe, then you are a just person. Cephalus agrees that this*

is his meaning.

Socrates rejects this theory, arguing that speaking the truth and repaying debts cannot be all there is to justice. I agree, There are certainly situations in which honesty in word and deed are not enough to make you a just person.

Consider, for example, the slave owners of the American South in the 19th century. Many of these may have dealt with one another honorably in business and other matters. Some of them may have been entirely truthful and scrupulous in repaying all debts. Such a person may think, according to Cephalus' theory of justice that they were very just indeed. But they were also slave owners. They denied millions of people the most basic rights a human has. They destroyed families by selling off children as objects of profit. Slavery is an entirely unjust institution. It harms the slave in innumerable ways, physically, morally and spiritually. No human being with a sense of self-worth, including the slave owners, would choose to live as a southern plantation slave. By forcibly subjecting people to a condition of living they themselves would not choose, the slave owners show the deep injustice in their characters. No amount of truth telling or debt repaying can change that. So I conclude that the slave owners were unjust even if they satisfied the conditions of Cephalus' theory.

To emphasize the point that honesty alone cannot guarantee justice, consider the case of Huckleberry Finn *by Mark Twain. The book's main character, a boy named Huck, runs away from home with an escaped slave, Jim. While floating down the Mississippi river on a raft, a group of men pass by in a boat and call out to Huck, "Is there anyone else on board?" they ask. Huck realizes that if he answers truthfully, they will capture Jim and return him to slavery. His conscience bothers him, though, for he realizes that under the law Jim is another person's property. If he were to follow Cephalus' theory of justice, he would tell the truth and return the property to its owner. But Huck does not. He lies and says that Jim is a white man. The boat goes on its way searching for other escaped slaves.*

In this case it is clear that following Cephalus' theory would

not result in justice. It would only return Jim to an unjust situation, slavery. According to that theory we will have to say that Huck is unjust. He lies and fails to return property. But in reading this story, that is not the judgement it is natural to make. It seems clear that Huck has done the right thing. He prevented an injustice. As Socrates points out, Cephalus is wrong. Justice is not simply truth telling and debt-repaying.

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Other On-line Resources

For a general account of hypothetical reasoning you can visit the Hypothetical Reasoning section of Phl. 201 Interquest Odyssey.

For an additional example of the application of this method to interpreting a central and important concept in a classic philosophy text, you can visit Socratic Wisdom: an exercise in interpretation.

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Self-Discovery Writing

Self-discovery writing occurs when a writer treats herself or himself as the subject of inquiry.

Purpose

The purpose of this form of writing is to develop new insights into oneself. These insights may involve attempts to identify, clarify, connect and account for beliefs. Successful self-discovery writing may also result in new questions about oneself. Sometimes simply recognizing that your own beliefs raise difficulties that were not apparent is a sign of intellectual progress. Earnest self-reflection is among the most difficult of philosophical tasks, hence this form of writing is very demanding. Key to successful self-discovery is mastery of the craft of forming meaningful questions.

Criteria of Evaluation

At a basic and novice level, self-discovery writing is intended to increase an individual's self-awareness. A successful effort will demonstrate in writing the students' attempts to identify their own beliefs, discern assumptions underlying those beliefs, and pose substantive questions to themselves. A common response to such writing is "I never thought about this before," and the students who demonstrate that they are now thinking about it have satisfied a basic aim. Note that an earnest effort to discover why I hold a certain belief need not result in a defense of it. Moreover, novice self-discovery writers may not have an explicit recognition of the process they are participating in. Assignments of this sort will be instructor-directed and connected to specific course topics.

Intermediate-level self-discovery writing involves a

sustained effort to identify and explore successive levels of one's own beliefs. The writer is able to show how different beliefs are connected and draw some conclusions from that observation. Whereas novice writers may satisfy the task by simply performing the process of self-reflection, the intermediate writer is expected to draw conclusions from this process as well.

The advanced self-discovery writer provides a sustained path of self examination. Themes will be self-consciously developed with recognition of the reflective process. Advanced self-discovery writing provides readers with explicit direction as to the purpose of the writing. Attention is paid to the analysis of key concepts and arguments. Hypothetical alternatives are explored and evaluated. Assignments may be prompted by course topics and texts, but the basic problem is produced by the writer.

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Example

The Maclaren River

It was eleven o'clock at night in Alaska, toward the end of June. The sun was in my eyes and the sky was an enormous bronze globe that arched hard and high above my head.

I had to hold myself together because the clarity of the air made me buoyant and if I hadn't been careful, my arms would have risen to the sky in exultation, and all the air would have left my lungs, and maybe I would have caught my breath and bounded toward the beauty like a dog wagging its whole backside with recognition and joy. But the truth is, I'm always a little bit careful, holding something in reserve, remembering from college psychology that hypersensitivity to one's surroundings can be a sign of mental abnormality.

I obviously have mixed feelings about this. Sometimes, on dark February mornings in town, when I can hardly force

myself to get dressed for work, I worry about that warning from college psychology. But most of the time it makes me angry. I think, fine: if it's abnormal for a person 's emotions to be tossed around by the weather, then I'll be abnormal. I'll cry at breakfast on the rainiest days, cry so hard I can't chew, and on the first warm day of spring I will drive all over town with the windows open, singing along with the Beach Boys. Who's to say that's not all right? Who's to say that the healthiest people aren't the ones who are open to the landscape, responsive to the weather, in tune? I think it's good to change with the seasons and resonate with atmospheric pressure, deep and dark, like a cello. I think the most pitiful person on earth is the one who wrote the textbook on normality, the poor climate controlled soul who thinks mental health can be disconnected from the wind.

Excerpted from Kathleen Dean Moore, *Riverwalking* (NY: Lyons and Burford, 1995).

See also Comparing and Contrasting, p. 25.; Personal Essays, p. 49; Defining Concepts, p. 17.

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CLASS JOURNALS

Journals have a long and influential tradition in philosophical writing, as illustrated by the writings of the Stoic philosopher Marcus Aurelius, the Christian theologian Augustine, and the Danish existentialist Soren Kierkegaard. In keeping with this tradition, in some classes you may be asked to compile a class journal. A journal is a method of thinking out loud or talking to yourself through writing. Entries express what the student has noticed, felt, thought, and experienced in a journey of self-discovery. Entries also can carry a student deeper into the reading, to a more sophisticated understanding. Journal writing may encompass an entire course, the reading of a text, or performing a specific course activity.

Purpose

A journal can be a way to:

- Reflect on new ideas or insights that you have.
- Elaborate on some aspects of the course content or class discussion.
- Engage in a critique of reading and conversation about reading assignments.
- Integrate your education by making connections between your courses, and between your course and your lived experience.
- Express aesthetic or artistic impressions of the course content.
- Formulate questions about the reading.
- Analyze the central argument in the reading.

Criteria of Evaluation

For some journals, the central question an evaluator will ask is whether or not the journal responds seriously to the specific assignment. Does the journal

entry, for example, elaborate on an aspect of the course content? However, journal assignments that require very subjective and personal impressions and observations pose special difficulties for evaluation. The instructor should make clear to you in advance the minimal requirements for the journal and criteria for an "A" journal (see following example).

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JOURNAL EVALUATION

An "A" Journal	A "C" Journal	An "F" Journal
.	**COMMITMENT**	.
Regular and frequent entries that go beyond required reading responses. Entries are provocative, lively, and diverse. Entries vary widely in length, but regularly go on for some time to reflect and acommodate more extended thought.	Regular entries limited to required reading responses. Entries are sometimes lively and spirited, sometimes flat. Entries occasionally lengthy and complicated, but often brief and sketchy.	Entries irregular, with noticeable time gaps, and do not meet required reading responses. Entries bunch up, with perhaps 2-3 in one week, and then no more for 10 days. Entries usually brief and fragmentary.
.	**AMBITION**	.

Entries regularly try to pose questions that engage the writer but for which the writer has no ready answer. Entries willing to speculate and try to make connections between this course and other courses. Entries draw connections between course material and the writer's lived expenence.	Some entries willing to pose questions or to speculate. Most entries discuss conclusions and assumptions rather than question them. Few entries make connections outside the course; some entnes may include the writer's lived experience.	Entries seem cursory, the result of a class duty rather than interest. Minimal effort to speculate or to reach for more than obvious conclusions. Minimal attempt to make connections to other courses or life outside the classroom.
.	**ENGAGEMENT**	.
Entries indicate the writer has re-read earlier entries in order to comment on them, contradict them, or find some order to them. The journal as become a vehicle of self-discovery for the writer. Over time, the journal evolves set of questions, issues, or concerns specific to the writer, and specific entries identify and explore these issues.	Entries show the writer has occasionally re-read earlier entries or returned to earlier questions and issues. Overall, the journal gives only an intermittent sense of progress or deepening understanding.	Minimal evidence that the writer has re-read earlier entries. Little or no sense of progress or deepening understanding. The writer does not engage in reflection beyond the immediate entry.

Example

Below is an example of an entry in a student journal. The entry responds to a poem read in preparation for a class.

This poem caused me to reflect again on that aspect of aging that involves the loss of a significant other. It seems to me to be one of life's greatest ironies that so much of our life focuses onfinding the right person to partner with, only to ultimately end up being alone. In some ways, it seems like the grandest sort of punishment for original sin.

This thought offers many philosophical points of departure, almost too many to choose from. One would be the question of whether we really are meant to be monogamous creatures to begin with: If the purpose of pairing is for procreation, why be monogamous ? Some would argue that a stable family structure with one mother and one father provides the most stable environment within which to raise children, but clearly this is not an absolute necessity. A variety of tribal archetypes could be setforth, with both animal and human models. Surely, there has to be more to it than that.

Do we strive for monogamous relationships because we believe that they are the foundation of a stable, moral culture? This type of arrangement seems to be advocated by the majority of world religions, but why? Furthermore, do monogamous relationships serve to stabilize society, or do they put undue stress on individuals, while society as a whole is permitted to be less responsible for all of its members? Again, there must be more to it than that.

Is partnering about lifelong companionship ? For me, this wonderful concept falls apart when it comes to the loss of your spouse after howevermany-wonderful-years. Are the benefits worth the pain ? Perhaps so. But what about those that love and lose multiple times ? There are those who are never able to enter another committed relationship after the loss of one spouse--the thought of getting that close to someone and then losing them

again is simply too much.

I am banking upon the belief that, however painful, the loss of my significant other will be outweighed by the years of pleasure gained. In the night, alone, however, I occasionally wonder if that thought will be enough to console me.

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See also Compare and Contrast, p. 25; Applying Theory to Practice, p. 31; Identifying a Philosophical Problem, p. 13; Self-discovery Writing, p. 39; and Analyzing Arguments, p. 21.

Page 45: Summaries

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Summaries

The most important feature of a summary is that it is short, almost always fewer than 250 words. It is a piece of writing about another piece of writing. Its purpose is to condense a long piece of writing into a concise summation of its meaning. There are (at least) two different types of summary to be used for different purposes and in different contexts--the argument summary and the outline.

Argument Summaries

An argument summary if a concise statement of the main points in an argumentative passage. It leaves out all the extraneous material that does not advance the argument, organizes the information for clarity, and paraphrases the language used by the author. Where the original argumentative passage may have been wandering, thick, or abstruse, the argument summary is clear and directly to the point. It reports--without criticism--the claim advanced in the argument and the reasons that back it up. That is all.

The first step in writing an argument summary is to analyze the argument, identifying the conclusion and the premises. Then, put the argument back together, this time clearly and succinctly: First, report the claim that is defended. Use phrases like "the author argues that . . . " to label the statement's role in the argument. Then, one by one, report the reasons offered in defense of the claim and any essential supporting information. Be sure to frame each claim and each reason with sign posting phrases ("the reason is that," "because," "To support this claim, she notes that . . .") that clearly identify the role each statement plays in the argument as a whole.

Purpose

The purpose of an argument summary is to clarify and communicate the central argument in a piece of argumentative or persuasive prose.

Criteria of Evaluation

A good argument summary-

1. Is an accurate representation of the original argument.
2. Clearly states the essential content of the argument.
3. Makes the form of the argument clear.
4. Omits all extraneous material.

Example

This example provides an argument summary for the position paper, "Should Relatively Affluent People Help the Poor?" That paper can be found on page 68 of this manual.

*In the position paper, "Should Relatively Affluent People Help the Poor?" the **author argues** that the rich of the world have a moral obligation to give a portion of their wealth to help people who are living in absolute poverty. **He refutes the claim** that helping the poor would only create more misery through overpopulation, pointing out that aid to the poor could include the sorts of aid that would encourage population control. **In support of his central claim, the author makes two primary arguments. The first is based on the premise that** people, no matter how poor, have a right to a standard of living at least equal to that of animals. **The second is based on his view that** it is morally wrong to allow people to die, when saving their lives is easily within the means of the rich.*

Outlining

An outline is a structural skeleton of the main points of the material as they appear in *chronological*, rather than *logical*, order.

Purpose

An outline displays, in structural form, an article's major point(s) and the details that support those points. It enables the reader to distinguish clearly between more and less important ideas.

An outline is often preparatory to analyzing an argument, or writing position papers, research papers, and many other forms of writing.

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Method

To outline, first preview the article. If there are headings supplied, note them. Then, read the article. Note how each section relates to the headings. If there are no headings, read for content and to get a sense of the major divisions in the article.

Now, locate the thesis statement. It announces what is being argued in the article. Write it down at the top of a page.

Take your notes from reading the article and see how the ideas you jotted down relate to the thesis. Is paragraph A defending the thesis? Criticizing it? Pointing out difficulties in the thesis? This process should give you a rough idea of the article's major divisions.

Now, choose the style of outline. A topic outline uses a noun or noun phrase for each heading. A sentence outline uses one sentence for each. A paragraph or section outline

gives only a summary sentence of each paragraph or section.

The amount of information contained in an outline will be shaped by the purpose for making the outline. For instance, if the article is recommended rather than required, a summary that indicates major topics (as phrases, sentences or summary sentences) may be all that is needed. After finishing, check your work. Above all, an outline should follow the structure given in the essay.

Example

The research paper reproduced in this handbook (see p. 82) is an adjudication of competing accounts of human nature offered by three Chinese philosophers. The outline below is a sentence outline of moderate detail.

IS HUMAN NATURE GOOD OR EVIL?: AN ANCIENT CHINESE DEBATE

Thesis: An examination of competing accounts of human nature offered by Kao Tzu, Mencius and Hsün Tzu shows Kao Tzu's to be the most reasonable.

I. *A specific debate about human nature is located in its philosophical and historical context.*

II. *The debate between Kao Tzu and Mencius is presented.*
    A. *Kao Tzu argues human nature is neutral, and Mencius criticizes this.*
    B. *Mencius argues humanity has a natural potential to become righteous.*
        1. *People are not born with feelings of righteousness.*
        2. *People do not become righteous solely through external pressures.*

III. *Given his account of human nature, Mencius must*

explain why evil people exist.
   A. *Mencius does have an explanation.*
   B. *The explanation is not entirely satisfactory as it does not address the origin of evil.*

IV. *Hsün Tzu argues human nature is inherently evil.*
   A. *Hsün Tzu disagrees with Mencius' definition of the 'nature' of humanity.*
   B. *Hsün Tzu argues that the potential goodness does not entail inherent goodness.*

V. *Given his account of human nature, Hsün Tzu must explain the origin of good people, or sages.*
   A. *He offers an account.*
   B. *The account is unsatisfactory because it treats human goodness as an artifact.*

VI. *Kao Tzu's view of human nature as neutral emerges as the most reasonable.*

Note how the outline here differs from an argument analysis (see p. 21). The outline simply reproduces the order of ideas in the essay; an analysis orders those ideas as claims, premises, evidence and conclusions.

