

Read the guidelines before reading the papers.

Composition Guidelines

1. Clear, concise introductory paragraph.
Is the goal stated clearly?
2. Topic sentence in each paragraph.
Does the topic sentence clearly introduce the goal of each paragraph?
3. Does the *sequence/order of sentences in each paragraph* make it easy to follow the author's reasoning in each paragraph?
Is each sentence *relevant* in each paragraph: Does each sentence help the author to reach his/her goal in that specific paragraph?
4. Is the reasoning in each paragraph good? Assess the *truth* and *support* of the reasons/premises.
5. Does the *sequence/order of paragraphs* make it easy to follow the author's reasoning throughout the paper?
Is each paragraph *relevant*: does each paragraph help the author to reach his/her central goal (that should be *clearly* stated in the introductory paragraph)?
6. Are the *best* opposing views accurately presented and impartially and correctly *evaluated*?
Are the *truth* and *support* of the reasons of the best opposing views impartially and correctly evaluated?
7. Are there any words whose vagueness or ambiguity prevents us from evaluating the *truth* or *support* of reasons/premises anywhere in the paper?
Are the key words in the author's reasoning appropriately clarified (according to either the principle of charity or loyalty) in the paper?
Interpretive principle of charity/generosity: if a context allows various interpretations of an expression, choose the one that results in the most reasonable position.
Interpretive principle of loyalty/fidelity: if a context allows various interpretations of an expression, choose the one that comes closest to the *intended meaning or goals of the author*.
8. Is it easy to follow the author's reasoning *throughout* the paper?
9. What is the quality of the author's reasoning throughout the paper?
Assess the *truth* and *support* of the reasons/premises throughout the paper.
10. Does the final paragraph accurately summarize the author's work?
Does the final summarizing paragraph take into consideration impartially all the pro/con arguments discussed in the paper?
Does the author acknowledge any incompleteness of his/her work, and specify where that incompleteness lies?
A final summarizing paragraph should *not* introduce new arguments or new information, but can suggest where additional thinking needs to be pursued.

GRADED PAPERS

In the following examples students were asked to write a 1-3 page paper on a saying (proverb, aphorism) of their choice (after my approval). *Read the comments carefully*, and apply them to your work.

A paper: He who learns but does not think is lost (No comments)

A paper: Necessity is the Mother of Invention (*Few comments*)

A paper: Ask and You Will Receive (No comments)

A- paper: When you Cease to Make a Contribution, You Begin to Die (*Few comments*)

B- paper: Cheaters Never Prosper (*No comments*)

C paper: Pride Leads to Destruction (*Comments*)

D paper: Examine what is said, not who said it (*Lots of Comments*)

D-paper: It is possible to store the mind with a million facts and still be entirely uneducated. (*Lots of comments*)

F paper: Forgiveness for the Dead Man Walking (*Comments*)

My comments are at the end of the papers, and address what immediate precedes the numbers in square brackets in the texts.

“A” paper

He who learns but does not think is lost

I will evaluate the truth of the saying, “He who learns but does not think is lost,” which is credited to Confucius. I will identify its form, define its critical terms, construct some counterexamples, and estimate the likelihood of my counterexamples.

First, since “learns but does not think” is presented as a sufficient condition for being lost, then this saying is equivalent to: “If one learns but does not think, then one is lost.” This conditional claim will later guide me in my construction of counterexamples against its truth.

Given the vagueness of “learn”, “think”, and “lost, *and* the fact that the way one interprets them will affect my evaluation of the truth the saying, I will describe how I will interpret them. If their vagueness did not affect my evaluation, I would not bother clarifying these words.

Learning is a broad concept that can include lots of complex thinking. But since what is presented as the sufficient condition in the saying is about learning *without* thinking, then Confucius’ use of “learn” in this sentence suggests that he intends it to mean simply memorizing information and behaviors (i.e., forming habits).

The next term I will examine is “think.” Since memorizing is a form of thinking, and memorizing typically includes some interpreting and classifying, which are also forms of thinking, and the sufficient condition is presented as learning *without* thinking, I must interpret “think” in a way that avoids any inconsistency. Confucius seems to use “think” in a way that is more demanding than what mentally occurs when we *only* memorize. I interpret “think” to refer to all the thinking that is involved in evaluating information and behavior. According to my interpretation, evaluating any information will include the use of memory, but the memorizing of information does not imply evaluating that information.

The final term in the saying is “lost”, specifically the state of being lost. Taken *literally*, if a person *is physically lost*, then s/he does not know where s/he is, or does not know how to reach any known location. If “lost” were interpreted this way, then the saying would be vulnerable to many realistic counterexamples. For example, think of all the students in the world who *only* memorize information (i.e., the sufficient condition is satisfied), and who are *not* lost because they know where they are, and how to return home. Consequently, this would not be a charitable interpretation. And given the intelligence of Confucius, it’s extremely unlikely that he would

intend such a meaning. Hence, this would not be a loyal interpretation, i.e., it would not be loyal to Confucius' intended meaning.

This indicates to me that I must look for a *figurative* interpretation of "lost". I will continue with the school example. Consider all the students who memorize information and habits *without* learning how to evaluate them. As a result, they cannot determine whether they are learning either true or false claims: they are *intellectually lost*. In addition, if they are learning behaviors without learning to evaluate them morally, they do not know whether they are learning either moral or immoral behaviors: they are *morally lost*. However, if I take Confucius to be using "lost" to mean "morally or intellectually lost", then I am reducing the saying to a *trivially* true claim: If someone learns something but does not learn how to evaluate it, then s/he does not know how to evaluate what s/he learn. This too would not be a charitable interpretation. And since Confucius is probably intending to assert something significant, then this too would not be a loyal interpretation.

Let us examine how the literal analogy of being lost in the woods can suggest a more significant interpretation. Someone lost in the woods does not know how to literally orient him/herself. This suggests the following tentative interpretation: if someone learns but does not evaluate what s/he learns, then s/he does not know how to *orient* him/herself intellectually, morally, socially, emotionally in the world.

However, even with this interpretation, the saying is still vulnerable to some counterexamples. For instance, it's possible that someone learns without thinking (i.e., the sufficient condition is met), but is *not* lost because s/he simply follows *reliable* behavioral and social rules s/he has memorized. Despite the learning without thinking, s/he is still able to orient him/herself in his/her daily life by simply following the various rules s/he memorized. This proves that learning without thinking is not a sufficient condition for not being able to orient oneself in one's daily life. For it clearly helps us to understand how it's possible for the sufficient condition to be true and the necessary condition false.

Though this is a good counterexample, it is extremely improbable. For it is extremely unlikely that (a) a human culture would have the capacity to generate *all* the rules that would anticipate *all new* intellectual, moral, social, emotional situations for any non-thinking person. It is also extremely improbable that (b) a typical human being would be able to memorize all those rules if they were even somehow available.

IF this were the only kind of counterexample against my interpretation of the saying, then its extremely *low* probability would mean that the saying has extremely *high* probability. Therefore, despite the counterexample, Confucius is still asserting a very reasonable claim.

Furthermore, the preceding counterexample suggests an interpretation of the saying that would block the counterexample: If one learns but does not think, and *things/events change significantly from what was learned about them*, then one is lost: one will not know how to interpret, use, repair, relate to, etc. those things. Since that counterexample is blocked, then the saying becomes even more probable.

Though I cannot think of any additional *realistic* counterexamples against its truth, there are still some *logically possible* ones. For instance, it's possible that a supernatural being guides those who learn without thinking *and* who live where things/events change significantly from what they learned about those things/events (i.e., the sufficient condition is satisfied), but they are *not* lost due to the supernatural guidance. So, the condition of learning without thinking, and of things/events changing significantly from what was learned about them is still not sufficient for the truth of being lost.

