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READING AND WRITING ABOUT GENERALIZATIONS: THEORETICAL DISCIPLINES

Some disciplines, such as philosophy and parts of most other disciplines from physics to literary studies, formulate written statements that are generally true across many situations. Theoretical statements can be developed in a purely abstract way, independent of specific observations of the world, or they can be developed as generalizations from many specific empirical findings. Theoretical disciplines vary in their connection to empirical evidence. Theoretical writing varies in form from situation to situation, often depending on the mode of analysis being used. In general, however, theoretical writing follows a sequence of ideas, with thought being the primary organizational device. Examples in this chapter from philosophy and economic social theory lend a sense of both the form and the importance of typical theoretical arguments.

The Range of Theory

Chapters 13 through 15 have offered ways of developing and presenting statements of knowledge using data gathered through various methods. But knowledge advances by general theoretical statements as well as by narrow claims closely related to specific evidence. Theoretical disciplines try to form statements that are generally true across many kinds of situations and are abstracted from the specifics of any particular case.

Some disciplines, such as pure mathematics and formal logic, develop pure theory. Writings in these fields argue through abstract rules, independent of particular observations of the world. A geometric proof, for example, proceeds by a series of generally true mathematical statements derived from other generally true mathematical statements, using acceptable procedures of mathematical manipulation. Formal logic never asks whether the premises or assumptions actually tally with conditions in the world; it only follows out the formal consequences of those assumptions.

Certain other theoretical disciplines, although they proceed primarily by general forms of argument, incorporate common sense experiences or other familiar observations about life. Much of philosophy operates by relating general ideas to ordinary experiences. In the Platonic dialogues, Socrates constantly asks people to consider everyday events, such as how a cook makes food taste good or how we tell a good thing from a bad one. This tradition continues today when linguistic philosophers ask us to consider how we use words in everyday contexts.

Other more empirical disciplines use theory to generalize from many specific findings. Disciplines like physics have in fact been able to establish general rules, often expressed in mathematical form, that seem to apply to all the observed examples and can predict future events. On the basis of laws of motion, we know when Halley's comet will next appear near the earth and when the next solar eclipse will occur. Physicists have even been able to predict that particles never before observed could be found under precisely defined circumstances. And in some cases the particles are right where they are supposed to be.

No matter how elegant the theory gets in empirical disciplines, however, it ultimately relies on the proof of empirical evidence. If the particle cannot be found, the theory falters. Although the theory article may never mention any experiment or data, somewhere down the fine it must fit with observation and experiment. To be testable, theories must have specific real-world consequences to be compared with empirical results. Albert Einstein's general theory of relativity, first proposed in 1913, had as one of its consequences that gravity bends light. In 1919, during a solar eclipse, the astronomer Arthur Eddington took photographs confirming that light from stars was bent as it passed the sun's gravitational field. These confirming results persuaded many scientists of the theory's validity. If a theory does not offer such concrete consequences, it is untestable, unpersuasive, and of only limited value.

Because theoretical statements in the physical sciences offer such specificity of results and rest on strong confirming evidence, they can become treated as laws, statements that are always true. Complex deductions follow with great certainty and precision from these laws without the need of checking every step against empirical results. Of course, theories change and surprising (or anomalous) empirical results appear, sometimes resulting in major shifts in knowledge; however, revolutionary shifts are exceptions to normal practice, which tends to develop in ways consistent with most of what has been previously discovered.

Other empirical disciplines rely on a looser connection between theory and observations or experiments. Theory can serve to gather together and organize what people have found. Theory can even speculate about a discipline's fundamental questions for which currently no firm

answers exist. But the theory's lack of precise, thorough, and unquestionable support in empirical evidence makes complex deduction and prediction on the basis of the theory more risky and less fruitful. Sociological theory can help illuminate many social, events, can stimulate research, and can even suggest powerful answers powerful questions about how society is organized and people behave. But many competing sociological theories exist with none persuasive enough to convince most sociologists of a single point of view. A sociological argument based only on pure theory will find few adherents.

Most fields that do not have a more rigorous theory usually have one form or another of this kind of conjectural theory. Of course, conjectural theories are more tightly tied to empirical data in some disciplines than in others. Legal theory, although interpretive, is frequently well grounded in the actual legal systems in the world, whereas literary theory tends to be more speculative. Also, as some fields make certain discoveries and develop new methods of observation opening up new classes of data, speculative theories can be replaced by more firmly grounded ones. For example, the identification of DNA as genetic material and the advances in the techniques of analyzing DNA have turned the field of genetics from speculation toward an exact science.