Criteria of Evaluation

A good outline shows the development of the topic as it occurs in the article or paper. It shows the relative importance of ideas and the relationship among these ideas.

In addition, a good outline:

1. uses a consistent method for numbering and identifying major headings;
2. is logical, clear and consistent. There are no single headings or subheadings. For every 1, there is a 11; for every A, there is a B; etc.;
3. does not use vague headings such as "Introduction," "Body," "Conclusion";
4. uses parallel grammatical construction for all items.

This is perhaps most important in topic outlines, but it is also important in sentence and paragraph outlines. Sentences with similar style help display the relationship among the items in the outline.

See also Analyzing Arguments, p. 21; Position Papers, p. 64, and Research Paper, p.81.

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Personal Essays

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In a personal essay, the writer's voice and the writer's experiences are at the center of the narrative. Ideas unfold from details, often the details of personal experience.

The personal essay can be distinguished from the position paper in several ways. Unlike a position paper, which argues for a particular set of claims, the essay is an exploration, a search for meaning. While personal essays are often persuasive, they do not persuade through argument. The essay has an informal tone and often an informal organization, unlike the position paper. Essays are often written in the first person and begin with the author's experiences. And, while a personal essay may grow out of a journal entry, it is more fully developed, more coherent, and more focussed and deliberate than a journal entry. It is a finished product.

One of the most common forms of the personal essay is a two-part sequence. First, tell a story or describe a scene from your own personal memories and experiences. Second, mine that experience for meaning: reflect on why it was important, what it meant for you, what wider meaning it might have, how that meaning might connect to larger themes.

Purpose

The purpose of a personal essay is to explore the meaning of experience, to connect ideas to one's personal life and to connect one's personal life to ideas--to test ideas against personal experience. Finally, the purpose of a personal essay is to write a piece that is a pleasure to read.

Criteria of Evaluation

1. Does the piece show an understanding of the form of the personal essay?

2. Does it draw on personal experience?
3. Does it find meaning in the personal experience?
4. Is it a pleasure to read?
5. Is it polished, finished, perfect in grammar and spelling?

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Example

BEAUTY

I was recently walking with my grandfather through the timbered land on which he was born and has lived all of his life. There are thick, untouched acres, and pieces that have been logged and burned back at different intervals over the last hundred years. Dispersed within the Douglasfirs and thick underbrush are a variety of maples and other broad-leafed trees that are turning with the season and beginning to d rop their leaves. Their bright oranges and reds blend and contrast wonderfully with the deep greens and browns of the timber. My grandfather knows every tree on his land, and has a story to tell about most of them. Some of his tales date back to the thirties, when he was a young son in a poor homesteading family gathering wild black walnutsforfood. To hear the good and bad details of his life with a lifetime of them all around me and completely natural is one of the most beautiful things I know.

A few years ago a good friend of mine made a pastel sketch for me of many blended images and colors on a big sheet of blue drawing paper. She did it over two different evenings while we were gathered with a small group of friends to be together afew more times before she moved across the country, and the rest of us went our separate ways, back to school or work. She doesn't claim to be any sort of an artist, and the different images she blended together with her colored chalk have always seemed completely random to me. And yet they are also completely perfect. She gave the drawing to me on the last night our group of friends was together, and the next day we all went our separate ways. I immediately bought an expensive frame for it and it has decorated my closest wall ever since. It is my most beautiful possession.

Both of these examples, which are thefirst two examples that came to me of

things that are very beautiful, involve objects or places that are directly connected to my personal relationships. This suggests that what l find the most beautiful are things that involve or in some way represent positive emotions about people. I could easily name a dozen things that I consider to be very beautiful, but that carry no personal or emotional attachmentfor me. But whether it would be the biggest, most colorful stand of trees in the world, or the Mona Lisa, it wouldn't, in my opinion, be anywhere near as beautiful as either of the examples I have given.

My experiences not only represent an emotional attachment for me, which I have found beauty in, but I think these are two experiences which work along with many others to make up the character of my personality. Because of this, there are not many things that are more valuable to me than experiences of beauty such as these.

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My example, which represent my strongest feelings of beauty, is based on personal experience and therefore the beauty is seen from within me and is not contained in the place or object by itself Certainly most people who saw my friend 's drawing placed next to the Mona Lisa would not pick mine as the more beautiful. My examples of beauty don't conform with any of the philosophers we have studied in class because they all define beauty objectively so that by their definitions the same beauty can be experienced by anyone. But I would like to see Hutcheson compare a work of renaissance art that contains perfect uniformity and variety with afinger-painting that his eight year old daughter made for him on his birthday, and tell me that thefirst is more beautiful to him than the second

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Page 51: Assertion Essays

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Assertion Essays ("I Believe")

An assertion essay is a way to convey some of your beliefs to other people. Another way is to simply state those beliefs and leave it at that. Yet, this other way leaves out the deepest (and most interesting) aspects of your thought. To simply make a statement and leave it at that does not tell anyone what role that belief has in your personality, how that belief is connected to the rest of your thinking, or how important a belief it is to you. Mere statements of belief or opinion give us little more than isolated claims that may belong to anyone. The deeper issue is how your beliefs are parts of your identity. The assertion essay provides a format for expressing your belief(s) and showing how your belief(s) belong to you as a unique individual.

Purpose

The purpose of an assertion essay is to convey your belief(s) in a way that shows how your thinking extends from your identity. To effectively convey what you think to others, you must make an effort to help the reader understand what you mean by your belief statement. A belief statement does little to convey your thought unless you work to make it clear. This will involve analysis of the main words you use to state your belief and, perhaps, use of examples to show how your statement may be applied in reality.

Equally important is to provide your reasoning for a belief. Explaining the support and evidence you have in mind in making a belief statement shows others how that statement fits into your system of beliefs. You set out to show that your belief statement is not an arbitrary or isolated thought, but is connected with your thinking overall. That is what presenting your reasoning for a belief provides.

Another way to show that your beliefs are those held by a whole, intelligent person (you) is to draw out some of the consequences of your beliefs. They may be practical consequences that show up in your action and choices. They

may be logical consequences that imply other beliefs. Being able to articulate some of the consequences of your belief(s) shows that you maintain a consistency characteristic of a thoughtful person.

If you meet these objectives in writing, then you will have accomplished the purpose of the assertion essay. Let's consider next how to do this.

Method

An assertion essay consists of four parts. These parts need not be limited to single paragraphs (as the example below shows). Rather, they are objectives you seek to accomplish throughout the essay. Keeping these parts separate gives your essay an orderly and intentional design, all the better for your reader. Here are some expanded explanations of the four parts.

> l) Your Title: The title of an essay is the first thing a reader sees. It may be a factor in whether they choose to read it at all. A thoughtful, informative title tells the reader something about you as a writer and something about your topic as well. The assertion essay is an extension of your self. Unless you intend to project yourself as an uninteresting and unimaginative person, work to give your essay an interesting and imaginative title.
>
> 2) Your Belief: Here you state directly what it is that you are writing about and what view(s) you wish to promote. An important part of this section is making clear how it is that your thesis comes up. That is, why is this important and why should anyone else care to read more? This section is often the opening paragraph, though it may take more than one paragraph to do the job depending on the complexity of your thesis.
>
> 3) Your Reasoning: Here you provide reasons, arguments, and evidence that support your thesis. A well thought out support section will give strength to the major claims you make. To accomplish this you need to understand what reasoning, argument, and evidence are in the study of philosophy.

4) Some Consequences: Your beliefs have consequences. Part of the task of philosophy is determining what those are. The consequences may be other claims that are implied or they may be actions that follow from the beliefs. In either case we often look to the criterion of consistency to evaluate the strength of one's beliefs. If, for instance, one professes certain beliefs but is unwilling to accept the consequences of those beliefs we are apt to think there is some error in the person's thinking (i.e. it is inconsistent). In this part of the assertion essay, you seek to make connections between the beliefs you are presenting and supporting by drawing out some significant consequences they may have.

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Criteria of Evaluation

An assertion essay is judged by the degree to which it accomplishes the goals set for its parts. An essay that expresses your genuine belief(s), gives adequate explanation of them, gives strong reasoning for them, and draws plausible consequences from them is likely a very successful effort. The following example, "On Purpose," succeeds in these ways.

Clarity: The author explains the key concept of "purpose" in the second paragraph. Without this explanation, this notion would remain vague.

Reasoning: The author gives two arguments (two forms of reasoning) for the main claim. One has to do with magnitudes of space, the other with magnitudes of time. We may agree with these arguments or not, but the essay's success consists in the well thought out support given.

Consequences: The author ends the essay with observations on the consequences that the belief "life has no ultimate purpose" may have for the way one lives and thinks. Some of these consequences are very practical. They point out how one may go

on to view the world and events when maintaining such a belief.

Incomplete explanations, weak arguments, and implausible consequences are grounds for criticism of such an essay. This is not a matter of simple disagreement. We can disagree with an author's reasoning while admitting that the arguments are well made and powerful. The possibility that we may respect another person's expression of their beliefs, even though we disagree with them, is what makes the assertion essay so powerful a form of writing.

Example

ON PURPOSE

My philosophical belief-system is based on the answer to a single question: " Is there an ultimate purpose to life ?" My answer to this is "no. " This answer is upsetting to many people, since they suppose this means that life is not worth living. While I agree that life does not have an absolute worth, that does not mean we should stop living or shuffle along in endless depression. When I say that life has no ultimate purpose I mean that when you consider the extent of the universe as a whole, nothing that we do has any meaningful impact in the end.

Something that has no significant impact is of negligible value. For example, consider the significance of tossing a lighted match into the sun. The effect would be negligible-practically zero. We may say that there is no real purpose in tossing a lighted match into the sun, because doing so would make no difference at all. Well, in relation to the vastness 53 of the universe, our actions have even less practical value than the match. In contrast to the universe, our lives mean nothing. That is what I mean in saying that "life has no ultimate purpose. "

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I have two basic reasons for this position: the vastness of space and the vastness of time. Space is incomprehensibly large. Our sun is a relatively small star in a remote solar system in a small galaxy which appears as a mere speck in the universe as a whole. On the scale of the whole universe, the size of a human being is equivalent to the size of a single atom. From our perspective, the actions we perform seem large and consequential. For

example, when a baseball player hits a home run with three players on base we consider it a big deal. But at the very best we are talking about several hundred yards here. Not miles, or millions of miles, or light-years. From the perspective of the universe which spans billions of light-years, a few hundred yards might as well be less than an inch. It is only because of our scale that we regard our actions as having any magnitude at all. But compared to the vastness of space, nothing we do adds up to any significant measure whatever.

The situation is even more apparent when considering the infinity of time. A human being currently lives to be about 80 years old on the average. But the earth itself is billions of years old Even by earthly standards an individual life is a mereflash. All human history itself is an unnoticeable blip in the vast sea of time. Most of us realize that 100 years from now, what we do today will make no difference one way or the other. Well, one billion years from now when the sun explodes, taking out most of the galaxy, none of human history will make a bit of difference either.

In the Amazon jungle there was a species of fly with eggs that hatched only once each year. In a single day, all of the eggs would hatch, the flies would mate, lay new eggs, and die. Each fly's life lasted less than 24 hours, just enough time to mate and lay new eggs. Now we might say that these flies do have a purpose in life, namely to mate and propagate the species. But as it turned out the swamp where thefly eggs lay dormant was drained and paved over to make a parking lot for a shopping mall. The species of fly is now extinct. The only possible purpose of any individualfly's life is now non-existent. Essentially it turned out that there was no ultimate purpose for the life of afly. It is the same for us. The duration and extent of our lives in relation to the vast expanse of time and space is much less than the life of a twenty-four hourfly in relation to us.

So what are we to do with this knowledge of no ultimate purpose? Some people ma find this a reason for despair and resignation. But that is not a necessary consequence of my view at all. Giving up on life has no more value that any other course of action. We might as well keep living and enjoy what we have. Perhaps with a more realistic sense of our insignificance, we will be less apt to struggle with life and other people. One of the great sources of suffering and harm in our world is pride. People think they are so important

that they may control the lives of others. But we are not so important as we think. Our pride and self-centeredness are based on an illusion, that what we do with our lives contributes to the ultimate purpose of the universe. Realizing ourfinal purposelessness is a way to lose that pride and be more content.

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One last point. In saying that there is no ultimate purpose to life, I am not saying that we do not have any purposes and goals in our lives. Of course we have goals like getting good grades, having a decent job, enjoying time with fnends, pursuing a dream, and so on. These are all purposeful activities. But their purpose exists only in relation to our limited lives in time and space. An ultimate purpose must be something much greater than that. It must be something that makes a difference to the universe as a whole. While the lack of an ultimate purpose does not take away the limited purposes and goals we have, neither should we mistake our individual aspirations for a universal value.

Jon Dorbolo.

See also Self-discovery Writing, p. 39 and Defining, p. 17

Page 55: Affirmation Essays

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Affirmation Essays ("I Agree")

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An affirmation essay is a format for writing about another author's ideas. Some people picture philosophy entirely as a process of disagreement and refutation. Yet there are times (one hopes) when you find in a philosopher's work ideas close to your own. Perhaps you will even be so impressed with a philosopher's reasoning that you find your views changing accordingly. Your points of agreement with the authors you read can make an excellent basis for an essay.

Purpose

The purpose of an affirmation essay is for you to work with another author's point or idea that you have some agreement with, explain that idea, explain the author's reasoning, provide your reasons for agreement, and describe the significance of this point to your life and thought.

It is very difficult to write about another person's work as a whole, especially with the complex works of great philosophers. It helps to start with a distinct point (or idea) taken from the author's work. The point you choose might be directly stated by the author or it might be unstated but implied. Either way, your task is to provide an interpretation of what the author says in order to show how you get that point (idea) from it.

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Method

There are five parts to an affirmation essay:

1) Identification and description of the essay topic.
2) Interpretation of the author's point.

3) Description and explanation of the author's support.
4) Description and explanation of your support.
5) The significance of the point.

STEP l: Choose a point or idea from an author's work that you can agree with and support. State and reference the point (idea) you are writing about. Describe the approach you are going to take in your essay. '

STEP 2: Give your interpretation of the author's point and related claims. You must explain:

a. what the relevant claims and terms mean,
b. how they fit into the author's work (i.e. the context of the claim).

STEP 3: Describe and explain the author's support for the point as found in the text (if the author does not support the point with reasons, say so).

STEP 4: Give and explain your own reasons in support of the point. You may or may not agree with the point entirely. If not, support that part you do agree with and explain what you don't agree with and why.

STEP 5: State and explain what significance you find the points (ideas) you have written about have for your beliefs and the beliefs of other people.

Criteria of Evaluation

The strength of an affirmation essay is judged by the degree to which it accomplishes the goals set for its parts. An essay that singles out an author's point, interprets the author's words to make the point clear, summarizes and analyzes the author's reasoning for that point, provides some of your own reasons for agreement with the author, and describes what significance the point has in life, will very likely succeed. The following example essay, "Existence Without Meaning," succeeds in these ways.

Author's point: The writer sets right out to identify the single point of the philosopher he is writing about: "Our existence has no absolute value." The writer also notes that this idea needs explanation and justification if it is to be

made clear and plausible to most readers.

Interpretation: The writer interprets the claim using a paraphrase claim, and then goes on to provide an analysis of the main concepts of the paraphrased claims (i.e., 'value' and 'existence'). This works as an effective strategy and certainly demonstrates that it is possible to do more than repeat an author s claims over again. The concept analysis makes good use of example to convey the basic ideas. Note that it takes about four paragraphs to accomplish this interpretative analysis.