Counterexamples of this type have a serious limitation. Since I cannot estimate the likelihood of any such *otherworldly* counterexample, I cannot use them to estimate the probability of my second version of the saying *in this world*. This seems to be the only kind of counterexample I can invent against my interpretation of the saying. So, relative to this world and my interpretation, Confucius' saying seems very likely.

To summarize, I sought a charitable and loyal interpretation of "If one learns but does not think, then one is lost", and showed that it is very reasonable. My blocking of the only realistic counterexample I could invent against its truth led me to a second version of the saying: If one learns but does not think, and *things/events change significantly from what was learned about them*, then one is lost. This further increased the likelihood of Confucius' saying. I'm not sure whether Confucius intended this second version of his saying, but I suspect that he would very likely agree with it.

"A" paper

Necessity is the Mother of Invention

I will assess the truth of the saying, (a) "Necessity is the mother of invention". This will require that clarify key words, and consider the best arguments for and against it.[1]

This saying must be interpreted figuratively.[2] Since necessity is evidently not a mother, a literal interpretation of the saying results in an obviously absurd statement. A charitable interpretation, which would seek an interpretation that yields a true saying, and a loyal interpretation, which would seek to interpret the saying as closely as possible according to the intentions of its author, would in both cases require us to look for a plausible figurative interpretation. I don't know the author of this saying, so I cannot attempt to interpret the saying according to his or her intentions. I will thus focus on a charitable interpretation.[3]

The literal use of "mother" offers us some suggestions for such an interpretation.[4] A mother procreates, nurtures, and raises her offspring. The notion of procreation suggests some kind of causal connection, while the notions of nurturing and raising suggest some kind of molding or influencing. Hence, the saying appears to be used to assert two claims:

(b) Necessity leads to (causes) inventions; and

(c) Necessity molds/influences inventions.

Given that this composition can only be a few pages long, I will focus exclusively on interpretation (b).[5]

There are at least three additional aspects of the saying that require clarification:

Necessity ((i) *What kind of necessity? Necessary for what?*)

leads to ((ii) *When: Always? Often? Generally? Sometimes? How?*)

inventions ((iii) *What kinds? To what end?*).

They need to be clarified because the way we interpret them will determine whether the saying is true or false.[6]

First, there are all kinds of necessities: physical, psychological, educational, moral/spiritual, professional, etc. Physical necessities are the things or activities required to survive physically or to be healthy physically. Similarly, educational necessities are the things and activities required for an education. The same kind of reasoning applies to all the other kinds of necessities. Of course, what we identify as a physical (educational, or moral, etc.) necessity will depend on how we define physical survival or health, education, etc. Since I cannot explore these additional considerations in this short composition, I will interpret the saying only with respect to physical necessity in the broadest sense that spans physical survival to physical health to physical comfort.[7] I have thus addressed question (i) regarding the kind of necessity in question.

Next, I must clarify the kind of invention, for its interpretation will also affect the truth of the saying. There are two points to note about inventions.[8] First, a charitable interpretation would relate the purpose of the invention to the specific kind of necessity experienced. For if we do not interpret it that way, the saying would express ridiculous claims, such as, "The necessity for warmth leads to the invention of ear plugs". Secondly, to say that something is an invention is to speak of some kind of success. Consider the following evidence: I've (accidentally or intentionally) invented a rocking chair, but it does not rock. I've (accidentally or intentionally) invented a painkiller, but it does not kill pain.

I've (accidentally or intentionally) invented a portable radio, but it is not portable.

Each one of these statements, and countless others *of the same form*, indicates that it is absurd to assert that someone (accidentally or intentionally) has invented x to do y , when x does not succeed in doing y . So, when one has (accidentally or intentionally) invented something, one has reached a goal: there is some kind of success. These two aspects of "invention" indicate that version (b) of the saying should be rephrased as

(d) Physical necessities lead to inventions that satisfy (fulfill) those necessities.

Hence, I have partly addressed question (ii) regarding the meaning of "invention".

However, there is an easy way to refute version (d) of the saying.[9] For this saying presents physical necessity as a sufficient condition for inventions, and there are many counterexamples against the truth of this version of the saying. For example, the necessity for daily healthful meals has always existed in the past for humans, yet it is only very recently that such meals are available to many humans; and today the necessity of curing AIDS (or the common cold, and all the other diseases for which there is no cure) has not led to a cure. Each one of these examples refutes the saying because in each case there exists at a specific time a physical necessity, but no invention satisfies that necessity *at that specific time*.

This refutation of version (d) indicates what can be done to improve our interpretation of the saying.[10] Despite humanity's current failure to satisfy various current physical necessities, the past and current inventions strongly support that humanity will *eventually* satisfy them. For example, given enough time, resources, knowledge, determination, and patience, the past medical inventions strongly support that humanity will eventually cure AIDS and the common cold. So if the saying were rephrased as

(e) Physical necessities lead *eventually* to inventions that satisfy those necessities,

it would block many of the counterexamples referred in preceding paragraph that refute the version (d) of the saying. For a current failure to invent something when a current necessity exists does not exclude the proper invention in the future. So question (iii) regarding *when* physical necessity will lead to inventions has been addressed.

There are extremely many and varied examples in human history that collectively provide strong support for (e). Here are just a few: the physical necessity for food has eventually led and continues to lead to inventions in agriculture, agricultural tools, and in nutrition; the necessity for protection against the elements has eventually led and continues to lead to inventions in clothing and shelter; the physical necessity for health has eventually led and continues to lead to inventions in medicine; similarly, the physical necessity for comfort has eventually brought us inventions in furniture, shoes, etc.

How strongly do these past and current successes support version (e)? [11] They do not logically guarantee eventual inventions for all current and future physical necessities.[12] For it is possible that humanity will become extinct due to pollution, nuclear or biological war, acquire some mentally impairing disease, regress technologically due to a world war, be enslaved by extraterrestrials, and thus fail to satisfy some particular physical necessity, etc. In order to block such counterexamples against the support of the evidence (i.e., the many physical necessities that have eventually led to inventions addressing those necessities), I must add a number of assumptions to that evidence: humanity will *not* become extinct; will *not* acquire some mentally impairing disease; will *not* regress technologically, etc.

Though the addition of such assumptions to the evidence increases the support for version (e) of the saying, these assumptions are not self-evidently true. So, I am required to justify them. However, I cannot provide strong evidence for all of them because they extend very far into the future. Hence, I have successfully increased the support for version (e), but at the cost of adding very debatable assumptions.[13]

In order to avoid requiring such questionable assumptions, I can rephrase the saying as:

(f) *Generally*, physical necessities lead eventually to inventions that satisfy those necessities.

The inclusion of the qualifying term, "generally", makes (f) weaker than (e), and thus (f) does not require the kind of strong support required by (e). However, this hedging does not necessarily protect (f) from all possible falsifying counterexamples. For instance, it's possible that humanity will continue to exist for much longer than it has existed, intellectually devolve to the point of barely meeting only minimal physical necessities for survival, and fail to invent or re-invent what would address most of the physical necessities. This is the only kind of counterexample that I can invent against the truth of version (f) of the saying, but they seem improbably. Therefore, though I have not proven that the saying is true, I have reached a version of it that appears at least probable.

I have considered various interpretations of the saying that necessity is the mother of invention, narrowed the scope of the saying to physical necessity, and sought the most charitable interpretation. After some clarification, I presented the best evidence supporting a version of the saying; discovered by means of counterexamples that the evidence also needed questionable assumptions; and finally reached a reasonable version of the saying that did not require such dubious assumptions. Therefore, if the saying, “Necessity is the mother of invention”, is to be at least probable with respect to physical necessities, it must be understood to mean, “Generally, physical necessities lead eventually to inventions that satisfy those necessities”.