Despite the lack of certainty of the conjectural theories, they have been used as the basis for practical action, particularly in the social sciences. Economic theories, although in conflict with one another and all to some degree unreliable as predictors, guide decision making in governments and businesses. In fact, two competing theories of economics (with many political, historical, social, and psychological consequences) guide the major political divisions of our world: capitalism and communism. On a less monumental scale, psychological and social theories guide many professionals in helping people improve their daily lives.

Reading and Writing About Theory

The initial point to consider in either reading or writing theory is what kind of work the theory is expected to do. Theory can serve many purposes, from deriving implications of axioms by rigorous logical procedures, to providing a synthesis of a range of empirical results, to creating a series of speculations that might excite further thought, to providing a political or moral framework for action. Although such purposes of theorizing (as well as others) may be carried out in similar generalized language, each indicates a different relation between the theory and actual experience.

If you have a solid grasp of the purpose of the theory as you read, you will know how to relate the theory to your knowledge of the world and the activity of the discipline the theory is part of. If you do not grasp the purpose of the theory, it may not seem to apply to solving a problem. The theory may appear to be merely a game of abstractions.

As you write, lack of a clear theoretical purpose may generate a free association of general thoughts. One idea may lead to another, but the result will accomplish little from a reader's point of view. Your train of thought may be very interesting to you but hold little significance for people who do not share your personal associations. On the other hand, if as a writer you know precisely what you wish to accomplish by your abstractions, you can direct your reasoning toward an identifiable destination.

Theoretical writing is built on methods of analysis specific to each discipline. Social-class analysis, behaviorism, and syntactic analysis are for their disciplines defined methods of arguing just as much as geometric proof, formal logic, and mathematical derivations are for theirs. Great innovators of theory provide not only theoretical systems or specific theoretical statements; they

also provide new methods of analysis, such as the calculus, quantum analysis, analysis of the subconscious, and the analysis of language in use.

All theoretical writing, nonetheless, in its presentation follows a sequence of ideas, with thought being the primary organizational device. Since theory presents a general line of reasoning rather than a description of a specific event, the narrative and descriptive elements evident in more empirical work tend to vanish. Specific descriptive and narrative details, where they appear, clearly must be subordinated to the progress of the overall thought. The formal sequence of the thought will, however, vary with the mode of analysis appropriate to the problem and the discipline. Some of the more common patterns for organizing thought found in theoretical articles include the following.

Common Patterns of Organizing Thought

- *Synthesis*—presenting a set of already accepted or plausible claims to see how they fit together or add up to a unified whole
- *Derivation*—transforming one statement or set of statements to another, using a specific set of approved transformation techniques, often from mathematics or formal logic
- *Causation*—showing how one system or state of affairs is transformed by a series of steps into another
- *Division*—breaking a problem, statement, or system down into its component parts
- *Speculation*—proposing a new idea or thought experiment and showing what the consequences of such an idea would be
- *System building*—proposing a speculative overall model for a subject and then showing how this model fits existing knowledge and what the further consequences of the system might

Although formal patterns of theoretical argument are frequently used, theoretical arguments use them in highly individual ways, constructing reasoning through a series of original steps. In reading such arguments you must be careful to identify what is accomplished at each step, where the next step begins, and how the shift is made to the new step. You must reconstruct the chain of reasoning by which the argument proceeds to its ultimate end. Making an outline or flow chart of the argument can help you grasp the text's logical progression, as can writing a summary (particularly using the miniaturizing method described on page 56).

How to Read a Theoretical Essay

1. Identify the purpose of the theory.
2. Identify the sequence of ideas and major steps of reasoning.
3. Identify the pattern or patterns used to organize the thought.
4. Identify the conclusions drawn from the reasoning.
5. Evaluate whether the conclusions are warranted on the basis of the argument.

AN EXAMPLE: THE ETHICS OF SPORTS COMPETITION

The following excerpt from a book examining ethical issues in sports, *Fair Play: Sports, Values and Society* by Robert L. Simon, considers the ethical value of competition. Simon, a philosopher, sets the views of the critics of sports competition against positive arguments made by proponents. By reasoning through the validity of each, he develops his own conclusions. In a passage just before the one excerpted here, he considers the arguments examining' whether the consequences of participation in sports are positive for society, but in this section he rums his attention to the individual. In particular he considers whether competition breeds selfishness or 'whether an underlying bond is created through cooperation in mutual challenge. His conclusion leads to another potential challenge by opponents of competition, a challenge he himself recognizes. He uses this challenge to examine whether the quest for personal excel1ence does away with competition, or whether the personal quest only makes sense in a competitive environment.