Argument Analysis: The writer notes that s/he is choosing one of several arguments Schopenhauer gives. The passage containing the argument is quoted, and most important, analyzed. Simply reproducing Schopenhauer's argument will have little value. Instead, the writer examines the argument conveyed in that passage in purposeful detail, even identifying it as having the form of a dilemma. Note that this portion does not set out to evaluate the argument, but to make its reasoning clear to the readers.

Original Reasoning: The writer turns from interpreting Schopenhauer's argument to providing one of his/her own. The technique of argument here is to make some key claims in support of the conclusion (i.e., Schopenhauer's claim) and to back those up with well-developed examples. It is up to the reader to judge how compelling the argument is, but anyone should be able to see how thoughtful the effort is.

Significance: Lastly, the writer draws out some practical effects that the belief at issue has. Indeed, it shows at least two different possible effects and indicates which is to be preferred. The impact of this closing move is to connect the very abstract ideas and arguments to ordinary life.

Example

The following essay is provided as a sample of what a successful affirmation essay may look like. This essay succeeds in identifying a point (idea) of another author, interprets that author's point (idea), describes and

explains the support the author gives for that idea, gives and explains reasons for supporting that author's point (idea), and says what importance that idea has for the wnter's own beliefs and the beliefs of other people. You can judge for yourself whether this essay is successful in meeting these objectives by how clearly it presents the author's ideas to you. You may have not read the Schopenhauer work this essay is based on. If the author is not clear in explaining and giving reasons, you will end up having no clue as to what is going on here. If you do end up with an understanding of what is being claimed and argued, the writer has been successful to that degree. This is what you are aiming for in writing your own essay: making your interpretations and reasoning clear for others to understand.

EXISTENCE WITHOUT MEANING

In his essay, "The Vanity Of Existence, " Arthur Schopenhauer (from Selected Essays of Schopenhauer, London: 1951) makes a point that is both difficult to understand and difficult to accept. Yet, there is a definite ring of truth in what he says. His basic point is that our existence has no absolute value. This idea is hard to accept. fireman beings seem to need to believe that their individual lives, and the human species as a whole, have a substantial worth in the universe. We want to believe that we really matter and that our existence makes a difference. Yet there is strong evidence that our lives are just infinitesimal squiggles in the vast expanse of space and time. This may be tough to take, but the truth often is.

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I interpret Schopenhauer's main point as being that our existence has no absolute value. To explain what this means I willfocus on the main concepts in that claim. To have value a thing must be more important or significant than other things. Value is a matter of degree. If everything were as valuable as everything else, then there would be no value. Suppose youfind a coin collection you used to keep when young. You sort through the coins and find that many of them are very common and so have no special value. But then you come across one coin that is very rare. Only a few of them exist in the world Compared to the other coins, this one is very valuable. Now, if this coin were like the others it would not have any more value than they do.

Fortunately for you, it is a unique and preciousfind. The value of something depends on its being different from other things.

If individual life, our existence, is valuable then it must have some quality that sets it apart from other things in the universe. Humans tend to believe that their lives are more valuable than the existence of rocks and coins. In fact, we tend to think that our lives have some absolute value. Even the most valuable coin does not have absolute value because it can be lost or people may simply lose interest in coin collecting. In that case, the rarest coin in the world would be worth nothing. Coins do not have absolute value. If our lives do have absolute value, then the significance of what we do and are would never change no matter what happened. Absolute means forever and under any conditions. Schopenhauer's idea that our existence has no absolute value means that whatever value our lives have is dependent on time and conditions. This is just the same as what is meant by substantial worth.

Another important concept in Schopenhauer's claim is existence. He says this:

A man finds himself, to his great astonishment, suddenly existing, after thousands and thousands of years of non-existence. He lives for a little while and then again comes an equally long period when he must exist no more.

From this I take it that he means our existence to be the span of our life. Not only that, but we 'find ourselves existing. " That is, we are conscious of who we are and that we are. Our existence is our individuality, and that as we all know is finite.

So the main point I take from Schopenhauer, that existence has no absolute value, means that our self-consciousness does not have any special or eternal place in the whole of the universe. In the big picture, we are no more valuable than rocks or coins.

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Schopenhauer gives several reasons for his view. The one that came closest to my understanding has to do with the futility of human striving. He says;

"Human life must be some kind of mistake. The truth of this will be sufficiently obvious if we only remember that man is a compound of needs and necessities hard to satisfy; and that even when they are satisfied, all he obtains is a state of painlessness, where nothing remains to him but abandonment to boredom. This is direct proof that existence has no real value in itself: for what is boredom but the feeling of the emptiness of life?"

In this passage Schopenhauer points out the dilemma of life's struggle. If we do not achieve our goals, we are resigned to dissatisfaction. If we do achieve our goals, we are resigned to boredom. Both dissatisfaction and boredom are conditions of meaninglessness. So either way, our lives turn out meaningless. The key premise of this argument is that we will either achieve our goals or we will not. That is true of everyone. Given his claims about either condition, it does follow that no meaningful result can be obtained, which is why he says this argument is "direct proof that existence has no real value in itself "

I have my own reasons for believing as Schopenhauer does. Basically, the relentless passage of time and the vastness of the universe show me how little significance we have in it. Time erodes all value. Nothing in the past has the value it once had when present. This is shown by how we treat history. If the past had any real value in itself, we would care for the truth about the past. But history is determined by present needs and ambitions. Take, for example, the Pocahontas story as told by the recent Walt Disney movie. The movie completely rewntes history. In the movie Pocahontas is a young woman who saves the life of John Smith (1607) and brings peace between the Native people and the English settlers. History shows that at age 11 Pocahontas was taken prisoner by the English, taken as a wife by the English planter John Rolfe, taken to London, and died of smallpox at age 22.

Now, a lot of people say "So what? It's just a story. " That is my point. The story is more interesting and valuable to us than the actual truth. If the real existence and life of Pocahontas had absolute value, then we would care for the truth more than for the fantasy. But the opposite is true and the same is the case for any historical figure you care to name. The value of the past is entirely dependent on how we use it in the present This shows that what has passed has no absolute value at all. And it is a fact that we will all end up in

the past. If Pocahontas' existence had absolute value, then it would be the same now. It is not and neither is any of ours.

My purpose in this essay has been to explain and support the idea that existence has no absolute purpose. I have not tried to say all that could be said about this. I do hope it makes sense to some. This point matters to me a great deal because I constantly see people staking their actions upon some ill-defined and elusive "ultimate purpose" for their lives. I realize my idea is depressing to most. I don'tfind it depressing at all. It is kind of liberating to think that we don't have to live up to some ultra-absolute standard. I may not have anything to look forward to, but I have nothing to regret either. If more people could understand this view and get over their fear of non-existence, they mayfind less reason to struggle and less cause for conflict with others. In effect, the world could be a better place if people would just realize that what we have is all there is.

Jon Dorbolo.

See also Position Papers, p. 64; Argument Summaries, p. 45.

Page 60: Refutations

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Refutations ("I Disagree")

A refutation is the process of discrediting an argument through the use of counterargument, evidence, or proof.

Purpose

The purpose of a refutation is to show that a position or argument is false or implausible.

Criteria of Evaluation

Arguments can be refuted by attacking their content and/or their form.

At the introductory level, refutations will be expected at least to attack the content of the argument. After isolating the argument's premises and conclusion, one or more of the premises are shown to be false or implausible. A premise can be refuted as untrue or unbelievable by presenting evidence which contradicts the premise or by reasoning that the premise contradicts common sense. Additionally, a refutation at this level could show some attention to the form of the argument. That is, a refutation can attack the form of an argument by showing that even if the premises of an argument are true, the conclusion does not necessarily follow. Finally, the meaning of terms in the argument can be attacked. For example, one can argue that the premises of the original argument use one term in two (or more) senses, or that a premise contains a self-contradiction. Your instructor will provide you with specific strategies for attacking arguments.

On an intermediate level, a refutation might well deal with a more complicated argument than at the introductory level. It might show a greater awareness of the context of the argument, devote more attention to the form of the argument, and in general display the skills involved in refutation (i.e., the

ability to isolate and display the weakness in an argument, produce counter arguments or evidence, and so on).

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In an upper level course, a refutation should include the previous elements when relevant and, in addition, examine critically the argument's logic. The refutation should find the argument invalid or inductively weak. A counterexample should be offered, and it should be clear which part of the original argument the counterexample applies to.

Note: All refutations must treat the original argument fairly. Avoid distortions of the original claims, personal attacks on the author, etc.

Examples

A Classic Model of Refutation

There are numerous examples of refutations in the history of philosophy. A classic example is provided by Thomas Aquinas' discussion of the morality of suicide. The framework of Aquinas' argument is as follows:

l) Statement of the question under dispute.
2) A fair presentation of views that support the opposing position on the question.
3) Statement of personal position and defense of that position.
4) Reply to and refutation of the views presented in (2).

We can illustrate this more directly by excerpts from Aquinas' article:

l. Statement of Disputed Question: *Is It Lawful to Kill Oneself?*

2. Presentation of views supporting the lawfulness or morality of suicide.

Objection 1. It would seem lawful for a man to kill himself: For murder is a sin insofar as it is contrary to justice. But no man can do an injustice to himself, as in proved in [Aristotle's] Ethic. v. 11. Therefore no man sins by

killing himself

Objection 2. Further, it is lawfulfor one who exercises public authority to kill evildoers. Now he who exercises public authority is sometimes an evildoer. Therefore he may lawfully kill himself

Objection 3. Further, it is lawful for a man to suffer spontaneously a lesser danger that he may avoid the greater: thus it is lawfulfor a man to cut offa decayed limb even from himself, that he may save his whole body. Now sometimes a man, by killing himself, avoids a greater evil, for example, an unhappy life, or the shame of sin. Therefore a man may kill himself

3. Statement of personal position and defense of the position.

I answer that, It is altogether unlawful to kill oneself, for three reasons. First, because everything naturally loves itself, the result being that everything naturally keeps itself in being, and resists corruptions so far as it can. Wherefore suicide is contrary to the inclination of nature, and to charity, whereby everyman should love himself.

Secondly, because every part, as such, belongs to the whole. Now every man is part of the community, and so, as such, he belongs to the community. Hence by killing himself he injures the community, as the Philosopher [Aristotle] declares (Ethic. v. 11).

Thirdly, because life is God's gift to man, and is subject to His power, Who kills and makes to live. Hence whoever takes his own life, sins against God, . . . For it belongs to God alone to pronounce sentence of life and death.

4. Reply to and refutation of opposing position (the "Objections").

Reply Obj. 1: Murder is a sin, not only because it is contrary to justice, but also because it is opposed to charity, which a man should have towards himself: in this respect, suicide is a sin in relation to oneself In relation to the community and to God, it is sinful, by reason also of its opposition to justice.

Reply Obj. 2: One who exercises public authority may lawfully put to death an evildoer, since he can pass judgment on him. But no man is judge of himself Wherefore it is not lawfulfor one who exercises public authority to put himself to death for any sin whatever: although he may lawfully commit himself to the judgment of others.

Reply Obj. 3: Man is made master of himself through his free-will: wherefore he can lawfully dispose of himself as to those matters which pertain to this life which is ruled by man's free-will. But the passage from this life to another and happier one is subject not to man's free-will but to the power of God Hence it is not lawful for man to take his own life that he may pass to a happier state, nor that he may escape any unhappiness whatsoever of the present life, because the ultimate and most fearsome evil of this life is death, as the Philosopher [Aristotle] states (Ethic. iii.6). Therefore to bring death upon oneself in order to escape the other afflictions of this life is to adopt a greater evil in order to avoid a lesser....

A Contemporary Model

Although the Thomistic discussion of suicide raises timeless issues, we aren't bound, of course, to the scholastic conventions of refutation of the 13th century. A very powerful writing and argumentation technique is gained by a reordering of Aquinas' steps:

l) A statement of the question under dispute.
2) A fair presentation of the views that support the opposing position on the question.
3) Your reasoned refutation of the arguments supporting the opposing position.
4) A statement of your position and a reasoned defense of that position.

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Below is an example of a student refutation using this strategy, which concerns the question of rationing health care resources to the elderly.

REFUTATION OF "SPARE THE OLD, SAVE THE YOUNG"

A. Etzioni's arguments against health care rationing for the elderly seem to be built upon a foundation of assumptions that is deeplyflawed....

First, while arguing that imposing limits on treatment available to the elderly threatens to tear apart the fragile weave of intergenerational relations, he focuses on the purely financial aspects in favor of such restrictions. This focus onfiscal alternatives offers a tempting distraction from the issues of much greater ethical significance. In a society in which the central focus is everincreasingly on the individual, offering the possibility of more and more years of life by medical treatments leads to an ever-diminishing acceptance of the aging and dying process. Etzioni argues that placing limitations on health care resources for the elderly will initiate a "slippery slope" effect. However, allowing egocentric and self-serving ideas of immortality through medicine to prevail in the face of a scarcity of resources represents an even greater "slippery slope"-one which is not only equally morally troubling, but which could threaten the very survival of our species.

Furthermore, Etzioni bases his argument against limiting treatment on rather dubious social perceptions of our elderly. He is concerned that rationing health care to the elderly will upset the fragile balance of relations between the elderly and non-elderly. What will happen, however, if the disparity in resource allocation continues to grow at its present rate-namely, if the elderly continue to take a growing disproportion of health care resources? Surely, the intergenerational unrest perceived by Etzioni now would continue to grow at a similar rate. Regardless of what spending cuts are made in other areas, this disparity will remain. It seems much more plausible that not dealing with this issue in a proactive manner will lead to precisely the intergenerational conflict that Etzioni alludes to, than would considered, well-administered limitations to elderly health care expenditures. Etzioni argues that restricting access to expensive procedures would merely increase the socioeconomic disparity in access to health care, because the rich would still be able to purchase services elsewhere. While this may be true in the short run, such a phenomenon could lead to an interesting long-term effect. If the afffluent elderly chose to spend theirfortune on their own health care, they would be faced with the same diffficult decisions that rationing forces upon society at large.

Etzioni suggests that establishing an age to represent a "normal lifespan" is an arbitrary decision that has no pragmatic basis and would be very open to manipulation. There is a very logical choice for this benchmark, however--the current average lifespan, which could be adjusted over the course of time. The benefits of this "normal lifespan" would not only be that it would be demographically warranted, but it would also place the onus on the medical community to direct the bulk of its efforts toward preventative medicine. If resources are removedfrom costly, late-life, lifeextending efforts, the real way to prolong the human life span would be through better preventative care. This, in turn, would likely result in better quality of life throughout the lifespan-a worthy goal for modern medicine.

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See also Analyzing Arguments, p. 2l; Testing Hypotheses, p. 33; Argument Summaries, p. 45; and Position Papers, p. 64

Page 64: Position Papers

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Position Papers

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A position paper states a claim and presents reasons why this claim is justified. The justification of the claim depends on the use of reliable evidence and careful reasoning. Letters to the editor are often position papers, as are judicial opinions and editorials. But position papers can be informal; a letter you might write to your parents in order to convince them to buy you a car could be an example of a position paper.

Purpose

A position paper addresses an issue, a single point in question or matter in dispute. This might be an issue of fact, a dispute about values, or a question of policy. Generally, the purpose of a position paper is to present reasons that will change another person's mind about that issue. Thus, its purpose is to persuade with good reasons.

Structure

Position papers can take many different forms, depending on the audience and the issue, and the kinds of reasons used to support a position. But generally, a good position paper will begin with a paragraph that clearly states the issue to be addressed and the position to be defended. It will end with a paragraph that clearly draws the conclusion and summarizes the major reasons that support it. The main portion of the paper "argues the case," that is, presents the reasons in support of the position. Beyond this, the form a position paper takes will vary.