1. The introduction clearly and succinctly states the goals.
2. The function of the first sentence: it introduces the main topic or goal of the paragraph. That’s why it’s called a **topic sentence**.
3. Keep in mind these two interpretive principles whenever interpreting any discourse: generosity/charity, and loyalty/fidelity.
4. Observe the function of this topic sentence.
5. This sentence functions like a signpost: it indicates to the reader the direction the author will now take. The author deliberately limits the scope of his/her paper to the amount of space allowed.
6. *Clarify only the expressions whose vagueness or ambiguity affects either the truth or the support of claims. If an express is vague or ambiguous, and its vagueness or ambiguity does not affect your evaluation of the truth or support of a claim, then leave that expression alone: clarifying it would be a waste of time.*
7. This sign posting indicates the new direction of the composition, and a further limitation of the scope of the paper.
8. The first sentence describes and justifies the new topic, and the second sentence functions as a signpost.
9. This topic sentence introduces an opposing view.
10. Sometimes, in fairly considering opposing views, we can identify repairable weaknesses in our own position. When we cannot eliminate the weaknesses in our position, and if the opposing view has better arguments, then the reasonable thing to do is to abandon our view.
11. This topic sentence has the form of a question.
12. Here the author is anticipating objections, and dealing with them.
13. This kind of “trade off” sometimes happens. Observe how the author addresses it in the next paragraph.

“A” paper

Ask and you will receive

I will evaluate the truth of the saying, “Ask and you will receive” by clarifying its very general meaning, identifying the context where it is typically or correctly used, and constructing counterexamples against it when it is interpreted in that context. I will then consider some ways to block most of those counterexamples. But as we will see, the attempt to save the saying will lead to some other problems.

There are some aspects of this saying that we can clarify without concerning ourselves with the context where it is typically or correctly used. The proposition “Ask and you shall receive” is a condensed way of saying “Ask for *something*, and you will receive *it*”. Since we typically ask *someone* for something, the more complete interpretation should be, “Ask *someone* for something, then you will receive it”. If we further interpreted it to mean, “Ask someone for something, then you will receive it *from someone else*”, there would be extremely many more realistic counterexamples against its truth than examples supporting it. Since it would be equally silly to expect what one asked for to simply appear magically after asking for it from someone, the likely meaning of the saying is, “Ask someone for something, then you will receive it from that someone or with some help of that someone”. Though “Ask someone for something” has the form of an imperative proposition, in this sentence it is presented as a sufficient condition for the truth of the proposition “you will receive it from that someone or with some help of that someone”. Therefore, the charitable interpretation of this saying is the conditional statement, “If you ask someone for something, then you will receive it from that someone or with some help of that someone”.

A charitable interpretation of a claim must consider the contexts where it is *typically or correctly* used. If we discard this general interpretive principle, and evaluate the saying in *any* context, we immediately encounter many realistic counterexamples against it. You could ask as for something that does not exist or cannot exist, or is not appropriate for you (e.g., you're too young, inexperienced, too weak, not knowledgeable enough about what you want, too irresponsible); or is immoral or illegal. You could ask the wrong person; for example, someone who does not understand what you want (e.g., wisdom), does not have any obligation to give you what you want (e.g., a total stranger), does not have what you want, does not have enough of what you want for him/herself, or does not have the means to give you what you want. For example, imagine asking for a million dollar weekly allowance from over six billion total strangers on Earth: you will certainly not get it. You could ask someone who has it or has the means to give it to you, but who either does not like you enough to give it to you, or is too self-centered to give it to you. Given the extremely many counterexamples against the truth of the saying that result from an evaluation that discards the context where the saying is correctly used, and given the very high likelihood of most of these counterexamples, a contextless evaluation of the saying leads to the conclusion that the saying is extremely unlikely, if not totally silly.

This saying originates from the *New Testament*, in the chapter where Jesus teaches the Lord's Prayer to his disciples, Luke 11:9. So this contextual information helps us to specify to whom one is making a request: "If you ask *God* for something, then *God* will give it to you". This clarification certainly eliminates many counterexamples that use any limitation of the one giving what is requested. Given the spiritual context of this saying, it also excludes any counterexamples based on immoral, illegal or even trivial (e.g., a request to be a perpetually contented consumer) requests.

However, there still appear to be many counterexamples against the truth of this saying: each day many people ask something from God but do not receive it: food, water, shelter, delayed death, quick healing, work to feed one's family and pay the bills, a winning lottery ticket, a good grade on a test, someone's love, etc. In other words, there appear to be many unanswered prayers. The fact that Jesus does not specify *when* one is to receive what one requests does eliminate some counterexamples, for in some cases some people do receive what they requested, but they receive it later than desired. However, there are still some counterexamples, e.g., people who never recover from an illness.

To address these counterexamples, we need to return to the context from which the saying originates, and ask ourselves, "What was Jesus' intended meaning in Luke 11?" According to Luke 11:9-12, Jesus said, "¹¹Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? ¹²Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? ¹³If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!" To receive the Holy Spirit would seem to mean at the *very least* that one become Christ-like spiritually and morally. So, with this further clarification, the quote becomes, "If you ask *God* for you to become Christ-like spiritually and morally, then *God* will make you Christ-like spiritually and morally".

How does one verify the truth of such a claim? If we evaluate this claim the same way we evaluate a typical descriptive claim, we need to answer the following questions:

- (1) What are the criteria to identify genuine requests to God to become Christ-like spiritually and morally?
- (2) What are the criteria to determine whether someone does become Christ-like?
- (3) What are the criteria for determining that it is God – and not some other cause – that made you become Christ-like?

One would then use the answers to the preceding conceptual questions to

- (4) (a) obtain a representative sample of those who genuinely requested God to become Christ-like; (b) identify the number of people who did become Christ-like *from God's intervention*.

The ratio resulting from the number of cases in (b) divided by all the cases in (a) would give us a frequency sense of the rough probability of the saying. Of course, the larger the size of this sample, the more reliable the estimation of the probability.

If this is the method of verification to be used to evaluate the truth of my interpretation of the quote, then I have some serious problems. First, I have no idea what the answer to question (3) could be. This third question is very important. Just because one asks Zeus or Odin (a god in Norse mythology) to be cured from an illness, and one subsequently recovers from that illness is *definitely not* sufficient for concluding that Zeus or Odin answered one's request. For the cure could have been a result of effective herbal medicine and a *strong belief* that Zeus or Odin would intervene – even if Zeus and Odin did not even exist. In other words, there could be a natural explanation of the cure. Assuming that the physical and spiritual worlds are distinct, we can logically appeal to the supernatural to explain natural events *only if* we have exhausted *and* eliminated *all* naturalistic explanations. Since today's failure to explain naturalistically some unusual event does *not* exclude a likely successful explanation within the next thousand years. Therefore it is difficult to know when all naturalistic explanations have been exhausted and eliminated. Consequently, I cannot at the moment answer question (3).

Secondly, since I cannot answer question (3), which must be answered in order to complete step (4), I cannot do step (4). So, relative to my limited knowledge and to my interpretation of "Ask, and you shall receive", this quote is to me not verifiable *at the moment*.

Could one appeal to faith as some kind of evidence? To believe that x simply *on the grounds that* one has faith that x , is just to believe that x on the grounds that one believes that x : this would just be a circular argument.