Part of Simon's method of argument is co fully state each position clearly and fairly before making counterarguments or extending the position further. He further recognizes in his position questions or potential weaknesses, which he then goes on to consider and answer. He also uses real examples to show behavior that either supports or contradicts the points being made. At times these examples become the material for further analysis and discussion. Beneath the arguments through reason and example lies an appeal to our own experience because we will accept his view that the primary ethical effect of sports competition is a sense of personal challenge and a quest for excellence only if we have seen chat in ourselves and others around us.

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READING STUDY QUESTIONS

1. What is Robert Simon trying to accomplish in this passage?

2. What are the main issues raised in this discussion? In what order are they raised? What are the main objections raised by opponents of competition and how does Simon answer each? What are the main steps in coming to the conclusion?

3. What is the method by which Simon answers each objection? How does each of Simon's answers carry his argument forward? Is there any particular reasoning or order behind the particular sequence of objections and' answers?

4. What are the overall conclusions that Simon draws?

5. What are the strengths and. weaknesses of Simon's arguments? What objections or points of support would you offer? To what extent does .his analysis fit with your experience of sports competition? Do his conclusions seem reasonable and convincing?

Writing Theory

Of all kinds of academic writing, writing theory may seem the easiest, but usually it is the hardest to do well. It may seem easy because you may feel that all you have to do is write out your ideas, following wherever your thoughts lead you without backing up what you say by slogging through detailed evidence or everybody else's conclusions. You may think chat you only have to describe ideas and reasoning that seem reasonable and important to you; then your readers will accept them as reasonable and important. But if you wander too far into your own thinking without relating it to the ideas, problems, and issues that other people find important, and to the experience, evidence, and reasoning that other people find persuasive, you may leave your readers far behind as you become lost in your private world of words—interesting, important, and convincing only to yourself.

Since theory, by its nature, consists in generalities, you cannot rely solely on the specifics of a single event, experience or object to explain your point; you do not have an immediate piece of the world over which you can meet your readers. Yet you still have to lead them down your own mental paths without getting them lost, bored, or distracted in some side alley. To do that you have' to successfully negotiate all the questions they will ask of your text and all the ways in which they will evaluate it. In a sense, the list of tasks in "How to Read a Theoretical Essay" on page 486 also defines exactly what you must put into the text. So, if your readers are to identify and must make that purpose so clear in the text that your readers will know exactly what your theory intends to do. And you must also make sure that they think your purpose is important—something worth reading and thinking about.

In writing theory, then, you need to spend time and attention on each of the areas that informed readers will pay attention to when reading and evaluating your writing. However, the order and way in which you pay attention to these areas may not be the same as the order and way in which your readers will. You may wish to compare the following steps in preparing a theoretical essay with the list of tasks in reading theory (page 233).

Steps in Developing a Theoretical Essay

1. Decide what you hope to accomplish by your theoretical statement.
2. Think through what kinds of ideas will help you accomplish that task.
3. Consider how those ideas relate to concrete and specific realities you have experienced, witnessed, learned, or read about.
4. Clearly state your ideas and the conclusions you want your readers to draw.
5. Evaluate which arguments are more likely to bring your readers to those conclusions.
6. Establish a clear pattern of reasoning that will lead your readers in the directions in which you want them to go.
7. Clarify the sequence of your ideas and the connections between them so that your readers can follow where you are going.

1. *Decide what you hope to accomplish by your theoretical statement.* Do you wish to establish a general pattern that explains how a certain mental process works so that you can try to create a computer program to carry out that process? Do you want to show why an idea or line of reasoning is flawed so that others will not make the mistake of believing it? Do you want to

resolve some question that has always troubled you and may have troubled others? Do you want to develop an overall understanding of a course's material? Do you want people to support your ideas through practical action? All of these (and many more) are tasks that theory can accomplish. The more dearly you know what your task is, the more you can develop and focus on appropriate ideas. If you don't have a dear goal, you can easily switch or muddle aims as you start to associate one idea with another.