The following is an outline of one form a position paper might take.

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THE TITLE OF THE PAPER IS A QUESTION THAT STATES THE ISSUE

I. CLAIM: The claim is the most important pan of the argument It is a sentence that is offered for discussion and/or consideration. It is the claim that you will defend

II. DEFINITIONS: All of the ambiguous words used in a claim must be fully understood before you can proceed with the rest of the argument. The definitions should stipulate what YOU will take key words to mean.

III. COUNTERCLAIM: State the counterclaim in order to have a logical and fair argument. you must show that you understand the counterclaim. The counterclaim is a statement of the view opposite to the view you will defend.

A. Present the strongest reason in support of the counterclaim.
B. Present a second reason in support of the counterclaim.

IV ARGUMENT: This section presents your argument (or reasons) in support of your claim. The section has a number of plans.

A. Begin your argument with a restatement of your claim.
B. Respond to the reasons given in support of the counterclaim (above) showing how they do not support the counterclaim.
C. Present the strongest reason in support of your claim.
D. Present a second reason in support of your claim.

V. CONCLUSION: In this section, you summarize your argument in support of the claim and restate the claim. No new information should be in this section.

Criteria of Evaluation

In assessing the quality of a position paper, consider these questions:

1 . Is the argument in support of a single claim?
2. It is supported by reasons that are:

a. true?
b. to the point?
3. Are the reasons suited to its audience and the purpose?
4. Are the ideas clearly expressed?
5. Are important points missing?
6. Does the evidence really support the claim?
7. Are the pans arranged in a coherent and logical sequence?
8. Are the inferences clearly labeled?

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Example

The following is an example of the outline of a position paper written by a student, following the outline provided above.

SHOULD RELATIVELY AFFLUENT PEOPLE HELP THE POOR ?

I. Claim:

> People who are relatively affluent should give a certain fair percentage of their earnings to help reduce absolute poverty on a global level.

II. Definitions:

> Relatively Affluent: rich or wealthy.
>
> Fair percentage: a small helpful percentage of earnings, such as ten percent (Peter Singer)
>
> Absolute poverty: A condition of life so characterized by malnutrition, illiteracy, disease, squalid surroundings, high infant mortality and low life expectancy that it is beneath any reasonable definition of human decency (Robert McNamara).

III. The counterclaim: Wealthy people should not have to help those who are

needier unless they choose to do so.

A. The strongest support for this claim is that by helping the poor, wealthier people would be increasing the world's population by contributing to the increased survival rates of those who would otherwise have a relatively low life expectancy, thus increasing the rate at which natural resources are consumed and environmental problems will arise.

B. Another reason supporting the counterclaim is that just because affluent people have a relatively higher income than others, does not make them morally responsible for those who are not affluent.

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IV. Argument:

A. People who are relatively affluent should give a fair percentage of their earnings to help reduce absolute poverty on a global level.

B. It is not the case that helping the poor would necessarily increase population and thus deepen the environmental crisis.

1.Monetary aid could bring medical supplies and food, but it could also bring with it contraceptive devices so that people in absolute poverty, who would have begun to see increased life spans, could decrease their birth rates.

2. Helping to reduce absolute poverty would also bring about more people who would be in a position, economically, socially, and medically, to contribute to cleaning up environmental problems and helping solve them.

3. People are resources too and to allow them to live in absolute poverty is to spoil and deplete that resource.

C. Animals, which are an important resource and part of life in most parts of the world, are often in more favorable and desirable surroundings than those of places struck by absolute poverty. Therefore people should be treated with more respect and consideration by being given the chance to live in better surroundings than those afforded to animal resources.

D. Killing another human being is morally wrong. Would it not then also be morally wrong to allow someone to die, knowing that they are in surroundings so squalid that they contribute to death? By not acting in favor of eliminating those harmful surroundings, a person would be a contributor to the problems of those people, by simply not acting at all. Therefore, it should be a moral responsibility of those with relative affluence to care for those in absolute poverty.

V. In conclusion, affluent people should give a certain percentage of their wealth to help do away with the absolute poverty in the world because people are not only living beings who should not be allowed to live in such squalor, but also because they are an important resource which should not be allowed to waste away.

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If one were to write a position paper following this outline, it might look something like this:

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SHOULD RELATIVELY AFFLUENT PEOPLE HELP THE POOR?

As the world approaches the end of the twentieth century, the

gap between rich and poor has never been wider. While some people have more money than it is possible to spend in a lifetime, no matter how lavishly they might make purchases, others are not able to provide even for their most basic needs. On all the continents of the world, people starve to death for lack of food, freeze to death for lack of shelter, die of diseases that could be prevented The situation raises the issue of whether the affluent people of the world have a moral obligation to help the poor. I shall argue that people who are relatively affluent should give a certain fair percentage of their earnings to help reduce absolute poverty on a global scale.

My claim is that those who are relatively affluent, that is, people who would normally be defined as rich or wealthy in the context of a given society, have an obligation to give up a small but helpful percentage of their earnings; Peter Singer, an Australian philosopher, suggests ten percent. The money would be used to alleviate absolute poverty, a condition that Robert McNamara, the former president of the World Bank, defines as "characterized by malnutrition, illiteracy, disease, squalid surroundings, high infant morality and low life expectancy that is beneath any reasonable definition of human decency. "

Many people argue that wealthy people should not have to help those who are needier than they, unless they choose to do so. The strongest argument for this claim is articulated by Garrett Hardin, an ecologist from the University of Southern California. He points to the harmful results of helping people, claiming that by contributing to the increased survival rates of those who would otherwise have a relatively low life expectancy, wealthier people would increase the world's population and thus increase the rate at which natural resources are consumed and environmental problems arise. Although starvation is an evil, Hardin says, helping the poor would create an even greater evil--increased numbers of starving people and fewer resources to help them. Others argue that just because affluent people have a relatively higher income than others, it does not follow that they

are morally responsible for those who do not.

I believe, in contrast, that people do have a moral obligation to help the desperately poor. For several reasons, it is not the case that helping the poor would necessarily increase population and thus increase environmental degradation. First, while monetary aid could bring medical supplies and food and thus increase population, it could also bring contraceptive devices and increased education about population control. And so, helping the poor could actually decrease the rate of population growth and, in the end, save environmental resources. Secondly, helping to reduce absolute poverty would also bring about more people who would be in a position economically, socially, and medically--to contribute to cleaning up environmental problems and helping solve overpopulation problems. Finally, from a purely practical point of view, it is important to note that people are an economic resource at least as important as firewood and fertile soil, and to allow people to sicken and die is to spoil and waste that resource.

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The obligation to help the poor is, to a certain extent, simply a matter of human rights. We believe that our pets have a right to decent treatment-enough food to live, shelter from the cold, medical care when they are hurt or ill, and affluent people in America spend large amounts of income to provide for these basic needs for animals. If animals have these rights, then surely humans have at least the same basic rights. People should be treated with more respect and consideration than animals, by being given the chance to live in better surroundings than those afforded to animals.

However, the primary reason why the affluent have an obligation to help the poor has to do with the moral principle that killing another human being is wrong. If it is wrong to kill another person, then it is also morally wrong to allow someone to

die, when you know they are going to die otherwise, and when it is within your means to save their lives at relatively little cost to yourself. By not acting to reduce the harmful, lethal effects of poverty on the world's poor, affluent people are violating a primary moral principle. Therefore, it is a moral responsibility of the rich to help the poor.

In conclusion, affluent people should give a certain percentage of their wealth to help do away with absolute poverty in the world, because people are not only living beings who have a right to decent lives, but because it is wrong to allow people to die when helping them live is well within your means.

Kathleen Moore, following outline by Brian Figur.

See also Analyzing Arguments, p.21; Refutations, p.60; Assertion Essay, p.51 .

Page 71: Case Studies

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CASE STUDIES

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Case studies are a common method of philosophical analysis in such areas as critical thinking, applied ethics, and legal reasoning. The "case" presents a compressed version of a scenario, hypothetical or actual, that exemplifies certain issues, decision procedures, or value conflicts. A case study analysis develops these issues or conflicts at greater length, typically through inviting readers to decide what they would do if they were decision makers in the case.

Methods of Analysis

In any method of case study analysis, attention should be given to both "problem-seeing," or determination of the problem, and "problem-solving," or using modes of reasoning, integrating values, and standards of assessment to suggest a resolution to the identified problem.

The case study and assessment below were developed by a student following a conversation with a local health care provider.

Is it Right to Prescribe Death ?

Dr. A is a family practice physician who has been seeing F as a patient over a period of six to seven years. On the initial visit, F was extremely ill, fighting the effects of the AIDS virus that he carried. F recovered from this initial bout of sickness, but as the disease continued to run its course, F's condition went through cycles of relapse and recovery. Since conventional care was not providing him with sufficient help, F explored many different avenues: specialists, herbalists, hypnotherapists, chiropractors and crystal therapy. He also considered many different religious

groups that emphasized meditation to see if that practice could relieve his symptoms. None of these methods, however, provided F relief from his pain and suffering.

This continuing cycle of seeking, but not finding, respite from his condition left F in a state of deep depression. Dr. A was able to treat the depression successfully at times, but these were outweighed by long stretches of despair. F's symptoms eventually left him bedridden at home and unable to take care of any of his needs. He had a constant high fever, diarrhea, was unable to keep any food down, and was going blind. F experienced constant pain and asked Dr. A to prescribe pain medication that could be used to take his life and end his misery. Dr. A believed that F's condition was irreversible, and that F's previous struggles with depression made it unlikely that he would change his mind Still, acceding to F's request would mean Dr. A would perform an act that, at the time, was illegal and could possibly jeopardize his professional standing and ethics. What should Dr. A do?

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There are a series of common steps used in developing an ethical analysis of a case study. These steps reflect the interests in both problem-seeing and problem-solving. The steps are presented in the ethics assessment below formulated by the student.

Step 1: Identify the major ethical problem in the case.

What has to be decided and who the decisionmakers are; and who the stakeholders are, that is, people who have a stake in the decision, but are not decisionmakers.

After a close examination of the ethical issues in this case study, the major question is evident: "Is it right for a physician to prescribe medication with the knowledge that his or her patient is planning to use the medication to commit suicide?" Dr. A is the primary decisionmaker with respect to writing the prescription, while F has the right to determine how and when he end his life.

Ideally, this will be a joint and mutual decision.

There are other stakeholders, although the case description does not directly identify them. F may have family or friends, including persons from his religious affiliations, that will be concerned about his care at the end of life. In most circumstances, Dr. A will need to rely on a cooperative pharmacist to
dispense the prescription. Depending on his practice, other professional stakeholders might include Dr. A's peers and colleagues, the hospital, and the medical licensing board.

Step 2: Assess the factual information.

> *Examine whether the informationpresented is reliable (is it "fact," "hearsay," or "opinion." Determine what information is not known that should be known before a decision can be made, and how that information can be attained.*

Given his symptoms, it seems evident that F's diagnosis of AIDS is valid F has lived with the infection for 6-7 years, so Dr. A. has made a professional judgment that the condition is "irreversible." In addition,
Dr. A. has made a diagnosis of "depression." In order to ensure adequate care and to avoid causing a premature death, both of these judgments should be confirmed by a second opinion.

If F is deemed clinically depressed, then a further issue will have to be addressed: Is his request for a prescription to end his life based on an informed, voluntary, and competent decision-making process. Dr. A's years of caring for F place him in a good position to evaluate F's consistency in his values over time, but a referral to a consulting psychiatrist may be in order.

Finally, is Dr A. technically competent to provide a lethal medication? His training has not prepared him for these scenarios, and many cases of a botched suicide have been reported due to the wrong medication, or the wrong dosage, being prescribed.

Step 3: Propose realistic alternatives available to the decisionmakers that

address the central question identified in Step 1.

Identify the basic goals and objectives of the decisionmakers, and the benefits and disadvantages of the possible alternatives.

Dr. A is faced with a dilemma regarding how he could effectively treat his patient F. His goals include respecting F's autonomous choices, providing compassionate palliative care, and maintaining his professional integrity.

We suggest a few alternatives/solutions to this dilemma:

- Dr. A could seek outside help in caring for F's physical and emotional needs instead of providing him with medicine. Dr. A could contact F's family and ask them to help by telling them of the extreme pain and suffering F is experiencing. Other groups that might provide help include the local AIDS support network, a church-based community outreach, or even professional health care for his depression. The last option may be extremely limited depending on F's financial or insurance status. The benefits to thisapproach include giving F a community of support that will ensure he is not abandoned in his dying. The disadvantages include denying F the medication he has requested, and enlarging the circle of care providers. If the latter is done so without F's consent, confidentiality will be violated.
- Dr. A could prescribe the medication for F. He could prescribe a powerful sedative/ painkiller (such as Seconal) that the patient could take in excess on purpose. To avoid legal repercussions, Dr. A could be absent when F takes the overdose. This enables F to determine the time and manner of his death; F may or may not decide to use the medication. This alternative doesn't allow for procedural safeguards, including a second opinion on prognosis, assessment of other modes of pain relief, or a competence assessment. Dr. A can have difficulty squaring this alternative with the moral commitments of his profession. Moreover, if he is absent when F takes the medication, and something should go wrong, he will have abandoned his patient at an extremely vital time.

- Dr. A could refuse F's request on the grounds that it violates his personal conscience, professional ethic, and the law. He could meet privately with F and tell him he cannot violate this ethic as it is at the core of what makes him a doctor. Dr. A could allow another doctor to assume care of F. Here Dr. A evades responsibility for the moral issues at stake, and for caring for his patient, by simply saying "no" and facilitating care through another physician. This may not provide good care to F simply because Dr. A and F have a long-term relationship, and a new physician will not have established the rapport and trust important to a good caregiving relationship.

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Step 4: Identify the relevant and priority ethical values important to proposing an ethically defensible recommendation.

1. Non-harm is a vital value because a doctor has made a professional commitment to respect all human life.
2. Confidentiality is crucial in any doctor-patient relationship, but even more so in this case, because of F's condition. AIDS is a disease that elicits much discrimination from society. If Dr. A seeks outside care for F, he needs to be sure he can absolutely trust those with whom he shares information about F's condition.
3. The potential legal ramifications of Dr. A's decision make justice an important value.
4. Respect for personal autonomy is vitally important, as patients should be able to make informed decisions about the health care they receive.
5. The value of human dignity has a major role in this case, since F has to rely totally on the care of others.
6. The principle of beneficence is relevant, because of F's pain's and suffering, and Dr. A's professional commitment to alleviate pain and suffering.

Step 5: Determine the ethically preferable alternative for this case by applying the priority values values for this case.

My ethics assessment leads me to support alternative 2 [Dr. A prescribes life-ending medication to F] because it is the alternative that best respects the patient's

wishes. It also satisfies the values of confidentiality and human dignity best, as no one else has been informed of F's condition, and he would be able to die with some dignity intact. With respect to the other values, I've come to the conclusion that a terminal illness such as AIDS requires rethinking my usual ethical values. In particular, although intuitively death seems like the ultimate harm, with respect to the value of non-harm, this alternative
releases F from the pain and suffering caused by AIDS. The doctor must not, in any circumstance, abandon the patient at the time when he needs friendship the most.

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Step 6: Moral Closure: Develop a plan for implementing this alternative

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Criteria of Evaluation

There are several criteria by which a case study analysis is evaluated:

1. Discernment: How well did you see the problem(s) at issue?
2. Comprehensiveness: Did you work through all the steps in the analysis method?
3. Integration: Did you bring the relevant values into your analysis, so they give you direction on how to resolve the issue?
4. Creativity: Did you ask the right questions and think of imaginative,though realistic, ways "out" of the dilemma posed in the case?
5. Closure:Did your resolution answer your question or problem about the case? Is your resolution supported by the values you've identified as important in the case?