Could one appeal to the belief that the *New Testament* is divinely inspired, and thus to the belief that every claim in the *New Testament* is true? Since such a belief is not obviously true, its use in my argument would require me to justify it; but this would open up a discussion that is much beyond the scope allowed for this paper. So, given the constraints on this paper, I cannot appeal to such a challenging belief.

I have sought a loyal (i.e., loyal to the intended meaning of Jesus) and charitable interpretation of "Ask and you will receive", and proposed to evaluate its truth the same we evaluate a typical descriptive claim about the world. I did not prove that this is the *only* way to establish the truth of the saying. I did not have the time and space to invoke the infallibility of the *New Testament*. Therefore, I can only *tentatively* conclude that the saying is to me unverifiable *at the moment*.

"A-" paper

"When You Cease to Make a Contribution You Begin to Die" – Eleanor Roosevelt

I will evaluate the truth of Eleanor Roosevelt's quote, "When you cease to make a contribution you begin to die." In order to accomplish this task I must first clarify any vague words and address arguments for and against it. It will also require that I address some questions in order to interpret the quote closest to the author's intentions: (i) *What kinds of contributions should you make?* (ii) *Who must contribute?* (iii) *To whom must one contribute?* (iv) *How much must one contribute in order not to begin to die?* (v) *In what way(s) do you begin to die? Biologically? Emotionally? Psychologically? Socially?*

The meaning of "contribution" often refers to giving or supplying in common with others, or to help bring about a result. Knowing that the author of this quote was active in politics and in women's rights, it is easy to assume that she has used the word "contribution" to refer to something one does for others. Things one can do for others include offering and/or supplying one's skills, knowledge, ideas, and/or opinions to help bring about a result, or simply by being active in a community by offering and/or supplying anything one is capable of contributing. Of course, it would be unnecessary to contribute all and everything one is capable of offering. For example, smiling at and waving hello to those you pass on the street can bring another joy,

but it would be impractical, if not impossible, to smile and wave hello to *every* person one sees. Furthermore, doing so may not bring each one of those persons joy. With these examples in mind, I must also consider which contributions are important enough to act on in order not to die. To do so, I must first explain who the contributors are and whom they are contributing to.

To begin with, I must address question (ii); who must contribute? People who are *usually* capable of making contributions to others are those who are capable of making rational decisions, often times adults. Children, too, are capable of making rational choices, but adults are more often free to decide on their own, and thus capable of choosing what they are able to offer others. For example, both an adult and a young child could reason that it would be generous to volunteer in a charity program that is stationed in a third world country. But typically, only an adult could actually decide for and dedicate him/herself to go to the third world country and volunteer. Therefore, we can assume that this quote is directed *more* towards adults than it is towards children.

To whom must one contribute? Anyone? Everyone? First, there must be a reason for one to supply his/her resources. So, there must be a *need* for such contributions. If nothing is needed, one's skills, knowledge, ideas, and/or opinions would be of no help to others, but possibly an inconvenience. So, answering question (iii), one must contribute to others who are in need of or who can benefit from one's contributions (i.e., family, friends, local community, international community etc.). The answering of these questions makes the saying a bit more understandable, but I have yet to determine the importance of contributing. So, I must now examine the alleged consequence of not contributing: the beginning of death.

It is necessary that I clarify the meaning of "die", for the way we interpret it affects the way we evaluate the consequences of *not* contributing. First, there are various ways in which a person can "die": biologically, emotionally, psychologically, socially, etc. Biological death refers to a person whose heart has stopped beating, meaning his/her body can no longer function in order to sustain life. Being emotionally dead may represent someone who is emotionless. Dying psychologically could refer to a person who is either in a persistent vegetative state or someone who has developed dementia, in which his/her psychological state slowly diminishes. Finally, dying socially is more specific to someone who gradually ceases to interact with others. Earlier I narrowed the kinds of contributions to social ones, and ceasing to make social contributions can reduce the interactions one has with others. In other words, when you cease to make a contribution to those who are in need of it, you diminish one kind of interaction to them.

This brings us to another point: must we contribute to only those whom we value? Will diminishing our interactions with others only matter if it affects our relationships with those whom we care for? If one is to purposely avoid diminishing contact with someone, it is more reasonable to assume they value their relationship with him/her. So, even though we are not restricted to contributing only to those we care for, we may only recognize our interactions with others as "damaged" or "diminished" if they were *valued* relationships.

Next, I must clarify how much one must contribute in order *not* to diminish one's valued interactions/relationships; otherwise its vagueness will prevent any precise evaluation. First, it will depend on how much is needed of one's contributions. For example, if someone needs his/her children to be watched and asks a friend who knows how to baby-sit to watch them, it would be required that the one watching his/her friend's children use his/her knowledge on baby-sitting to effectively take care of those children. If one has the knowledge of effectively baby-sitting and does not use those skills appropriately, then that person is not contributing *enough* and may risk hurting his/her friendship with his/her friend.

But, what if the need for one's contributions is greater than what one can offer? Will one cease to interact with others, or begin to "die" socially, because one cannot fulfill those needs? In order to answer these questions, I must include in the interpretation of the quote that the *amount* that one contributes to others will depend not only on what others genuinely need, but also on *what* one has to offer (i.e., skills,

knowledge, ideas, opinions, active roles in a community), as well as on one's *ability* to contribute by means of those gifts. In other words, an individual's quantity and quality of any one of these factors will proportionately determine how much she or he is capable of giving. This answers question (iv). Hence, the saying can be rephrased as: *When you cease to make significant contributions that you can appropriately give to those you care for, you diminish your relationship with him/her.*

However, there are ways of refuting this version. For the saying asserts that making significant contributions is a sufficient condition for sustaining interactions and/or relationships with others, and there are counterexamples against the truth of this assertion. For example, most marriage contracts oblige for two individuals to make significant contributions to one another, such as standing by their partner in sickness and in health, for richer or for poorer, until death do them part. And, for some time, married couples usually do stand by their promises. Yet, despite the significant contributions they have made to one another, the actual likelihood of *lasting* relationships between married couples is only a fifty percent chance in the United States.

This refutation of the revised version indicates the need for improvement of our current interpretation of the saying. Although making significant contributions cannot guarantee one will sustain interactions (relationships) with others, the other fifty percent of U.S. marriages, and marriages in other parts of the world, as well as friendships between individuals indicate that making significant contributions *can* increase the likelihood of lasting relationships. Thus, we assume a more appropriate version of the saying: When you cease to make significant contributions to those you care for, you *risk* diminishing your relationship with him/her.

Although I have increased the support of the author's intentions by revising the saying, I have also made it a weaker assertion by adding the word "risk." And even though I have addressed one of the counterexamples made against the saying, others remain, such as the many situations where persons have ceased to make contributions, yet he/she remains socially interactive. Nevertheless, I have clarified vague terms, narrowed the kinds of contributions to social ones, and presented counterexamples for and against it. So, in order for the saying "When you cease to make a contribution you begin to die" to be the least bit probable, it must be interpreted as, "When you cease to make significant contributions to those you care for, you risk diminishing your relationship with him/her."

My comments:

(1) The first highlighted part is where the student seriously misinterprets the saying. In "*When you cease to make significant contributions that you can appropriately give to those you care for, you diminish your relationship with him/her*", the sufficient condition is "you cease to make significant contributions that you can appropriately give to those you care for". It is not, as the student says, "making significant contributions". The other condition is "you diminish your relationship to him/her, and not "sustaining interactions and/or relationships with others". The mistake is a result of inferring from "If not-A, then not-B" to "If A, then B". This is an invalid move, as demonstrated by the following counterexample by analogy (i.e., an example that has the same form of reasoning, but has a true reason and a false conclusion, thereby countering the alleged validity of the inference):

If there is no oxygen this room, then there is no fire in this room.