2. *Think through what kinds of ideas will help you accomplish that task.* Different kinds of ideas can accomplish different things. A mathematical equation will help you calculate how much a change in one variable will affect another. A generalization about a series of historical events will help draw all the separate details into an overall pattern and help you conceive of the overall consequences or meaning of the events. A statement about the usual consequences of a particular kind of action will help you decide which alternative course you should follow. On the other hand, none of these ideas can accomplish everything. The equation cannot weigh the desirability of changing a variable in one direction or another, even though it can help you predict the outcome of such a change. The historical generalization does not necessarily motivate people to behave in different ways. And the general statement of consequences does not give you insight into the motivations or meanings lying behind the action. So it is as important to choose appropriate kinds of ideas for your task as it is to develop correct ideas. A brilliant critique of the faulty logic of someone else's argument will only help you avoid the other person's errors; it will not show you the better path to follow.

3. *Consider how those ideas relate to concrete and specific realities you have experienced, witnessed, learned, or read about.* Depending on the kind of theoretical essay you will be writing, you may need to refer to specific experiences and facts. If you need to discuss at length how your generalization relates to the specifics you and others have observed, you will be forced in the final essay to make convincing connections between the concrete and the general, so it is best to start examining those connections from the very beginning to make Sure your ideas do not wander too far from the ideas you can support. Even if you do not have to discuss concrete cases, the general plausibility of your argument still depends on your readers being able to find your ideas consistent with their experience and knowledge. Just because your form of writing does not force you to take soil samples of the moon does not mean that you can get away with claims about the lunar green cheese mines you hope to establish in the next century.

4. *Clearly slate your ideas and the conclusions you want your readers to draw.* As you think through your ideas and your evidence, your mind may work in a variety of fuzzy, indirect, or associative ways Inspirations can come in many different ways and from many different directions, and your first glimpse of a good idea may also be dim and out of focus. Nevertheless, it is up to you as a writer to work that idea into something focused and intelligible. If you cannot present your vision clearly, your readers are not likely to see precisely what you want them to see, and even less likely to see its truth or value.

5. *Evaluate which arguments are likely to bring your readers to those conclusions.* It is not enough that you are convinced of your ideas: you must convince others of those ideas. Simply repeating your conviction or even going over the process by which you came to your ideas will not necessarily persuade others, who have different experiences, interests, knowledge, and mental processes. Think about the concerns and beliefs of your readers and then try to

anticipate the ways in which your ideas will appeal to them and the kinds of objections they might have.

6. *Establish a clear pattern of reasoning that will lead your readers in the directions in which you want them to go.* Once you know where you want to take your readers and what kinds of arguments are likely to move them in that direction, you must still order your arguments in a recognizable way so that you will not lose your readers by forcing them to make sudden jumps in reasoning or by adopting new assumptions without preparing for them. You must help your readers understand where you are going by setting out your arguments in an easily recognizable, step-by-step pattern.

7. *Clarify the sequence of your ideas and the connections between them, so that your readers can follow where you are going.* The more clearly you mark the path of the reasoning you want your readers to follow, the more likely they will continue in the same direction. Transitional phrases, logical conjunctions (such as *therefore, consequently, nevertheless),* forward-looking descriptions of the points you will make, and backward-looking summaries of the points you have made help keep you and your readers in agreement about what it is you have written.

A STUDENT EXAMPLE: ETHICAL CHOICE IN EVERYDAY LIFE

The following student essay was written for an introductory philosophy course, as part of the class's study of the basic concepts of ethics. The instructor asked the students to write thousand-word essays considering how everyday decisions might be approached using the theories of ethics discussed in class. As part of this discussion students were asked to identify the ethical theory they themselves favored in making ethical choices and argue for that theory.

James Cadavida, whose essay follows, identifies two major ethical theories discussed in the course: absolutism and consequentialism. Moreover, he points out two variations of consequentialism—a short-term act utilitarianism and a longer-range rule utilitarianism. After seeing how these various theories might apply to two everyday kinds of choices, he considers whether anyone theory seems generally preferable. He, however, has no way to decide in general among the three, but rather argues that anyone might be appropriate depending on the case. He provides several examples to support this idea, then begins to explore how a person might decide in any particular case. James's reasoning moves step by step as he establishes cases, defines and applies concepts, compares the consequences and their implications, and then considers how to choose among them.

Sample Theoretical Essay

How to Make Those Difficult Little Choices

How should we make ethical· choices? "What kinds of assumptions lie behind the decisions we make each day of our lives? The *big ethical* issues, like abortion or euthanasia, touch our life only rarely, if ever. However, every day we are confronted with choices about ethical actions. Consider the following, seemingly insignificant cases,

The sign reads, in large bold capital letters, "DO NOT WALK ON THE GRASS." The sidewalk leading to the building where your next class meets takes a long detour around the lawn. You are already running late. If you cut directly across the grass, you can make it to class on time.