Writing A Case Study

In some classes, you may be asked to develop your own case study, based on your personal experience, and provide a collective or personal ethical analysis of the case. In writing your own case:

1) Spend time thinking over a situation in your life in which a difficult ethical choice was presented. The context might be within:

- Your family life, e.g., you promised to be home at 11:00, but when that time came, you wanted to stay out longer.
- Preserving a friendship, e.g., a good friend comes to you and asks you to keep a secret that involves another friend.
- A school situation, e.g., you wonder whether you should report the use of illegal drugs to a counselor, or cheating on an exam to a professor or you face harassment of some kind from other students or a teacher.
- A workplace situation, e.g., a fellow employee is coming in late, leaving early, taking long breaks, etc. Everyday life, e.g., a stranger approaches you as you walk down the street and asks for some money for lunch.

2) Once you've determined your situation, then write the essential details down. Some guidelines are:

- Be as brief as you can but include details important to the situation;
- Write down the topic of situation, e.g., friendship, drug use, cheating;
- Write down two or three basic features of the situation, e.g., what circumstances led up to the dilemma; what needed to be decided, who were the decisionmakers, etc.
- Have the situation reach a decision-point and end your description, asking "what should be done?". Preserve confidentiality by changing all names or identifying information in the situation.

See Assertion Essays, p 51

[Page 77: Dialogues]

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DIALOGUES

Dialogue has been one of the great genres of philosophical writing since the classical Greeks. In fact, Plato's dialogues (in which, for the most part, Socrates is the chief interlocutor) are still the most sophisticated representatives of the genre. Still, dialogues by Berkeley, Hume and other philosophers (as well as scientists such as Galileo) are of considerable philosophical interest and literary value. Because they require a clear grasp of the philosophical positions involved, excellent reasoning skills, psychological insight, and literary ability, dialogues are one of the most difficult writing genres in philosophy.

Purpose

A dialogue is usually a conversation between two or more persons holding different philosophical views. A dialogue allows a dramatic representation of the strengths and weakness of a philosophical positions to be revealed in the course of a conversation between persons holding those views. In Plato's dialogues there is often an attempt to show someone that they do not know what they think they know. Such dialogues often end in *aporia* or puzzlement. Other Platonic dialogues have the function of stating positive philosophical theses in the face of opposition. For example, in the *Gorgias,* Plato defends the radical moral thesis that it is better to suffer injustice than to do it against the sophists and politicians who utterly reject this doctrine. Occasionally philosophers will write dialogues between abstractions, .i.e. a dialogue between Faith, Reason and Truth -- but this is much less frequent than dialogues between people.

Criteria of Evaluation

At the introductory level we would expect that a student would write a

short dialogue adequately and fairly representing a single specific claim or simple philosophical position which she attacks or defends in the course of the dialogue using arguments, analogies, hypotheses, explanations or other philosophical forms of persuasion. It is worth noting here, that adequately and fairly representing a position which one intends to refute requires that one give the strongest statement of the position which one can, and that in reasoning against it one avoid fallacies such as the straw argument, *ad hominem* and other forms of poor reasoning. On an intermediate level we would expect a longer dialogue, showing the exposition, and critical examination of a position, again using the appropriate philosophical skills, and displaying good organization. On an advanced level, such projects would be more ambitious and display some literary skills as well in the development of character and the presentation of the argument.

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Example

In Berkeley's *Three Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous* we can find some classic examples of a position being refuted in the course of a dialogue and see the strategy employed to do so. In the first dialogue, for example, Berkeley aims to show that there is no such thing as matter existing independently of the mind. He does this because he believed that the belief in matter leads to skepticism and atheism.

He begins with a character ("Hylas" which means "matter" in Greek) who thinks that all properties, i.e. color, taste, sound, and smell as well as extension, motion and rest, solidity and texture, exist independently of the mind. Berkeley lived in a philosophical age which sharply distinguished between mind dependent properties (like pleasure and pain, color and taste) which were called secondary qualities and mind independent properties (like extension, solidity, motion and rest) which were called primary qualities. So Hylas is very much behind the times. His position is the Aristotelian position rejected by the "modern" philosophers who Berkeley is attacking. Berkeley's spokesperson in the dialogue "Philonous" or "lover of mind" develops the arguments of these modern philosophers to show that color, taste, smell and sound are properties which depend for their existence on a perceiving mind.

This might seem like a waste of time. But it is not, for reasons that we will see shortly. Having gone through many such arguments in some detail, Berkeley then comes to the crucial distinction between primary and secondary qualities:

> **HYL***: I frankly own, Philonous, that it is in vain to stand out any longer. Colours, sounds, tastes, in a word, all those termed secondary qualities, have certainly no existence without the mind. But by this acknowledgement I must not be supposed to derogate any thing from the reality of matter or external objects, seeing it is no more than several philosophers maintain, who nevertheless are the furtherest from denying matter. For the clearer understanding of this, you must know sensible qualities are by philosophers divided into primary and secondary. The former are extension, gravity, motion and rest. And these they hold exist really in bodies. The latter are those above enumerated; or briefly all sensible qualities beside the primary, which they assert are only so many sensations or ideas existing nowhere but in the mind. But all this, I doubt not, you are already apprised of. For my part, I have been a long time sensible there was such an opinion current among philosophers, but was never thoroughly convinced of its truth until now.*

Here we have the position or claim Berkeley plans to refute stated simply and clearly. Philonous then proceeds to offer arguments which are *just like* the arguments which he has used to show that color and taste are mind dependent, to show that extension, motion and rest and the other primary qualities are also mind dependent. To the degree that these arguments are simple and effective, they offer a spectacular attack on the distinction between primary and secondary qualities.

What is extraordinarily clever about the way in which Berkeley has structured this dialogue, is that by giving the arguments of the modern philosophers to show that color and taste are mind dependent, he has established what sorts of arguments his opponents will accept for this conclusion. When he then applies arguments of exactly these same kinds to show that the properties which his opponents hold are mind independent are not, he has already firmly established that they will accept arguments like

these as conclusive. (This is a strategy which Plato often uses in writing dialogues as well. Socrates will give an analogous argument about some topic which parallels the crucial issue to be decided. This analogous argument then serves as a model. This allows the pattern of reasoning to be worked out on a topic less contentious than the crucial topic at issue in the dialogue. Then, when that same pattern of reasoning is applied, it is much more effective in persuading.) Returning to Berkeley, we find Philonous making just this point to Hylas.

Thus, Philonous says to Hylas:

> **Phil:** *You are still then of the opinion, that extension and figures are inherent in external unthinking substances?*
> **Hyl:** *I am.*
> **Phil:** *But what if the same arguments which are brought against secondary qualities, will hold proof against these also?*
> **Hyl:** *Why then I shall be obliged to say that they exist only in the mind also.*

Philonous then proceeds to give Hylas arguments of the same kind as he had deployed to show that the secondary qualities are mind dependent to show that extension and figure and the rest of the primary qualities are mind dependent. One such argument goes like this:

> **Phil:** *Again, have you not acknowledged that no real inherent property of any object can be changed, without some change in the thing itself?*
> **Hyl:** *I have.*
> **Phil:** *But as we approach or recede from an object, the visible extension varies, being at one time ten or a hundred times greater than at another. Doth it not follow from hence, likewise, that it is not really inherent in the object?*
> **Hyl:** *I own I am at a loss about what to think.*

The point of this argument is that the size of an object we see varies

dramatically with the distance we are from it. Since it seems large from up close and small from far away, it cannot be that we are immediately sensing a real property, for the size of an object cannot be both large and small, for the thing itself has not changed -- as Philonous has carefully gotten Hylas to acknowledge.

Part of what makes Berkeley's achievement so impressive is the number and detailed character of the arguments he offers. He takes on the position he is attacking from every angle. It is an assault on all fronts. But for a student who is learning the craft, far smaller and less ambitious goals are to be preferred. To give an argument such as that just presented, with the parts properly organized would be an impressive achievement all by itself.

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How can this example help you write a dialogue? You may not understand why Berkeley is trying to show that matter does not exist or what the distinction is between primary and secondary qualities or why Berkeley is trying to show that this distinction cannot be maintained. For present purposes, all of this is largely irrelevant. What you need to grasp from this example are some simple points:

1) A dialogue is a conversation between persons who hold differing philosophical positions. So, the first point is that you need to understand the philosophical positions which each side is presenting, and very likely you need to understand the strengths and weaknesses of these positions as well. This is one of the requirements which make writing dialogues so difficult. Historians of philosophy still debate about how well Berkeley understood the position he was refuting, but there is no doubt that he is refuting one plausible interpretation of his opponents views.

2) The aim of a philosophical conversation is to try to determine which position is the strongest, that is which has the best evidence and arguments supporting it. So, not only must you thoroughly understand the various philosophical positions you are writing about, but you must give the strongest interpretations of views which you are trying to refute, and use the best kinds of reasoning skills in doing the refutation. That is, the use of fallacies such as

straw arguments, and arguments against the person is not acceptable practice.

Historians of philosophy are still debating whether Berkeley attacked the strongest version of the position he was refuting. The are good arguments to show that he did. The level of Berkeley's reasoning is first rate. The tone which Philonous adopts with Hylas is patient, not abusive. Philonous is willing to deal with an enormous variety of objections. He is willing to let Hylas change his position, and so forth. It is clear that Berkeley is engaged in a serious critique of the position he is trying to refute, not after a quick and cheap victory.

3) One of the most crucial points in writing a dialogue in which you are attacking a philosophical position is that you need to consider what kinds of arguments the proponents of that position would accept.

As noted above Berkeley wants to argue that all qualities are mind dependent, his opponents hold that only some arguments are mind dependent. Berkeley begins by giving his opponents arguments for the mind dependence of some qualities, and then applies the same kind of argument to the qualities which they think are not mind dependent.

Plato often does much the same as Berkeley, only he will have Socrates present an argument about a different and more neutral subject which has the same structure as the argument which will refute the position he aims to refute. Thus he gets his interlocutor to agree that the reasoning in the neutral case is good and then applies it to the controversial case.

Page 81: Research Papers

See also Comparing and Contrasting, p. 25; Class Journals, p. 41; and Assertion Essays, p. 51

An Additional Example

Suppose that you wanted to engage in a dialogue with the other citizens of the United States as well as the government and military about whether the country should go to war or not. Suppose also you wanted to engage in this dialogue because you disagreed with what seemed to be the government's policy. What common ground would be available for such a discussion? What could operate in the way in which the arguments for distinguish primary and secondary qualities worked for Berkeley? The answer is just war theory. The United States government and military have come to adopt just war theory as the basis for determining whether to go to war (and how to conduct wars once they begin). Just war theory provides criteria for determining whether a war should be begun or not. So, the issue becomes whether a particular situation in which a war might begin fits those criteria or not. To explore this, you might want to visit:

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Research Papers

A research paper is often the most extensive and important project in a philosophy class. It will often involve the use and effective synthesis of many of the skills mentioned in this handbook. Such a paper assignment will typically require that you locate and examine information from many sources, almost always involving library research, and at times the use of the world wide web or conversations with reliable authorities. Typically a paper of this kind will require that you find a problem or thesis, give an exposition of materials relevant to stating and resolving the problem, and make a statement of the resolution of the problem or the conclusion This may require giving and analyzing arguments, explanations and so forth as well as providing criteria for evaluating the adequacy of competing positions. It will almost always require that your research be documented in an appropriate way.

Method

You will find many of the suggestions in "The Writing Process" section of the manual to be particularly useful in preparing a research paper. A research paper very much is a process, so the following ideas should be incorporated as part of your research.

1. Getting Started/Pre-Writing

Freewrite what you know about the research topic before you begin your library research. Choose the ideas, questions, or themes that you would be most interested in developing and use these to focus your research in the library.

2. Planning

Consider your audience for the paper. If the specified audience is the educated lay person, what will they know about your topic? What ever public or academic audience you have in mind, you will need to write to that level.

Consider your objective in writing the paper. What general themes do you wish to discuss? What conclusions do you want to establish?

Determine how you will generate support for your analysis and conclusions. A research paper draws heavily on two principal areas for its ideas: 1) Primary sources: Books or articles, 2) Secondary sources: Books or articles about the primary source which interpret, comment, and criticize the primary source. As you locate your sources, make sure you know how to evaluate them for reliability and how you will document your use of borrowed information (see "Documentation and Referencing").

3. Structural Organization

Although different assignments will ask you to focus more specifically on one aspect of a research paper or another, a good organizational rule-of-thumb for a research paper is that you should devote:

- Approximately 1/3 of the paper to identifying the major questions;
- Approximately l/3 to analysis and criticism of the arguments of others on these questions; and
- Approximately l/3 to developing and defending your own perspectives.

4. Drafting

After you have planned your research paper and organized its main elements, write a first draft of the article. Then ask a friend, roommate, or fellow student to review it for you. Have them look at clarity of purpose, organizational framework, accessibility and simplicity, and

comprehensiveness; grammar can be addressed later. Have them use the "peer response form" from p. 9 to tell you where the strengths and weaknesses of the paper lie.

5. Revising

Based on the comments of your reviewer(s), revise your initial draft. Consider the following:

- Introduction: Clear identification of topic. Clear identification of purpose. Forecasts rest of paper.
- Content: Strong transition from introduction. Examine examples and arguments for logic, length of detail, and progression of the argument. Make sure you have addressed the criteria of evaluation for your paper specified by your instructor.
- Conclusion: Smooth transition from content of paper. Appropriate summary of content. Conclusions reached and defended.

6. Polishing

Once the ideas in the body of your paper are clearly and fully developed, you are ready to polish the paper through attention to grammar, sentence structure, punctuation, and spelling. In polishing, make sure you attend to your professor's specifications on format for submission of the final draft.

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Example

IS HUMAN NATURE GOOD OR EVIL ?
AN ANCIENT CHINESE DEBATE CONCERNING GOOD AND EVIL

Introduction

Is human nature inherently good or inherently evil ? Or, are people[1] both good and evil ? These questions have long confounded Western thinkers. Interestingly, ancient

Chinese philosophers deliberated these questions as well. Their debate began sometime around 300 B.C. between Kao Tzu and Mencius, a Confucianism. Another Confucianist, Hsüntzu, responded over half a century after Mencius' death. A reading of their discussion tells us that on a line extending from inherently good to inherently evil, Mencius and Hsüntzu are at opposite ends while Kao Tzu lies at the center. The extremes that stem from a middle viewpoint invite curiosity. How does Mencius argue that human nature is inherently good and explain the evil apparent everywhere in humanity at his time? Conversely, how does Hsüntzu reconcile his assertion of inherent evil with the obvious goodness of the sage? Does Kao Tzu's claim have any merit? In an attempt to answer these questions, we will explore the debate between Kao Tzu and Mencius, then consider Hsüntzu's arguments.