Therefore, if there is oxygen in this room, then there is a fire in this room.

The student's counterexample against making significant contributions is a sufficient condition for sustaining interactions and/or relationships with others correctly refutes this alleged sufficiency, but this refutation is totally irrelevant because it does not at all address "*When you cease to make significant contributions that you can appropriately give to those you care for, you diminish your relationship with him/her*".

The next paragraph where the student attempts to block his/her counterexample is also irrelevant because it salvages a misrepresentation of the quote that is supposed to be evaluated.

In the final paragraph, the student does mention an *incomplete* counterexample against the truth of the revised quote: “such as the many situations where persons have ceased to make contributions, yet he/she remains socially interactive”. It’s incomplete because it does not help us to understand how the reason can be true and the conclusion false.

“B-” paper

Cheaters Never Prosper

I will assess the truth of the saying, “Cheaters Never Prosper.” This will require that I clarify exactly how I am interpreting the term “prosper.” I will consider three reasonable ways of interpreting the word “prosper,” and then evaluate the truth of the saying according to each interpretation.

First, “prosper” could be interpreted financially. So the saying becomes: cheaters never succeed financially. Even though they may be financially successful for other legitimate reasons, according to this proverb, their cheating never contributes to their financial success. “Prosper” could also mean a gain in power. This interpretation means that the cheating doesn’t contribute to any gain in power. To gain spiritually is the third interpretation of the word “prosper.” What I mean by gaining spiritually is growing morally and having a guiltless and remorseless conscience.

I will examine the truth of the saying according to each interpretation of the word “prosper.”

There are several examples that support the saying, “Cheaters Never Prosper,” according to the financial interpretation of prosper. Martha Stewart tried to cheat Wall Street by unloading some stock before the price of the stock plummeted. She knew the price would plummet, because she had received some insider information. She got caught lying about it and will now serve a 5-month jail term and pay a hefty fine for the lie. You can see that she certainly hasn’t gained financially. Another example is the Enron scandal. Many people in power at that company tried to “cook the books,” and they got caught. Again, many went to jail and also paid a hefty fine for their cheating.

However, there are other examples that refute this proverb. I know a lawyer who cheated on the state bar exam and then became a successful trial lawyer making lots of money. He clearly prospered financially from his cheating. Although he wasn’t a great test taker, he is a financially successful lawyer.

Now I will give an example of cheaters not prospering according to the “power” interpretation. Think about Ken Lay, the former CEO of Enron. He cheated on his accounting and thought he had gained great power, because he was the CEO of a huge corporation. His deeds were found out and he is now being prosecuted for his role in the scam. In this case, there was actually a loss of power and therefore not a gain of power.

Nevertheless, there are examples that refute the “power” definition of the proverb. Consider the case of an employee who lies (cheats) on his or her resume and gets the in-house promotion over his or her coworkers. He or she is now their supervisor and has a lot of power over them. This is a case of a cheater prospering. So it seems in some cases that cheating can contribute to a gain in power.

With respect to the third interpretation of the saying, I need to define what I mean by growing morally. It means becoming more like Christ. Being Christ-like would require honesty, and cheating would deviate from His teachings. Therefore, any deviation from His teaching diminishes spiritual growth.

Given that any deviation from Christ’s teaching diminishes spiritual growth, and cheating is a deviation and barring any bizarre circumstances, there is no way that a person could become more spiritual by cheating.

I set out to evaluate the statement “Cheaters Never Prosper.” I’ve presented support both for and against it. I’ve come to believe that the statement isn’t true all the time. I’ve given many counterexamples to this statement. Given my refutation, the statement I’d like to submit as true would be, “Cheaters don’t

always prosper.” This deflates the intended function of the proverb, which is to influence. What I’ve done is corrected it as a descriptive claim.

“C” paper

Pride Leads to Destruction

This statement can have many different meanings to each different person. In the way it is stated here, can we agree on its validity?[1] Perhaps it is stated in a way that is too broad to determine its truth? By determining the degree of this statement, would we have a better chance of justifying our perception on it.? [2] All of these questions and more should be recognized as important factors in analyzing the truth of this statement. Pride and Destruction have many levels of intensity so it will be crucial to define them as we will understand them for this paper. After that I will try to present the best arguments for as well against this proverb. [3]

We understand that Pride and Destruction can vary in intensity. Let’s first look at the meaning of the words when being used in a very dramatic situation. [4] “Pride” we will understand as an overwhelmingly strong [5] emotional feeling towards ones own self-worth, self-abilities, and self-knowledge which reflects ones self-esteem. This emotion can be so strong that it can take over and rule our actions and outlook on life leaving us very close-minded or oblivious to other options. Destruction that would result from such Pride could be as drastic as taking ones own life, demolishing any self-value, isolating ourselves from the outside world, or hurting ourselves and others. [6]

Let’s look at an award-winning doctor who prides himself at being the best doctor in the Medical profession. One of his co-workers comes out with a new procedure that is proven to be better than the old one. However our prideful doctor is not open to change his ways because “he knows best” and wouldn’t want to give credit to anyone else. Throughout time the doctor using the new procedure becomes very successful in his ways and our prideful doctor loses many clients resulting in a downward slope in his medical profession. So by this doctor being so prideful and trying to always be the best, he began to destroy his name as well as his career. This is a case were Pride can lead to destruction.

Here is an example of a teenage girl who was always very popular and very thin. She took great pride in her outer beauty that, unfortunately, is too common in today’s society. Over a period of time she gained weight and her self-esteem dropped dramatically. Being that her pride in her self image meant everything to her, she began starving herself to get the weight off. Her friends and family became very concerned but every time they tried to talk to her she denied any unhealthy behavior because she wouldn’t admit her sickness. This girl ended up starving herself for so long that her body no longer had the energy to live. In this case by the girl trying to regain her pride she ended up destroying her life. [7]

By talking about Pride in an overwhelming manner it is very hard to think of a situation that wouldn’t lead to some type of destruction.[8] However, how about Pride that isn’t so overwhelming? [9] Let’s keep in mind that everybody has some Pride but not everybody is so engulfed in their Pride that it leads to destruction. Take for example a situation where someone says hurtful things to someone they love but is so prideful they won’t admit to any wrong. This type of pride doesn’t help the relationship grow but it doesn’t necessarily destroy them or there[spelling] relationship.[10] This could be used as a counterexample[11]

I realize there are many different levels of Pride and Destruction that I have not mentioned and the examples could go on and on. This is not to say they are less important, [12]but for the purpose of this paper I am mainly trying to show that this proverb, “Pride leads to Destruction,” needs to be specified more to determine it’s validity [13]. As we see from this proverb, Pride can definitely lead to Destruction but determining the intensity of the Pride determines the level of Destruction.

1. Validity describes the strongest kind of *support of premises*. Truth applies to statements, though it is common for the non-academically trained to use “valid” to mean “true”. There is no need to capitalize “Pride” and “Destruction”.

2. Degree of what? This question is confusing. What precisely is the author asking?

3. This introductory paragraph states all the goals, but it is slightly repetitious. Here is one (among many) of expressing succinctly the same ideas:

In order to determine the truth of “Pride leads to destruction”, I will define “pride” and “destruction”, after which we will see that there are degrees of pride and destruction (for these words are vague). Subsequently I will try to present the best arguments for as well as against this proverb.

4. There is a problem of continuity here. The topic sentence addresses the issue of degrees of pride and destruction, but the second sentence describes a definition of “pride”. Since it is from the definition a term or its use that we can determine its degree of vagueness, this part of the paper would be easier to read if the author began with *his/her* definition of “pride” and “destruction”, and then proceeded to show or illustrate their respective vagueness. The author correctly emphasizes the vagueness of these words because it affects the evaluation of the truth of the proverb. [Please note that vagueness is not always problematic: if it does not affect the truth or support of claims, leave it alone.]