Your roommate walks in after getting a haircut. It is an extremely short buzz cut that accentuates the size of his ears and nose. You wonder why he changed his look and think to yourself that he looked much better with longer hair. He turns to you and asks you what you think.

What would you do if you found yourself in these two situations? *Would* you take the sidewalk and be late for class, or ignore the sign and cut through the grass? Would you tell your roommate what you really think or would you spare his feelings and tell a little "white lie"? Although, in situations such as these, you may think that you are simply acting on instinct and doing what seems right or best at the moment, your decisions will most likely be informed by one of two theoretical *ethical* frameworks: absolutism or consequentialism.

The absolutist looks to the action itself and asks, "Is this action, in itself, right or wrong, good or evil?" In the first example, the absolutist may refer to a general moral Principle (e.g., obey the rules) or to more specific principles which justify the existence of the rules (e.g., don't damage living things unnecessarily, do your part to maintain an aesthetically pleasing campus). These specific principles appeal to things which are good in themselves: respecting nature, being a responsible member of a community. If the absolutist decides to ignore the sign and walk on the grass, she or he must determine that the act of walking on the grass, in itself. is either morally good or at the very least morally neutral.

In the second case, the absolutist may appeal to the general principle, "Never tell a lie," and tell his roommate what he thinks regardless of the consequences or he may appeal to a different general principle, "Do unto others as you would want them to do unto you," and tell his roommate that his new haircut looks great. A problem arises when two absolute principles conflict, like the two noted above. In cases like these, the only way to come to a decision based on the morality of the act itself is to give one principle more weight or to describe the act in such a way as to avoid disregarding one of the principles (e.g., he may describe the act of lying as "being kind").

The consequentialist, in contrast, looks to the results of the action and asks, "If I do this, will more good or harm result?" In the case of walking on the grass, the consequentialist who is an act utilitarian will consider the specific case in question: "Should I, at this particular moment, walk on the grass?" The consequentialist who is a rule utilitarian will universalize the specific case: "Should everyone in the same situation as I walk on the grass?" To justify ignoring the sign, the consequentialist must determine that walking on the grass will result in more good than harm in this case only or in this case and all similar cases: e.g., the good consequences (getting to the class on time, not distracting other students by walking in late. hearing part of a lecture that enables her to get an A on the final exam) outweigh the bad (causing new seedlings to die, creating an unsightly bare patch in an otherwise beautiful lawn, making more work for the groundskeeper). The act utilitarian will probably be able to justify ignoring the sign; after all, what harm will be done if one person walks on the grass and treads very lightly? For the rule utilitarian, the decision may be more complicated.

In the second case, the consequentialist will focus on the results of telling the roommate what she or he really thinks against the results of lying (or just not saying anything). Again, the act utilitarian will have an easier time deciding to tell a lie (or be kind). After all, she or he has to live with this person for the rest of the year and telling the truth might make the roommate angry or hurt the roommate's feelings; this in turn could lead to a breakdown in their friendship. The rule utilitarian, on the other hand, might point to the long-term effects of not telling the truth. What if the roommate somehow found out what she or he really thought? This could ,result in a breakdown in trust and lead to even worse results than telling the truth in the first place.

Most people vary their approaches to ethical dilemmas, appealing to moral absolutes one minute and consequences the next, or combine the two, justifying their decisions on both absolutist and consequentialist grounds. This may cause a few problems in our daily lives, as we make choices that we think in retrospect were not the best ones. We may even have to justify or apologize for some choices we make, and others may or may not be happy with the reasons we give. However, life usually moves on with little attention to whether we have walked across the grass or been too blunt about a haircut.