At the time of these ancient philosophers, China was enmeshed In violent, political instability. The incongruity of constant warfare and the common belief that human nature is bestowed by ti'en (heaven) threw the philosophical community into a divisive debate concerning the inherent morality-or lack of-in humanity. A. C. Graham, premier scholar on Chinese thought, quotes a fragment from Expounding the Canons. a Mohists document, which seems to sum up that metaphysical quandary: "If on behalf of the criminal I declare that Heaven's Intent is the right alternative but it is his nature to be a criminal, I make it my song that Heaven's Intent is the wrong alternative. The criminal will take selfishness as Heaven's Intent and what man judges wrong as right, and his nature will be incorrigible.[2]

The Debate Between Kao Tzu and Mencius

Nothing remains to inform us of Kao Tzu's philosophy and life except that which Mencius records in his writings. According to Mencius, Kao Tzu's position is that human nature is indifferent, or neutral; the direction it takes in the process of living is reliant directly on external guidance. To achieve success in being good, this neutral nature requires skillful and possibly strong external attention. To explain this process, Kao Tzu uses the unfortunate analogy of

turning a willow tree into cups and bowls. Mencius easily discredits this by pointing out the calamity of righteousness if so violent a change is required. But, Kao Tzu also gives the example of directing whirling water. If it is directed westward by an opening, it goes west; if directed eastward, in the same manner, it goes east. Thus human nature, like water, goes in the direction it is moved. Kao Tzu also maintains that righteousness is not internal like the desire for food, or sex, which he terms humanity. Instead, righteousness is learned from external observations. So, his reverence of an old man is merely a reaction to age, "It is not the oldness within me." [3] *Mencius returns that water's true nature is to go downward, not east or west, and so, human nature tends towards righteousness naturally. He argues in 6A:6:*

---FOOTNOTES

[1] The ancient Chinese philosophers, like their Western counterparts, focused primarily on 'man,' although Mencius does broaden the scope of his discussion occasionally with the term 'people.' As a female, I am painfully aware of the invalidation of women through such exclusion.

[2] A. C. Graham, Disputers of the Tao: Philosophical Argument in Ancient China (Illinois: Open Court Publishing, 1989) 109.

[3] Wing-tsit Chan, A Source Book In Chinese Philosophy (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1963) 52.

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> *"If you let people follow their feelings (original nature), they will be able to do good. This is what is meant by saying that human nature is good. If man does evil, it is nor the fault of his natural endowment. The feeling of commiseration is found in all men; the feeling of shame and dislike is found in all men; the feeling of respect and reverence is found in all men; and the feeling of right and wrong is found*

> *in all men. The feeling of commiseration is what we call humanity; the feeling of shame and dislike is what we call righteousness; the feeling of respect and reverence is what we call propriety hi); and the feeling of right and wrong is what we call wisdom.*
>
> *Humanity, righteousness, propriety, and wisdom are not drilled into us from outside. We originally have them with us. Only we do not think [to find them]. Therefore it is said, 'Seek and you will find it, neglect and you will lose it... '"* [4]

This passage may lead us to believe that Mencius is saying that people are born with inherent feelings of commiseration, shame, respect, and reverence which we need only to find However, in 6A:7, Mencius goes on to compare these feelings to seeds or germs of wheat, indicating they are not developed or even ascertainable in their original form. In his book, Mencius On The Mind, *I. A. Richards refers to them as "impulsions", and points out that these impassions include those natural desires or impulses we share with animals.*[5] *Mencius claims that while people share many things in common with animals, such as desire for food, water, and survival, they also have something which makes them different and which they hold in common with all other people.*[6]

---FOOTNOTES

[4] Chan 5

[5] A. Richards, *Mencius on the Mind* (London: Routledge Kegan Paul LTD, 1964) 67.

[6] Mencius, *Mencius* trans. D. C Lau (England: Penguin Books, 1970) 131.

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This specific, though slight, difference is indicated by the term hsing [nature]. Hsing (nature) begins with sheng (be

born, live) which is combined with the radical for heart. Human nature is a compilation of the living processes humans share with other animals, which include inclinations such as eating and procreation, and the heart, which is the seat of thought and is also where jen (benevolence) resides. Thus, the slight difference is the addition of thought to the other inherent qualities of people which are shared with animals.

Mencius argues that if righteousness or the reaction to the old man in Kao Tzu's example were external, then people would treat an old horse with the same reverence. Mencius' most compelling argument for internal righteousness can be found in 2A.6:

> *Suppose a man were, all of a sudden, to see a young child on the verge of falling into a well. He would certainly be moved to compassion, not because he wanted to get in the good graces of the parents, nor because he wished to win the praise of his fellow villagers or friends, nor yet because he disliked the cry of the child. From this it can be seen that whoever is devoid of the heart of compassion is not human.* [7]

In the introduction to his translation of Mencius, D. C. Lau illuminates Mencius' argument. Although the lack of desire in the man for praise, indicating a lack of selfish interest is important, Lao points out that the key phrase is "all of a sudden. " This implies that the man had no time to think; his reaction is spontaneous, or without thought which indicates that the reaction is a "true manifestation of a man's nature because he was caught offguard. " Further, Lao notes that Mencius says nothing about the man doing anything, simply that he was "moved to" the feeling.[8] *Mencius uses this observation to show that if people are inherently bad, or tend towards goodness or badness depending on the way in which they are directed then there can be no "all of a sudden."*

But, why, if we are inherently good, are there evil people? We know that goodness is only a germ, like the seeds of

wheat planted in the ground. We know they lie within the heart, the thinking portion, which differentiates us from other animals. And we know that this difference is slight and must be actively cultivated, or nurtured like the wheat seed, lest it be lost. It is here that the Yangist concept of nourishing human nature is woven into Confucian thought. Mencius is not arguing that 'to have originally' is synonymous with 'starting out' with goodness. Rather, he is using the word as it is employed by his contemporaries: if human nature is good, it has developmental potential, if nourished and allowed to grow without interference.

---FOOTNOTES

[7] Mencius 82.

[8] Mencius 19.

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Although people may have the germ of goodness in their hearts, it must be allowed to sprout and then nurtured. Mencius believes that we must even seek it out, then protect and cultivate it until it reaches a height where it can care for itself. This is clear in 6:A7, his farming analogy. Here, he compares human nature to a field in which grain has been planted. In good years, the field might yield good crops, in bad years, bad crops. It is, Mencius claims, the same with humans. In good years, they tend toward the good, in bad, toward the bad. Even if there is a variation in quality during one year, it is due to the soil, or the care, not the seed. [9] *Intuitively, the farmer or parent understands this concept. Recultivated, the nature of wheat seed is to grow wheat. Likewise, the human nature will develop into goodness with care. If not, either seed withers and dies, leaving weeds or evil in its place.*

The argument at this stage has made a strong case for the goodness of human nature, but, it as yet has not made a case against bad being present as well. In 6A:14, Mencius attempts a response. Here, he presents the theory that all of the human animal, both physical and mental, is a whole,

and if treated as a whole, even the self-centered desires we share with other animals are nor bad; they are ignoble. So, if even our ignoble parts are placed in their proper order of care, just as the fingers in relation to the back, then they are not bad. Therefore, it is not the ignoble which is evil, it is the lack of awareness, or sight which creates an imbalance and a small person.[10] *This is not an altogether satisfactory response. We know that evil is a lack of awareness caused by lack of training, but we still do not know how lack of training begins. Is it an inherent lack in individual leaders or are leaders who do not provide appropriate training not really human?*

Hsüntzu's Response

This section indicates that the disagreement lies in the definition of hsing (nature). Graham explains that Hsüntzu draws a distinction between spontaneous, or natural reactions and things, such as true goodness which must be worked for.[11] *Lau concurs and adds that aside from definition, Hsüntzu differs from Mencius in that even though the possibility of morality may exist as a germ of goodness within, it requires considerable pressure from outside sources to develop into any which is functionally moral.*[12]

---FOOTNOTES

[9] Mencius 164.

[10] Mencius 177

[11] Graham 244-245.

[12] Mencius 21.

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Andrew Chih-yi Ch'eng agrees and further clarifies this by explaining that Hsüntzu qualifies his definition by adding that hsing (nature) is 'that which cannot be learned or acquired.' [13] *"On The Rectification of Terms, " book 22*

confirms this:

> *In miscellaneous psychological terms the essential factor at birth is man 's original nature. That which at birth is produced by the concord of the yin and yang, whose essence is suitable for the stimulus and response relation which is not produced by training, but exists spontaneously, is called original nature. The love, hate, joy, anger, sorrow, and pleasure of original nature are called the emotions. When the mind selects from among the emotions by which it is moved-this is called reflection. When the mind reflects and can act accordingly-this is called acquired training.*[14]

Hsüntzu believes that to merely have the potentiality, or germs, of goodness is nor enough to say that man's nature is inherently good The seeds require development and external care to develop properly. Therefore, they are not a part of human nature. Clearly, to Hsüntzu, to equate having the potential for goodness as being inherently good is a dangerous supposition. If such were the fact, then there would be no need for exterior moral training, or li (propriety). And in the warring world of Mencius and Hsüntzu, there was a great need for such training. But, our question to Hsüntzu regarding the origin of the sage remains. His answer, which is located in book 23:3, reflects the previously quoted passages: "All rules of proper conduct (Li) and justice (Yi) come from the acquired training of the Sage, not from man's original nature. " He goes on to compare the sage with a worker who creates things because of acquired training, not because of some inherent ability.[15] *So, we can visualize the sage as using his evaluative ability to consider the potentialities inherent in his nature and, by continued thought and further training, creating a complete system of conduct and justice. As with Mencius' answer to the origin of evil, this is not altogether satisfactory. It would seem that such an individual who, living in such an evil time, manages to simply shape goodness in the process of other things is something of a miracle.*

Perhaps the problem arises from Hsüntzu's claim that human nature is evil. His definition of hsing (nature) does not necessarily lead to such a conclusion. After all, we do not conclude that other animals are evil simply because they act in accordance with their natural tendencies.

---FOOTNOTES

[13] Andrew Chih-yi Ch'eng, *Hsüntzu's Theory of Human Nature and Its Influence on Chinese Thought* (New York: Columbia University, 1928) 42.

[14] Hsüntzu, *The Works of Hsüntzu* trans. Homer H. Dubs (London: Late Probsthain Co., 1928) 282-283.

[15] Dubs 305.

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Ch'eng explains that this has to do with Hsüntzu's concept of evil. If we consult his definitions, we can surmise that he looks upon good and evil as a social phenomenon:

He uses the two words merely as relative terms. For instance, he says, "What is meant by good is a condition of normality and peaceful rule and what is meant by evil is a condition of depravity and rebellion. " So the word evil is used merely to describe the contemporary social conditions without any philosophical import. By saying that human nature is evil he does nor mean that it is totally depraved and hopeless. What he means is simply that man has failed to adjust himself to his social environment. He conceives of evil as a moral failure instead of an innate wickedness.[16]

This passage does account for evil given the canons of the Confucian school, which rejects a self-centered interest in profit. What it does not seem to account for is the origin of human goodness. In treating human goodness as an artifact, Hsüntzu seems to have the same difficulties as Kao Tzu's willow/bowl analogy.

Conclusion

Kao Tzu, Mencius and Hsüntzu agree on the need for education and training through li (propriety or rites), but they disagree in their consideration of hsing (nature). Kao Tzu provides the thesis that human nature is neutral, thus human beings can be directed by outside forces towards good or evil. Unfortunately, Kao Tzu's belief that human nature requires direct intervention by extreme external measures indicates an assumption that human nature tends towards evil. Mencius' attitude towards humankind 's good instincts is a generous acknowledgment of the potential for goodness. He also indicates a need for external direction. However, Mencius' idea of external guidance is one of nurturing and thus differs dramatically from Kao Tzu's. Mencius' theory affirms the goodness in humanity, but fails to account for the origin of humankind's evil deeds, thus it is not complete.

On the other hand, Hsüntzu claims that the biological instincts humans share with other animals need to be modified to produce goodness. These biological instincts are by their nature selfish, thus in a cooperative society, they are evil. The origin of Hsüntzu's concept of external guidance is mysterious, and seems as puzzling as Kao Tzu's analogy of making the willow into cups and bowls. Thus, Hsüntzu fails to account for the origin of goodness and therefore his theory is incomplete as well. This leads us to conclude that although the dialogue among these philosophers is illuminating, it is as confounding and inconclusive as that of Western thinkers. However, their answers, even though incomplete, provide us with lines of inquiry which we may profitably pursue in our own efforts to understand ourselves.[17]

---FOOTNOTES

[16] Cheng 42.

[17] I would like to acknowledge and thank Bill Uzgalis for his valuable assistance and support during the numerous rewrites of this paper.

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See also Identifying a Philosophical Problem, p. 13; Organizing Your Ideas, p. 15; A Series of Steps, p. 5; and Documentation in Philosophy, p. 93.

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Documentation and Referencing

Documentation in Philosophy

In any philosophy writing that uses information from other sources, the source of the borrowed information must be clearly documented. This enables the reader of your paper to re-create your research and writing process. To borrow information from another without proper acknowledgment is a form of dishonesty known as plagiarism. OSU Academic Regulation 15 requires honesty in academic work.

> *Honesty in Academic Work (Academic Regulation 15):*
>
> > *The administration of the classroom rests with the instructor. When evidence of academic dishonesty comes to the instructor's attention, the instructor should (a) document the incident, (b) permit the accused student to provide an explanation, (c) advise the student of possible penalties, and (d) take action. The instructor may impose any academic penalty up to and including an "F" grade in the course after consulting with his or her department chair and informing the student of the action taken. Using the standard form, the instructor must report the incident and the action taken to his or her department chair, who, in turn, shall forward the report to his or her dean.*

Methods of Documentation

There are two primary methods of documentation in the writing patterns of philosophy: the *MLA in-text citation* style, and *footnotes or endnotes*. You should ask your professors which style they prefer, if their paper instructions are not explicit.

In-text Citations

The MLA (Modern Language Association) style of documentation recommends in-text citations that refer readers to a list of works cited.

An in-text citation combines:

- A phrase that names the author of the source, and
- A reference that includes at least a page number.

For example, suppose in your paper you quote the following sentence from a book by Marcus J. Borg: "Two key words enable us to glimpse what was most central to Jesus: spirit and compassion." Your in-text citation would look like this: (Borg 46). The reader then knows to turn to the list of "Works Cited" at the conclusion of the paper where more detailed information about the book by Borg can be found: Borg, Marcus J. *Meeting Jesus Again for the First Time*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1994.

In MLA style, a bibliography is compiled at the end of the paper under the heading, "Works Cited." The "Works Cited" section will include the books and articles referenced by the citations within the body of the paper and may also include resource material consulted but not cited. "Works Cited" lists sources alphabetically according to the author's last name. A listing consists of three elements:

a. Author's name
b. Title
c. Publication Information

Footnotes or Endnotes

A more traditional citation format is to use footnotes (located at the bottom of the page on which the reference is cited) or endnotes (located at the end of the paper). Footnotes and endnotes are signified by the use of superscript type and a successive numbering system. In either form, notes require complete publishing information as do in-text citations:

- Elements of Documentation (first reference should be fully documented):
  a. Author's name
  b. Title
  c. Publication information
  d. Page reference
- Second and Subsequent references:
  a.) Last name of author

b. Title, if more than one work of an author is cited in the paper
c. Page reference

- Citation Formats:

The format for citation using footnotes or endnotes largely follows the same style as the formats for in-text citations. However, there are two important differences:

1. The author's first name comes first in the citation, i.e., Kathleen D. Moore, rather than Moore, Kathleen D., and the last name is followed by a comma rather than a period.

2. The publication information--place of publication, publisher, and year of publication--is enclosed within a parentheses.

The original example used to illustrate in-text citation would look like this in a footnote or endnote system:

1. Marcus J. Borg, Meeting Jesus Again for the First Time (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1994) 46.

Citation Forms

Whether you use the MLA In-text citation style or the more common Endnotes and Footnotes style, you will need to compile a list of sources used and put it at the end of your paper. The MLA calls this section "Works Cited"; otherwise it is called a "Bibliography." Here is how you should list the sources you consult:

1. General Form of Book Citations

Authors Name: Last name, comma, fist name, period.

Title Full title, italicized or underlined, period. Include subtitles.

Publication Information:

a. Editor or Translator's Name: First name, last name, preceded by Ed. or Trans., followed by period.
b. Edition: 2nd ed., 3rd ed., etc.
c. Volume number
d. Publisher: city, state, colon, publishing company, comma, year of publication.
e. Page numbers: Used only when a specialized part of a book is cited, such as a preface or appendix.