5. First, there is a problem of consistency [serious]. If “pride” is to be defined as an “overwhelmingly strong” emotion, then there does not seem to be any degree of pride. Secondly, this high degree of intensity narrows the definition too much because it excludes mild or weak emotions. Thirdly, the definition is also too narrow because pride is not just an emotion but also an attitude [serious] or behavior. We can describe someone as behaving proudly even though the person may not be experiencing any emotion. After clarifying the meaning of both “pride” and “destruction” it would then be important to mention and illustrate in very short examples [because of the required brevity of the paper] degrees of pride and destruction.

6. First explore the meaning of “destruction” *independently of* pride. What does it generally mean? In this sentence the author draws out some possible consequences of pride without first having clarified what “destruction” means. This sentence is actually a conclusion that should come later after it has been supported. It’s an important conclusion because it supports the proverb.

7. These are good examples of intellectual and physical pride. What about spiritual pride? Given the required brevity of the paper, these examples should have been condensed. This would have allowed the author to present more examples and especially to elaborate more on the analysis of the meaning of the key words, and on the pro/con arguments.

8. This should have signaled the author that his/her proposed definition was too narrow.

9. The author is not consistent with his/her definition of pride, but is correctly exploring other aspects of pride excluded by her/his narrow definition of “pride”. The author should have re-written paragraph two where s/he gives her/his definition of “pride” in order to avoid this inconsistency.

10. This example could be used to illustrate a different degree of destruction, for in some relations it would damage (i.e., create some destruction) the relation, but in others it would cause very little damage, and in some unusual relations, there would not cause any damage (destruction) whatsoever. This last case would require one or two sentences to describe how the relation would remain intact. It is only cases such as the last example that refute the proverb: where there is pride without any destruction. Note that there are other counterexamples: it is possible for someone to have extreme pride in certain situations and yet to be sufficiently self-controlled to avoid any destructive consequences of his/her pride.

11. The author probably means, a “counterexample against the truth of the proverb”. [Note that counterexamples can be constructed to refute different things, e.g., the truth of claims; the sufficiency of reasons; the adequacy of definitions. However, as stated in [10], the example presented in this paragraph does not refute the proverb because there is still some “destruction” (damage) in both variations of it.

12. Good acknowledgement of the complexity of the issue and the incompleteness of the paper.

13. Use “truth” instead of “validity”

Here is one way, among many, of summarizing the author’s effort:

I have defined the two central words of the proverb, and shown that my means of examples that despite the vagueness of these two words, there are also many cases where there is pride but no destruction whatsoever. Since the proverb is easily refuted by the latter kind of example, it is probably presented in an exaggerated way in order to call attention to the dangers of pride. If we were only interested in expressing a true claim, and not in expressing a moral injunction, then we should rephrase the proverb as, “Pride generally increases the risks of varying degrees of damage or destruction”.

“D” paper

Examine what is said, not who said it

I have numbered consecutively the author’s statements constituting his/her reasoning, highlighted the premise and conclusion indicators, and *attempted* to diagram the structure of his/her reasoning. You should diagram your reasoning throughout your cycles of drafts (but not during your cycles of brainstorming, for it might block your creativity). Diagramming your reasoning helps you to achieve the following:

1. It forces you to become aware of the general structure of your own reasoning.
2. Once you have a clear idea of your intended reasoning in a diagram, you might notice more easily how your written arguments are scattered. The diagram identifies the parts that you want to work together, and you can re-write your paper so that your reader will clearly grasp those parts: your re-written work will flow in a way that corresponds to your intended reasoning, thereby making it easier for your readers to follow your intended reasoning. This will diminish the chances that readers will misrepresent or misinterpret you.
3. Once you have a clear idea of the map of your reasoning, you will be in a better position to organize efficiently the evaluation of all your inferences, and to strengthen the weak ones.

NOTE that whenever statements are equivalent, we give them the same number. This practice helps to simplify our diagrams, forces us to notice our repetitions, and to decide whether these repetitions are necessary. The words in square brackets represent what I take to be implicit in the passage.

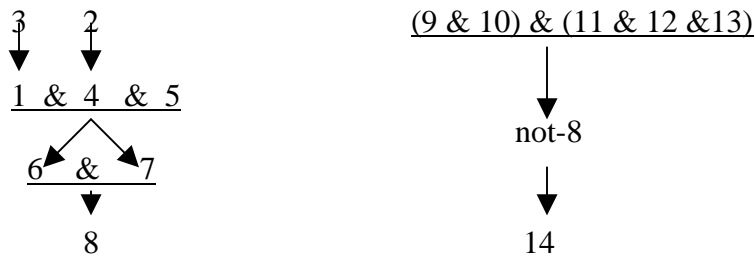
The proverb I have chosen is “Examine what is said, not who said it”. In the following paragraphs I will show how this proverb can be both true and false, and how it should be changed to address all situations.

(1)<The statement that all men are created equal is true whether Adolph Hitler or George Washington said it>. [**Because?**] (2)<The strength [of the statement stands on its own]> and (3)<[the] truth of the statement stands on its own>. [**So?**] (4)<The value of this statement is not diminished by the person saying it>. (5)<An excellent business ideas would be no less profitable coming out of a homeless man giving out advice for change than it would be if a successful CEO of a fortune 500 company said it over lunch>. **So**, (6)<only what is being said is important> and (7)<the person who is speaking has no effect on the truth of the thought or phrase>. **Therefore**, (8)<you must always analyze the idea or the thought that is being expressed without taking into account who is saying it>.

(9)<[I]f you hear Adolph Hitler give a speech about thee being only one true race, and that all others should be eliminated, [it] would [not] be wise to just examine what he said and not what type of person he is>. (10)<The knowledge that he is a racist with extremist points of view might help you in analyzing if what he is saying is true or not>. (11)<If the idea given by the homeless man and the CEO was risky and you could lose millions if it failed, [it] would be a wise business decision to examine the success of their previous ideas>. (12)<Knowing that the homeless man was a former small business owner and that it’s failure led him to become homeless would probably impact your view on his idea>. Also, (13)<if you found out that the CEO had a history of coming up with extremely successful ideas [it] would make his idea more financially savvy>. **Therefore**, (not-8)<examining only what is being said and not the person who is saying is not always a wise idea.

(14)<In order for this proverb to be sited for all situations it should be changed to “examine what is said and not the person who speaks it most of the time”>.

Here is my diagram (map) of what appears to be the structure of his/her reasoning:



Here are my comments on the author's paper. My comments address what immediately precedes each number in square brackets. I will be referring to the numbered statements in the above passage.

The proverb I have chosen is “**Examine what is said, not who said it**”. In the following paragraphs I will show how this proverb can be both true and false, and how it should be changed to address all situations. **[1]**

The statement that all men are created equal is true whether Adolph Hitler or George Washington said it. The strength and truth of the statement stands on its own. **[2]** The value of this statement is not diminished by the person saying it. **[3]** An excellent business ideas would be no less profitable coming out of a homeless man giving out advice for change than it would be if a successful CEO of a fortune 500 company said it over lunch. **[4]** So, only what is being said is important and the person who is speaking has no effect on the truth of the thought or phrase. Therefore, you must always analyze the idea or the thought that is being expressed without taking into account who is saying it. **[5]**

But what if you hear Adolph Hitler give a speech about there being only one true race, and that all others should be eliminated, would it be wise to just examine what he said and not what type of person he is? **[6]** The knowledge that he is a racist with extremist points of view might help you in analyzing it if what he is saying is true or not. **[7]** If the idea given by the homeless man and the CEO was risky and you could lose millions if it failed, would it not be a wise business decision to examine the success of their previous ideas? **[8]** Knowing that the homeless man was a former small business owner and that it's failure led him to become homeless would probably impact your view on his idea. Also, if you found out that the CEO had a history of coming up with extremely successful ideas would it not make his idea more financially savvy? **[9]** Therefore, examining only what is being said and not the person who is saying it is not always a wise idea. **[10]**

In order for this proverb to be sited for all situations it should be changed to “examine what is said and not the person who speaks it most of the time”. **[11]**

1. Good introduction! I know precisely the author's goal. In these short papers, an introduction should be direct and short.