Nonetheless, some decisions we face do linger in our memory, in our relationships, and in our continuing actions. It is important to us whether we make the right choice, because we have to live with what we have done. Choosing the wrong framework for considering an ethical choice could leave us with regret for perhaps being too rigid in adhering to an absolutist position in not forgiving a partner's indiscretion or, on the other hand, for being too flexible in not standing up to intimidation in order to get out of a sticky situation. One way out of this dilemma is to commit oneself fully to either an absolutist or a consequentialist policy, and then if the latter to decide on a commitment to act or rule utilitarianism. Perhaps personality, upbringing, or belief might help one decide on such a regular policy. However, no one of these theories seems to me to be always the appropriate one. Certain action choices seem to call for absolutist principles, such as spreading hurtful and inaccurate rumors about people. Such an action seems to violate a basic respect for others which is the groundwork for ethics. On the other hand, other action choices may be most usefully thought of in terms of immediate consequences, as when someone is using your basic honesty to take advantage of you--a little lying may remove you from the person's clutches and then you can avoid her or him thereafter. And still other occasions may be best considered in terms of 10ngterm consequences of patterns of ethical choices, as when you are trying to build a relationship of intimate honesty with a close friend.

Consciously choosing which ethical viewpoint to take in any situation would then require you to think through the nature of the situation, and what theory of ethics fits it. It would also mean developing criteria for making the choice of the most appropriate theory. The examples I used in the last paragraph suggest some possible criteria, such as whether the situation touches on the fundamental assumption of ethical behavior, whether the situation represents only a temporary set of circumstances 'Within which you are not being treated ethically by others, or whether the actions are part of a long term set of relationships or arrangements which you need to be concerned about.

These three criteria are certainly not comprehensive, and may overlap in some cases. So I do not yet have an adequate theory of how to choose the appropriate ethical theory in any case. Nonetheless, given the complexity of *ethical* choices, it seems better not to commit oneself to an absolutist or consequentialist/utilitarian position before looking at the facts of each situation.

WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

1. After reading Robert L. Simon's selection on the ethical value of competition (page 234), answer the five reading questions on page 234 in an informal journal entry.

2. Write a short response essay to the selection by Simon, drawing on your own experiences in sports to discuss whether you think that competition breeds selfishness or creates a bond through cooperation in mutual challenge.

3. Apply the ideas that Simon presents in the selection from his book on pages 234 to a particular professional sport and write a 500-word essay discussing whether the presentation of that sport in the media has positive or negative effects on society as a whole.

4. In an informal journal entry, summarize the two main theoretical approaches to making ethical choices outlined in the student essay by James Cadavida (pages 237-239).

5. Write a short response essay to the essay "How to Make Those Difficult Little Choices," drawing on one specific example, from your own recent experience, in which you made an

everyday ethical choice. Examine to what degree your decision-making process fell into one of the two theoretical approaches.

6. Using one of the two theoretical approaches that Cadavida describes, write a short (one-to two-page) editorial arguing for an ethical position on a difficult contemporary moral dilemma (for example, abortion, surrogate motherhood, capital punishment, gun control, euthanasia).

7. In an essay of three hundred words for a philosophy class, clarify the meaning of one of the following commonly used abstract terms; *honesty*, *love*, *virtue*, *despair*, *sin*, or *evil*. With your teacher's permission, you may substitute any similar word. In your discussion, examine what you consider incorrect or inaccurate uses of the term, and present a way of understanding the concept more precisely.

8. If you are taking a course in mathematics, logic, or one of the physical sciences, explain a proof or derivation from your textbook or class lectures. Explain the meaning of each step in the proof or derivation, how the author moves from one step to the next, and why that logical progression is justified. Your explanation can be in the form of a fuller rewriting of-the original proof or derivation (at least twice the length to allow for explanatory additions) or in the form of annotations to a photocopy of the original. The purpose of this explanation is to demonstrate to the teacher of the subject your full understanding of the proof or derivation.

9. A friend, considering taking a course you are now taking, asks you to describe what that course is really all about, what the underlying ideas are. In an essay of three hundred words, explain the basic theory of the subject as presented by the teacher, and relate that theory to the kinds of material that are taught.

10. Write a two-page essay applying the two theoretical approaches outlined by Cadavida to the moral dilemma being debated by Kamisar and Smith in the two articles on euthanasia (page 74). Consider to what degree each author falls in line with one of the two approaches to making ethical choices.

11. For a discussion group on ethics and belief, prepare a 300-word statement of a general principle or idea that you consider important to your life. Explain what the principle or idea is, why you value it, and how it affects your thought and/or behavior.

12. Write a letter to me, the author, presenting some of the concepts about writing that you got from using *The Informed Writer*. Then explain whether you believe these concepts are valid or useful. Defend your position. I want very much to receive your comments, for I want to know what students are getting or not getting from the book. Mail the letter to: Charles Bazerman, c/o College Text Division, Houghton Mifflin Company, 222 Berkeley Street, Boston, MA 02116.