2. General Form of Periodical Citations

Author's Name: Last name, comma, first name, period.

Title: Enclosed in quotation marks. Period precedes closing quotation.

Publication Information:

a. Name of book or periodical: Italicized or underlined, period.
b. Volume and Issue number:
c. Publication Date and page numbers: Year of publication in parentheses, colon, page numbers of article, period.

Examples of Book Citation Formats

Book:

Hamington, Maurice. *Hail Mary? The Struggle for Ultimate Woman hood in Catholicism*. New York: Routledge, 1995.

Two or Three Authors:
Lakoff, George and Mark Johnson. *Metaphors We Live By*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1980.

Four or More Authors:
Bouma, Hessel, III, et al. *Christian Faith, Health and Medical Practice*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1989.

Editor:
List, Peter C., Ed. *Radical Environmentalism: Philosophy and Tactics*. Belmont, California: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1993.

Author with an Editor:
Mill, John Stuart. *Utilitarianism*. Ed. Samuel Gorovitz. Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1971.

Translation:
Kant, Immanuel. *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*. Trans. Lewis White Beck. Indianapolis, Indiana: Bobbs-Merrill Educational Publishing, 1969.

Two or More Works By the Same Author:
Borg, Marcus J. *Meeting Jesus Again for the First Time*. New York: Harper San Francisco, 1994.
__________. *Jesus: A New Vision*. San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1987.

Second or Subsequent Edition:
Moore, Kathleen Dean. *Inductive Arguments: Developing Critical Thinking Skills*. 3rd ed. Dubuque, Iowa: Kendall Hunt Publishing Company, 1995.

Multivolume Work:
Kierkegaard, Soren. *Either/Or*. 2 vols. Garden City, New York: Doubleday Company, Inc., 1959.

Work in an Anthology:
Roberts, Lani. "Duty, Virtue, and the Victim's Voice." Ed. Courtney S. Campbell and B. Andrew Lustig, *Duties to Others*. Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Kluwer, 1989. 109-121.

Examples of Periodical Citation Formats

Article in a Journal Paginated by Issue:
Leibowitz, Flo. "Pornography and Persuasion." *Philosophy and Literature* 18:1 (1994): 118-123.

Article in a Journal Paginated by Volume:
Uzgalis, William L. "The Anti-Essential Locke and Natural Kinds." *The Philosophical Quarterly* 38 (1988): 330-340.

Article in a Newspaper:
Pacheco, Manuel. "Mexico's Problems Go Beyond the Peso." *The Oregonian* 11 August 1994: B12.

Article in a Weekly Magazine:
Borg, Marcus. "Death as the Teacher of Wisdom." *The Christian Century* 26 February 1986: 203-206.

Article in a Monthly Magazine:
Moore, Kathleen Dean. "The Willamette River." *The North American Review* March/April 1994: 8-10.

Review:
Scanlan, Michael. Rev. of *Bertrand Russell: The Origins*, by A. Garciadiego. Modern Logic 5:4 (1995): 428-434

Editorial:
"No License to Kill." Editorial. *The Oregonian* 20 October 1994: D8.

Letter to the Editor:
Campbell, Courtney S. Letter. *The Oregonian* 27 October 1993: D6.

Examples of Citation Formats for Other Sources

Pamphlet or Government Publication:
Association of Forest Service Employees for Environmental Ethics. *Clarion Calling: A Guidebook for Forest Service Employees*. Eugene, Oregon. 1995.

Personal Interview:

Nelson, Carrie. Personal Interview. 20 October 1995.

Film:
North by Northwest. Dir. Alfred Hitchcock. MGM, 1959.

Television Program:
"Do Unto Others." *Ethics in America*. Narr. Fred Friendly. PBS, WGBH Boston. 7 Aug. 1988.

Need Help?

For additional information on documentation, citations, and referencing in philosophy papers, consult the following sources (the first displays MLA style, the second, endnote style):

Hacker, Diana. *A Pocket Style Manual*. Boston: Bedford Books of St. Martin's Press, 1993.

Joseph Gibaldi and Walter S. Achtert, *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*, 3rd ed. (New York: Modern Language Association of America, 1988).

Citation Guide for Internet Sources

In citing from the internet it is important to consider the form, dates, and source. The general form of an internet citation is:

> Author's last name, first name. "Title of the Work" or "title line of the message." "Title of the Complete Work" or title of the list/site as appropriate. The internet address of the work. The date of the work (if available). The date that you accessed the work.

Documents on the internet are ever changing. The web page you cite may have changed by the time your work is read. It is important to note the date of the work so that the relevant version of that work may be identified. Web pages, email messages, and new s group posts typically have dates of production or revision. It is also valuable for you to provide the date on which you accessed the document. This may help in identification of the source. Even if the document ceases to exist at some point, your work will show that you attended to the details in a thoughtful way.

Internet Sources vary: the web, gopher, ftp, e-mail, news groups, chat rooms, and more. The full internet address identifies what type of source you used. Below are samples that indicate how citations of internet sources may be made.

World Wide Web
Uzgalis, William. <uzgalisw@cla.orst.edu>. "Stories and Themes" in Great Voyages: The History of Western Philosophy from 1492 to 1776. <http://www.orst.edu/instruct/phl302/stories.html> September, 1995. Accessed May 1, 1997.

Dorbolo, Jon. <dorboloj@ucs.orst.edu>. "Sparks and Flames" in InterQuest. <http://iq.orst.edu/odyssey/02dd13.html>. January, 1997. Accessed May 1, 1997.

Listserv Messages
Salahub, Eric. . "Can We Think Too Much?" InterQuest. <phl201-class@iq.orst.edu> 4/ 21197. Accessed 5/1/97.

FTP Site
Heinrich, Gregor. <100303.100@compuserve.com>. "Where there is Beauty There is Hope: Sau Tome e Principe." <ftp.cs.ubc.ca/pub/locals/FAQ/african/gen/saoep.txt>. July, 1994. Accessed May 1, 1997.

Gopher Site
Plato, Phaedrus, Tr. Benjamin Jowett <gopher://gopher.vt.edu:10010/02/131/15>. Accessed May 1, 1997.

Discussion Group
Hinman, Larry. "Forgiveness," In Ethics Updates, Ethics Updates Discussion Forum, Virtue Ethics, ed. Hinman, Larry. <hinman@acusd.edu>. Feb 17, 1997. Accessed May 1, 1997.

E-mail Messages
Barnette, Ron. <rbarnett@grits.valdosta.peachnet.edu>. "Exploring Cyberspace." Private e-mail message to Dorbolo, Jon <dorboloj@ucs.orst.edu>. April 21, 1997.

These instances provide you with ways to cite your uses of internet documents. The purpose of a citation is to provide a reference point so that readers may check your sources for themselves. When you are in doubt as to the proper form of citation, supply the information needed

to access your source.

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Guidelines For Non-Sexist Use Of Language

The following guidelines are a condensed form of those originally published in the *Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association* in February 1986 (Vol. 59, Number 3), pp. 471-482. Virginia L. Warren, Chapman College, APA Committee on the Status of Women in the Profession.

For several reasons we, as philosophers, should be particularly sensitive to the issue of sexist language-that is, language whose "use creates, constitutes, promotes, or exploits an unfair or irrelevant distinction between the sexes" (Mary Vetterling-Braggin, 1981, p.3). First, our profession has long focused on language. Accordingly, we are attuned to the emotive force of words and to the ways in which language influences thought and behavior. Second, we pride ourselves on our willingness to question assumptions. Yet the uncritical use of sexist language may blind us to our having adopted a particular value-laden perspective. Such blindness may systematically distort our theories and interfere with the careers and lives of many of our colleagues and students, both female and male. Third, as scholars and teachers we pursue truth wherever it leads: to the reform of our ordinary concepts and beliefs and, if necessary, of our everyday language.

Our readers and listeners may have been receiving a message that we never intended to send. Rather than encouraging a superficial recasting of words, these guidelines are designed to foster a deeper appreciation of how easily bias slips into our thoughts and theories.

The Generic Use of 'Man' and 'He'

The generic use of 'man and 'he' (and 'his,' 'him,' 'himself) is commonly considered gender-neutral. The case against the generic use of these terms does not rest on rare

instances in which they refer ambiguously to 'male' or 'human being.' Rather, *every* occurrence of their generic use is problematic. . . There are convincing reasons, both empirical and conceptual, for avoiding the generic 'he' and 'man' and for specifically including females. Hence, it is inadequate to state in an opening footnote that, for the remainder of the letter, article or book, 'he' shall stand for 'he and she' and 'man' for all humanity. What authors intend is not the issue. Good intentions not carried through are not good enough.

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Summary of Guidelines for the Nonsexist Use of Language

When constructing examples and theories, remember to *include* those human activities, interests, and points of view which traditionally have been associated with females.

Eliminate the generic use of 'he' by:

- using plural nouns
- deleting 'he,' 'his,' and 'him' altogether
- substituting articles ('the,''a,''an') for 'his'; and 'who' for 'he'
- substituting 'one,' 'we,' or 'you' - minimizing use of indefinite pronouns
- using the passive voice [use sparingly]
- substituting nouns for pronouns [use sparingly]

Eliminate the generic use of 'man':

- for 'man,' substitute 'person'/'people,''individual(s),' 'human being(s)'
- for 'mankind,' substitute 'humankind,' 'humanity,' 'the human race'
- for 'manhood,' substitute 'adulthood,''maturity'
- delete unnecessary references to generic 'man'

Eliminate sexism when addressing persons formally by:

- using 'Ms' instead of 'Miss' or 'Mrs.,' even when a woman's marital status is known
- using a married woman's first name instead of her husband's (e.g., "Ms. Annabelle Lee" not "Mrs. Herman Lee")
- using the corresponding title for females ('Ms.,' 'Dr.,"Prof.') whenever a title is appropriate for males
- using 'Dear Colleague' or 'Editor' or 'Professor,' etc. in letters to unknown persons (instead of 'Dear Sir,' 'Gentlemen')

Eliminate sexual stereotyping of roles by:

- using the same term (which avoids the generic 'man') for both females and males (e.g., 'department chair' or 'chairperson'), or by using the corresponding verb (e.g., 'to chair')
- not calling attention to irrelevancies (e.g., 'lady lawyer,"male nurse')

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Philosophical Writing in E-Mail

E-mail (electronic mail) is communicating with other people in writing by means of a computer network. Some common academic applications of e-mail by students are communicating with professors, arranging meeting times, organizing group projects, sharing class notes and ideas, solving problems with other students, submitting paper drafts to instructors, and getting writing advice from the On-Line Writing Center. All this can be done without e-mail, of course, but an advantage of the electronic form is that you may carry on a conversation with several people even though all are in separate places at different times.

The form of e-mail as a written medium is particularly valuable to philosophy students. Communicating difficult ideas in writing to others is a way to bring out your strongest thinking Being able to write e-mail effectively is a preparation for other forms of philosophical writing. Here are some guides to writing clear and effective e-mail for academic uses.

I. KNOW YOUR TOOLS: E-mail comes in many different forms. Use those that are comfortable and convenient for you. Do spend some time to acquire and study the user manual (available at your University Computer Services department) and/or help file (available from within the program). You do not need to master the full program to be an effective e-mail writer. You do need to know what features are available and master those most useful to you. The more time you put into actually using your email program, the more you learn about what it can do.

2. KNOW YOUR ACCESS: The easier it is for you to get to a computer, the more likely you will use it frequently. There are several access sites (labs, kiosks, stations) available on any campus. Chances are that wherever on campus you are, you are but a few minutes away from an e-mail

session. Recognizing this allows you to schedule your e-mail use into openings in your larger schedule.

Time is an important factor in effective use of e-mail. The most effective way is to have short and frequent sessions. Thirty minutes every day is a much more effective and enjoyable way to use e-mail than longer periods of time further apart. You may have the sense of really discussing rather than just reading old mail. If you use e-mail at all, then you should be prepared to check in regularly. If you are using e-mail in a class, three times per week is minimum. This is because the nature of e-mail is that it is quick and change happens fast. Information sent by e-mail typically calls for rapid response. More than a week away from the e-mail box renders much of your valuable mail obsolete. And as the number of unread/unanswered messages grows in your Inbox, so will your frustration. A simple rule for productive e-mail: Do a little at a time and do it often.

3. SAVE AND DELETE: Make sure you know how to save important messages, both on your e-mail system and to a disk. Save and keep copies of important messages, such as those from your professor. Your e-mail program automatically saves copies of messages that you send. This provides a record of your correspondence. Such information may prove valuable to you in assessing grades and is enjoyable to look back on in later life. When you know how to save what you want, you are freer to delete what you don't need. This is the key to reducing the pressure of too much e-mail.

4. WRITING TO: An e-mail message has a header indicating the main recipient of the message (To:), other recipients of the message (Cc: or "carbon copy"), and a subject line to indicate the content of the message. Use the To: line to enter the e-mail address of the person(s) from whom some action is requested. Use the Cc: line for sharing the message with other interested parties. The Subject: line is like the title of an essay. Make it informative. It is by the subject line that potential readers will determine whether

they should read your message. This is especially important when a message is sent back and forth as a number of replies. Consider for example the subject lines from a lively exchange:

> Subject: Plato's Feminism
> Subject: re: Plato's Feminism
> Subject: re: re: Plato's Feminism
> Subject: Is Plato Really a Feminist?

Notice that the reply sequence just keeps going on and on adding little new information. The last subject line breaks this cycle by focusing in on an aspect of the conversation. Think of your subject line as a descriptive abstract of the content of your message. As the content of the conversation changes, so should the subject line.

5. PREFACE YOUR COMMENTS: A main source of unclarity in e-mail writing is not telling your readers what the message is in reference to. Imagine opening a message to read, "That is an interesting point, though I still disagree with much of what the author says. . ." You may read the entire message without a single clue as to what the "point" is and who the "author" is. Compare this opening: "Jeremy, you make a good point when you say that 'Vlastos interprets Plato's Feminism using a very narrow conception of what Feminism really is.' There are several other points in Vlastos's article that I disagree with as well...." Even if you know nothing of Vlastos, Plato, or feminism, it is at least clear here what is at issue. Work to bring that much clarity into the preface of your e-mail messages.

6. EDIT REPLIES: A useful feature of e-mail is the ability to answer a message by including the original message in the reply. This way the other person's words are right there along with your comments. Even better is the ability to move around in the original message and comment on specific parts (the way a professor writes in the margins of your essay).

After a number of replies the messages may become hard to read. Outdated and extraneous text should be deleted

leaving just the parts of the message you are replying to. E-mail programs have delete functions. Use these to cut out all but the directly relevant material. You will end up with a sharper, clearer message more likely to receive a response. Don't worry about cutting out parts. The original is probably stored and can be retrieved if need be.

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7. WHITE SPACE: When responding within a text, put a few lines of white space between the original text and your comments. This increases readability. Compare the examples below:

Example A

>Plato could not have been a Feminist. Women had no power in Athens anyway.>>Exactly! It is in that context of oppression that his Feminist ideas in the Republic seem so revolutionary>Nowhere does he say that women should hold political office, own land, or run businesses.>>But the Republic is describing a society radically different from Athens. In fact he says that in an ideal state women will be among the guardians and a woman may even be the King.

Example B

>Plato could not have been a Feminist. Women had no power in Athens anyway.

>>Exactly! It is in that context of oppression that his Feminist ideas in the Republic seem so revolutionary.

>Nowhere does he say that women should hold political office, own land, or run businesses.

>>But the Republic is describing a society radically different from Athens. In fact he says

that in an ideal state women will be among the guardians and a woman may even be the King.