2. First, it's not clear what the author means by the “strength” in statement (2). The only *charitable* interpretation I can think of is that “strength” is intended to mean “likelihood” or “plausibility”. As writers we need to anticipate where readers might not grasp our intended meaning, and choose the most effective word to get our intended meaning across. Secondly, it's not clear how statements (2) and (3) are used. As indicated in my diagram of the author's reasoning, they *appear* to be used to support respectively statements (1) and (4). The author should have used premise/conclusion indicators to make his/her intended reasoning explicit and clear.

3. It's not clear how “value” and “diminished” are used here. Since the introduction explicitly refers to the truth or falsity of the proverb, an interpretation that would be *loyal* to the author's intentions, is that “value” means “truth value” or “probability”. We need to be consistent with our introductions.

IF I have correctly interpreted the unclear words and the reasoning, then the inferences from (3) to (1) and from (2) to (4) are valid: it is impossible for (3) to be true and (1) false, and it is impossible for (2) to be true and (4) false.

However, the truth of the premises is very questionable. Only a necessarily true claim or a definitional claim “stands on its own”. But “All men are created equal” is neither one nor the other. So, statement (2) in the diagram is seriously questionable. If the author were to rephrase this problematic sentence in a way that avoids this problem, and if s/he were to still use the phrase, “stand on its own”, then that phrase would need to be clarified. It’s also not clear

4. The author has given two examples, described in statements (1) and (5), intended to illustrate and support (6) and (7). The problem with these examples is that we already commonly believe that we are all created equal, and the business idea is explicitly assumed to be excellent. IF an idea is excellent or is true, then it remains excellent or true regardless of the source. The author is generalizing from these two examples, so we must ask ourselves *how representative are these examples of all the claims to which we are exposed?*

In real-life situations we usually do not know that an idea is excellent or true, and usually are not in a situation to verify whether it is excellent or true, and thus we must depend on the reliability of the source of those claims. To prove this we simply need to consider all the information we have learned since our birth from textbooks, books, magazines, journals, TV, radio, and conversations. We did not and do not personally verify the great majority of that information because we were not and are not in a position to do so most of the time. Consequently, most situations force us to rely entirely on the person uttering the claim in question. When this occurs, that person must have justified reasons for asserting whatever is at issue, and must be trustworthy. In such cases the rational thing to do is to assess the reliability of the person, and consequently, we must “examine” the person who is making a claim. (There are additional criteria for appealing to experts.)

Consequently, the author has mistakenly generalized to (6) and (7) from two unrepresentative examples.

The author has also overlooked some very simple sentences whose full meaning and truth depends on who is uttering it, e.g., “I’m sick.” “I’m happy”, “I’m a billionaire”, “I have five brothers and four sisters”, etc. These simple cases illustrate that there are some claims whose truth *is* affected by the person uttering it. Such examples, and those mentioned in the preceding paragraph, in fact refute the truth of the two conclusions (6) “only what is being said is important”, (7) “the person who is speaking has no effect on the truth of the thought or phrase”, and (8) “you must always analyze the idea or the thought that is being expressed without taking into account who is saying it” [my emphasis].

5. The inference from (6&7) to (8) is valid, for it’s impossible for (6&7) to be true and (8) false. In other words, IF (6&7) were true, (8) would be true. But I have just shown that all these statements are false, which shows that validity by itself does not establish truth.

6. We are now examining an opposing argument by the author. The author at statement (9) is mistakenly dismissing a view merely on the grounds of its origin. The Hitler example is problematic: one typically has the knowledge that (a) he was a racist, and that (b) racism has no scientific basis. But what is really doing the work here to reject *his claims* is (b). Statement (a) is in fact *irrelevant* for that rejection. Premise (6) is false. Statement (9) is expressed in the form of a rhetorical question: it is generally preferable to be direct and not to suggest what one wants to say through questions.

7. The knowledge that Hitler is a racist with extremist points of view does *not* help us to *analyze* anything in his claims. So, premise (10) is false. However, that knowledge about him *and* racism in general justifies our being *on guard* against his views on this matter.

8. The author is making the important point that we need to assess the reliability of those who make significant decisions that affect us. The author is again using a rhetorical question as statement (11): It is generally preferable to be direct and not to suggest what one wants to say through questions.

9. The author is saying that some knowledge about the homeless man and CEO would affect our decision. The past failures or successes would justify one’s *initial* level of confidence *prior to* the actual evaluation of the business idea. Once a proper evaluation is completed, the past successes of the CEO or failures of the homeless man are *irrelevant* to our decision, for someone with past failures could have presented sound arguments, while someone with past successes could have presented terrible arguments. So, the truth of premises (12) and (13) is problematic. The author

presents statement (13) in the form of a rhetorical question: it is generally preferable to be direct and not to suggest what one wants to say through questions.

10. The give examples need to be presently differently in order to support conclusion (not-8) more effectively.

11. The inference from (not-8) to (14) is good. Given what the author has written, this added qualification to the proverb would protect it against counterexamples. But one can improve the proverb in a way that makes it more useful. For instance, "Examine what is said and not who says it when you are in a position to evaluate adequately what is said. But when you are not in such a position, you should generally evaluate the source".

In this paper the author is addressing the reliability of sources. S/he does not develop the examples effectively, though s/he is definitely heading in the right direction. There are serious problems with many inferences and the truth of the premises. The final paragraph should summarize what has been accomplished. This important topic would have required a few more examples with a deeper discussion of them in order to show the need to assess sources when we cannot independently evaluate the claims expressed from those sources. The qualities of this paper are that it generally reads easily, though the intended reasoning in the second paragraph is difficult to identify, and the author does make an effort to consider the opposing views. Unfortunately, one of those views, expressed in the second paragraph, was presented in an exaggerated way.

“D-” paper

“It is possible to store the mind with a million facts and still be entirely uneducated.”