In this e-mail program the ">" marks indicate the different writers. The addition of a few lines of white space makes the difference much clearer.

8. FOCUS: E-mail is great medium for free thinking and free writing. All the same, it is important to make your messages more readable by sticking to a central issue or point. If you have other issues to raise or other points to make, do so in other messages. A focused message, whatever the length, is much more readable than a message with several different issues in it.

9. WRITE DIRECTLY AND AFFIRMATIVELY: It is hard to pull off irony, satire, and indirect persuasion in any medium. E-mail is extra tough on this. You are much better off directly stating what you have to say. Compare these:

A. >Oh sure, by all means let's have term limits! After all, with only 12 years to serve, we can certainly expect those in Congress to do a perfect job. If they can't solve all our problems in 20 years of office then they certainly should be able to do so in 12. Think about it!

B. >How can term limits solve our political problems? Do you think that smaller states will benefit from these arbitrary limits? And who is to say that so-called term limits will work?

C. >I oppose term limits because I do not believe they will achieve the objective set for them. Term limits are supposed to lessen the power of incumbents and reduce corruption in office. But I think term limits will create an even worse situation in which the majority of Congress will be motivated to get as much as they can in the few years they will be in office. This will produce effects that are the opposite of what term limits are intended for.

All three authors might be making the same point, yet the ways they set about making it differ greatly. Of them, only the last provides the author's genuine ideas and reasoning. Sarcasm (as in message A) always runs the risk of being misinterpreted. After all, the sarcastic author is pretending to take the view opposite of their own and make it appear ridiculous. You may as well suppose that the author of A really supports term limits. Using rhetorical questions runs the risk that readers will simply answer them according to their own view. Supposing that the author of B is against term limits, suppose a term limits advocate answer the questions as follows: "*By eliminating corrupt politicians. Yes. The American people.*" If that is the effect of the message on a reader, it clearly does not serve its purpose. The plainest way to communicate your point is to state it directly and with sufficient reasoning. The author of C conveys a sense of confidence and seriousness that stands less chance of misinterpretation and invites constructive discussion.

I0. WRITE ETHICALLY: A simple technique can help you determine whether a comment is appropriate for your e-mail message. When composing the message, imagine that the comments you are writing in your message are a professor's comments in the margins of your own work. How might you react to professorial comments such as these?

> Do you really believe any of this? Think about it!
> Who are you to say what is right here?
> I'm sick and tired of people who go on and on about....
> Your so-called "essay" says more about you than the topic.

You probably would not count these as fair criticisms of your work. Neither should you count such verbal moves as fair responses to your e-mail correspondents. Treat your correspondents with the same respect that you reserve for yourself.

I I. ASK QUESTIONS: Some messages may call for no response at all. For those that do, close the message with

an invitation to continue the dialogue. Simply asking what someone else thinks of your points is an invitation to continue. E-mail works best when it flows. Letting your conversant know that you are interested in what they have to say (if genuinely felt) can promote smoother and more cordial mail exchanges.

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I2. COLLABORATIVE WRITING: Some students use e-mail in a very productive way, by working through the steps of a writing project with others on-line. This process can help you focus on specific aspects of your task, organize your thinking, manage your time, and revise in response to appropriate feedback. To achieve this you need one or more E-mail partners. Other students in your class may be willing, especially since the process can be performed on separate schedules. You may even try positing requests to mailgroups of students at other schools. Some students have formed gratifying intellectual relationships with students in other countries.

This collaborative writing process proceeds by treating each step in the writing task as a separate email message. Start this process several days before the assignment is due. Write one message each day addressing one of the steps. Read your partners' messages and respond to them thoughtfully and critically. Ask questions, point out alternatives, acknowledge strong arguments, and provide the kind of commentary that gives your partner a basis to reassess their work. Remember, you and your partner(s) are not grading each other. Your professor will grade your work. Criticism and questioning does no harm in the collaborative process.

Consider how you may apply this technique to writing a *Refutation Essay* (See *Forms of Philosophical Writing* in this Handbook.) Following the four steps of the classic model of refutation, you would perform the following with your partner(s):

Day I: Write an e-mail message in which you

give a statement of the question under dispute.
Day 2: Write an e-mail message in which you present a fair argument for the opposing position on that question. Read and reply to your partners' messages.
Day 3: Write an e-mail message in which you give a refutation of the argument given in your Day 2 message. Read and reply to your partners' messages
Day 4: Write an e-mail message in which you state your personal position on the issue and give a strong argument for it. Read and reply to your partners' messages
Day 5: Pull together the first four messages and comments. Make a draft of the four parts, revise and send to your partner(s).

Continue and resolve this process as it meets the needs of your circumstances. Note what you gain from it. In five days you have produced a considered draft of your refutation essay, you have given and received critical feedback, you have revised your work, and you have done all this with an investment of just minutes each day. Many students find that the collaborative writing process provides them with nearly finished assignments with much less effort than the "write it all at on the night before it is due." The key is having someone to write for and communicate with. A cooperative audience, your partner(s), is an excellent writing aid.

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How to Get Help

Your Professor

Your best resource is your professor. Each professor posts office hours, when he or she is available exclusively to work with students--to answer their questions, to read their drafts, to give advice and clarify directions. So take advantage of office hours; they may be the best resource on campus.

Writing Guides

A variety of writing guides give good advice about writing. At least one of them should be on your book shelf, next to your dictionary.

Rise B. Axelrod, *The St. Martin's Guide to Writing*

Richard Bullock, *The St. Martin's Manual for Writing in the Disciplines*, p. 13.

Lisa Ede, *Work in Progress*

Diana Hacker, *A Pocket-Style Manual*

Diana Hacker, *A Writer's Reference*

Andrew Harnack, *Writing Research Papers*

Zachary Seech, *Writing Philosophy Papers*

Byron L. Stay, *A Guide to Argumentative Writing*.

Edward M. White, *Assigning, Responding, Evaluating*

Writing Learning Center

In order to help students become more proficient, confident, and self-sufficient writers, the Center for Writing and Learning's Writing Center assistants can meet with students on a regular or one-time basis to provide informed, careful responses to work-in-progress. Writing assistants can also work with students who need practice in specific areas of grammar and punctuation. The center can be found in Waldo 125B. Their phone number is 737-2930.

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SOCRATIC WISDOM

An Exercise in Interpretation

Introduction

Socratic wisdom plays a central role in Plato's dialogue the *Apology*. Socrates claims that it is because he has a certain sort of wisdom that he is in the trouble in which he finds himself, that is, in court with his life in jeaporady. Socrates proceeds to describle how his quest to understand the puzzling claim of the God at Delphi -- that there is no man wiser than Socrates -- provoked the anger of the old accusers against him. He also describes a number of instances where his wisdom led him to make decisions about what course of action to take. Given the centrality and importance of this concept of Socratic wisdom, it is perhaps unsurprising that there would be differing interpretations of what it is. If there are even two interpretations which are really different from one another then they will be incompatible. That is, they cannot both be true. The question then becomes which one is the right interpretation. How could one answer this question? One answer is that the right interpretation or the best interpretation is the one which is best supported by the text of the *Apology*.

In this exercise you are going to try to determine to what degree a particular passage from the *Apology* supports or refutes two competing interpretative hypotheses about what Socratic wisdom amounts to. What are these two interpretaitons? And why do we call them hypotheses? How does a passage from a text support or refute a hypothesis? In what follows, I will do my best to help you understand the two interpretative hypotheses and the ways in which they are similar to and different from one another. Once you understand this, then you can look at a passage from the *Apology* to see which hypothesis the passage supports and which it refutes.

Interpretations

In reading a text we want to understand an author. Often enough in reading a philosophical text we find that there are several possible meanings -- the text is ambiguous. How are we to decide which meaning is right, thus resolving the ambiguity. An interpretation of a philosophic text is a particular explanation or account of the meaning of that text. Different interpretations are, in effect, differing accounts of the meaning of a passage or

text. In this case we have two different meanings of "Socratic wisdom." The question we want to answer is which meaning is best supported by the text. The two interpretations are these:

1. Socratic wisdom is knowing that you know nothing.
2. Socratic wisdom is being able to distinguish what you know from what you do not know.

Supposing for a moment that these two interpretations really are different (This is often not obvious to some students), what does it mean to treat these interpretations as hypotheses? And how is one to use the text to determine which of them is better supported?

Hypothesis, and consequences

One might take a hypothesis in this case to be an unproved supposition which one tentatively accepts in order to explain certain facts. In this case it is going to be facts about the meaning of a particular text. In other contexts it will be facts about the world or ourselves that we want to predict or explain. For a general account of the nature of hypothetical reasoning, you can visit the Hypothetical Reasoning section of Interquest Odyssey.

Hypotheses are often put in the form of 'if...then' sentences, where the hypothesis is in the if clause of the sentence, and the facts which it predicts or explains are in the then clause. So if we put our two interpretations of Socratic wisdom into this format we get:

1. **If Socratic wisdom is knowing that you know nothing, then...**
   and
2. **If Socratic wisdom is being able to distinguish what you know from what you don't know, then...**

The question then becomes what facts the two hypotheses might predict or explain. We need to know these in order to fill in the **then** part of these **if...then** sentences. How would we know what these facts are? The answer here is that one has to examine the two hypotheses carefully and ask what follows from each of them. Things which are not implied by the hypothesis or which do not follow from it are not relevant. This puts severe limitations on what can appear in the then clause. Thus, suppose we were to say that one

fact implied by the first hypothesis is that someone who knows that they do not know will be wealthy. Socrates may, in fact, think there is some connection between wisdom and wealth, but no such connection comes from just looking at the concepts which explicitly appear in the hypothesis. So, we have no way (at present) to connect wealth and wisdom. So how should one proceed?

The first and most important reply is to stick with the language of the hypothesis. Both hypotheses talk about *knowing* and *not knowing,* so it is consequences related to knowing and not knowing which are genuinely going to follow from the hypotheses. One good question to ask is what would one expect Socrates to say or not say if the first (or the second) hypothesis about wisdom is correct? One might also look at related concepts. What is the opposite of wisdom? Well, it might simply be called foolishness! (There may well be another state which is in between wisdom and foolishness. But don't worry about that now.) What does the definition of Socratic wisdom tell you about being foolish? How would you define foolishness, if the first interpretation is right about what wisdom is? It is pretty clear that this is likely to be a fruitful question because Socrates' quest involves determining if someone is wise or not.

So, here are some consequences which likely follow from the first hypothesis:

1. If Socratic wisdom is knowing that you know nothing, Socrates (who claims to possess this wisdom) would never say that he knew anything (other than that he knows that he does not know anything).
2. If Socratic wisdom is knowing that you know nothing, anyone who claims to know anything (other than that they know nothing) would think they knew things which they did not know.
3. If Socratic wisdom is knowing that you know nothing, thinking you know what you do not will not only be a mark that one who does not possess wisdom, but will define the state of being foolish.

Here are some consequences which likely follow from the second hypothesis:

1. If Socratic wisdom is being able to distinguish what you know from what you don't know, Socrates (who claims he has this wisdom) would carefully distinguish what he knows from what he does not know.
2. If Socratic wisdom is being able to distinguish what you know from what you don't know, Socrates will make claims to know things.

3. If Socratic wisdom is being able to distinguish what you know from what you don't know, then thinking you know what you do not will not only be a mark of not possessing wisdom, it will define the state of being foolish.

There may well be other consequences which you can derive from the two interpretative hypotheses, but these will probably do.

Testing Hypotheses

At this point it might be well to read the section *Testing Hypotheses* in *Writing Philosophy Papers: A Student Guide* to get an idea about how testing hypotheses works. Note that the Guide tells you that it is important to be able to distinguish "which consequences are predicted by several hypotheses and which consequences are unique to a single hypothesis." How does one do this?

The answer in this case is that we need to compare the lists of consequences compiled above to see what consequences are the same for both hypotheses and which ones are different. We want to do this in order to isolate the differences or incompatibilies between the two hypotheses. Why is this important? The reason is that that when you go to look at the passage, it is the differences which will tell you which (if either) of the hypotheses the passage supports and which one it refutes.

Notice that while the definition of wisdom in each hypothesis is different, the definition of foolishness is the same! It follows from both hypotheses, if you think you know what you do not know, you are not only not wise, you are foolish! Why is this important. It is important because you now know that finding this account of foolishness in the text will not in any way tell you that one interpretation is better than the other. This definition of foolishness does not distinguish between them! So what does? How are they different?

Look at 1 in the list of consequences of the first hypothesis and compare it with 2 in the second. Here we have a real incompatibility. Should we find Socrates making claims to knowledge in the *Apology* the first hypothesis would require us to say that he is foolish. But this contradicts the claim that Socrates possess this kind of wisdom. This would show that the first interpretative hypothesis is incoherent and, in fact, refuted by the text. On the other hand, if Socrates makes claims to know things, this would be perfectly compatible with the second hypothesis. So the text would support that hypothesis.

If Socrates were to never make claims to know anything beyond the claim that he knows nothing, that would strongly support the first hypothesis. The fact that in whatever passage is relevant he does not make any claim to know or distinguish between wh at he knows and what he does not know would tend to refute the second hypothesis.

Now, at long last you are just about ready to go look at the passage of the *Apology* to determine which hypothesis it supports and which one it refutes. But before you go to do this. You should make clear to yourself what you are looking for. Reread the last three paragraphs, and write down for yourself what you are looking for which would refute the first interpretative hypothesis (that Socratic wisdom is knowing that you know nothing) and what would refute the second hypothesis (that Socra tic wisdom is being able to distinguish between what you know and what you don't know.) Now that you have done that you are ready to look at the passage! Here it is:

> Strange, indeed, would be my conduct, O men of Athens, if I who, when I was ordered by the generals whom you chose to command me at Potidaea and Amphipolis and Delium, remained where they placed me, like any other man, facing death; if, I say, now, when, as I conceive and imagine, God orders me to fulfil the philosopher's mission of searching into myself and other men, I were to desert my post through fear of death, or any other fear; that would indeed be strange, and I might justly be arraigned in court for denying the existence of the gods, if I disobeyed the oracle because I was afraid of death: then I should be fancying that I was wise when I was not wise. For this fear of death is indeed the pretence of wisdom, and not real wisdom, being the appearance of knowing the unknown; since no one knows whether death, which they in their fear apprehend to be the greatest evil, may not be the greatest good. Is there not here conceit of knowledge, which is a disgraceful sort of ignorance? And this is the point in which, as I think, I am superior to men in general, and in which I might perhaps fancy myself wiser than other men, - that whereas I know but little of the world below, I do not suppose that I know: but I do know that injustice and disobedience to a better, whether God or man, is evil and dishonorable, and I will never fear or avoid a possible good rather than a certain evil. And therefore if you let me go now, and reject the counsels of Anytus, who said that if I were not put to death I ought not to have been prosecuted, and that if I escape now, your sons will all be utterly ruined by listening to my words - if you say to me, Socrates, this time we will not mind Anytus, and will let you off, but upon one condition, that are to

> inquire and speculate in this way any more, and that if you are caught doing this again you shall die; - if this was the condition on which you let me go, I should reply: Men of Athens, I honor and love you; but I shall obey God rather than you, and while I have life and strength I shall never cease from the practice and teaching of philosophy, exhorting anyone whom I meet after my manner, and convincing him...

Now Write your Essay!

Now write a brief essay (say 300 to 350 words) in which you:

1. briefly introduce the problem of deciding which interpretation is best supported by the text,
2. tell us which consequences follow from each hypothesis;
3. explain which consequences follow from both hypotheses,and which from only one or the other
4. tell us which hypothesis is best supported by the text and what exactly the evidence is for this, and
5. give a brief conclusion which announces the solution to the problem.