-Alec Bourne

This argument has the following simple structure:

*It is possible to store the mind with a million facts,
THEREFORE the mind is still entirely uneducated.” [1]*

Clarification of a few words must first be determined before analyzing this argument.[2] The first word [that needs to be clarified] is “facts.” In order for this reason to be supportive of the conclusion “facts” must mean “useless bits of information that have no logical significance in the world of knowledge”. [3] A person might have many facts memorized, but without education and knowledge they are useless. The second word that needs clarification is “uneducated.” [4] To better describe the meaning of this word, the use of it’s opposite will be used. Being educated means that a person has knowledge of a topic that requires logical thinking and reasoning. Having an education allows a person to think critically about that specific topic that they are educated about. [5] To test the support of this argument, it has to be determined if the premise was true, could the conclusion still be false? [6] Assuming the premise is true that it is possible to store the mind with a million facts, could it be possible that that same mind is still entirely uneducated? [7] Using the definitions and clarity given to this argument, no, the conclusion cannot be false. A person is not educated if the mind is full of useless nonsense. [8] This makes this argument a very strong one. [9]

Now the truth of the first statement, or premise, must be determined. Is it true that it is possible to store the mind with a million facts? It is not certain because no person has probably ever counted facts, but it is logically possible. So, this statement can be considered true. [10]

The conclusion of this argument is well supported, and because of the clarification of the words given it makes sense, but it is difficult to accept. [11] In a way, a mind full of facts does not seem to be enough to be fully educated about something. But to say that a person would still be *entirely* uneducated is unsettling. [11] In general, storing a fact in one’s mind would mean that a person knows something, be it useless fact or not. So, in the sense that this argument states, it does not mean a fact requires to know something, but to many people a fact requires knowledge on some certain topic. [12] This argument is a very strong argument and valid, but is still very uneasy for people to accept because of everyone’s broad sense of the word “education.” [13] [14]

1. There should be a short introduction. The serious mistake here is that the author misrepresents the proverb as the argument when it is in fact just a single statement having the form ***It is possible that M & U***, where “M” stands for the proposition “The mind stores a million facts”, and “U” stands for the proposition “The mind is still entirely uneducated”. The proverb is intended to refute the belief that *having lots of information* (e.g., a million facts) is sufficient for *being educated*, in other words, it is an attempt to refute the conditional statement, **IF** someone has lots of information (e.g., a million facts in his/her mind), **THEN** s/he is educated.

2. Here the author's strategy is mistaken: *we should clarify only the words whose vagueness and ambiguity affects either the support or the truth of premises (or the reasonableness of a claim); so we discover what needs to be clarified after beginning to assess either the support or truth of premises.* The author is using the interpretive principle of charity/generosity: whenever a passage can be interpreted in different ways, we should interpret it in the way that makes it most reasonable.

3. Whether one correctly interprets the passage as a single statement or misinterprets it as an argument, “facts” does not need to be interpreted as “useless facts”. Of course, if we have learned only useless facts, we are not educated. But if we have learned useful facts and do not reason well in the application of those useful facts, the author of the proverb would want to say that in such a situation the useful facts serve us no better than the useless facts, and so we are still not educated. Consequently, facts by themselves, whether useful or useless, are not sufficient for an education. Hence, despite the ambiguity of “facts”, whether we interpret it as “useless facts” or “useful facts” does not

affect the reasonableness of the proverb. The author's mistake here illustrates that some (even slight) degree of evaluation must precede the identification of the words that need to be clarified. *If a vague or ambiguous word does not affect the truth or support of premises, or the reasonableness of a claim, then leave it alone.*

If the author had been correct about the need to clarify "facts", an example of a "useless bit of information" would have been helpful, e.g., On January 3rd, 2002, at 6:30am there were 2538 flakes of oatmeal in my morning porridge; flake1 weighed 0.01 grams; flake2 weighed 0.011 grams, etc.

4. The author correctly identifies a word that does need to be clarified, for its interpretation affects the truth of the proverb, and the support of the "premise" in his/her misinterpretation of the proverb. If "uneducated" had been clarified first, perhaps its intended meaning would have suggested to the author that clarifying "facts" is irrelevant (demonstrated in #3 above).

5. The author correctly identifies a likely aspect of the intended meaning of "education": reasoning skills are a necessary condition for education. But s/he presents a notion of education that is too narrow, for an educated person will not limit the application of those skills to what s/he has learned, but will also transfer those thinking skills to new domains.

6. This sentence should be the topic sentence of new paragraph because the author is now shifting to a different task, the evaluation of the support of the premise, and this sentence informs the reader of that task. However, the more precise question to evaluate the strongest support of premises for a conclusion is not "if *all* the premises were true, **could** the conclusion still be false?", but rather, "**Could** *all* the premise be true AND the conclusion false?" or "Is it **possible** for *all* the premise to be true and the conclusion false?" : "Is it **possible that (all P & not-C)?"**

7. Relative to the author's misinterpretation of the proverb, s/he has the correct strategy: s/he attempts to assess the sufficiency of the "premise", i.e., the validity of the "argument", by trying to construct a counterexample against the support of what s/he takes to be a premise.

8. "Nonsense" is introduced here without justification, and is not necessary even if the author were justified in interpreting "facts" as "useless facts". This addition of "nonsense" violates the *interpretive principle of loyalty/fidelity*: one should interpret an argument according to an author's intended meaning. (NOTE that sometimes the interpretive principles of charity/generosity and loyalty sometimes conflict: an author's intended meaning might not result in the strongest argument.)

The really serious mistake here is that the author fails to assess correctly the support of the premise. Given his/her interpretation, the argument is:

*It is possible to store the mind with a million useless facts,
THEREFORE the mind is still entirely uneducated.*

Whenever it is logically impossible to construct a counterexample against the support of premises, those premises logically imply the conclusion, they are sufficient for the truth of the conclusion, in other words, the argument is valid. But one's inability to construct a counterexample does not mean that the argument is valid, for one could have failed to invent a counterexample either due to a failure of imagination or to a lack of relevant knowledge. This is what seems to have happened in this case, for the argument is in fact invalid. Consider the following counterexample:

It is possible that:

It is possible to store the mind with a million useless facts [*The premise is assumed true.*]. AND
One has learned a lot of reasoning skills and useful knowledge in addition to those useless facts. AND
It is false that the mind is still entirely uneducated. [*The conclusion is assumed false.*]

Not only is this situation possible, it is in fact true for all educated (in the sense advanced by the author) people, for it is possible for all of them to have a million of useless facts and to be educated due to their thinking skills and other relevant knowledge. The *possibility* of the counterexample proves that the argument is invalid: it proves that the given premise, even when assumed true, is *not* sufficient for the truth of the conclusion. The *extremely high likelihood* of the

counterexample proves that the premise provides only extremely weak support for the conclusion. Hence, the author has seriously misevaluated his/her misinterpretation of the argument.

9. IF the author had been correct about the impossibility of constructing a counterexample, at this point s/he would be mistakenly understating what s/he would have established. When it is in fact impossible to construct or invent a counterexample (i.e., *any possible* situation where *all* the reasons are *true* and the conclusion *false*), the support of the premises is not just strong, it is valid. S/he misinterprets what s/he believes to have established.

10. The author is merely asserting that the premise is true without providing any evidence. S/he merely needed to point out that propositions M & U are consistent. However, the truth of the “premise” is actually beside the point. For even if it were psychologically impossible for the mind to hold a million useless facts, the author of the proverb would simply respond by rephrasing the proverb as “Even if the mind could store a million useless facts, it could still be entirely uneducated”. We need to anticipate how others would respond intelligently to our criticism (i.e., we need to consider the best opposing views).

11. A better topic sentence is needed here.

12. The author is correctly focusing on the word responsible for the strongly stated “conclusion”. *In general, the more strongly stated a conclusion, the more support it needs.* This is why this interpretation of the proverb yields such a weak argument: the premise is stated as just a possibility, but the conclusion is stated quite strongly. This escaped the author’s attention. However, though this extremely weak argument escapes the author’s attention, the concern expressed here suggests that s/he still feels that there is something wrong with the “argument”. This should have been a hint to re-examine his/her interpretation and evaluation.

13. This sentence is confusing. The author *appears* to be considering an opposing view to his/her presentation. *We should always consider the best opposing view(s) against either our own arguments or against our evaluation of arguments.* S/he *seems* to advance that some people believe that the knowledge of useless facts implies some education (i.e., what the author *appears* to refer to as a “broad sense of the word ‘education’”), and so such knowledge implies that one would not be entirely uneducated. However, this view would be relevant opposition to the author’s evaluation of the argument only if his/her misrepresentation of the proverb had been:

*It is possible to store the mind with a million useless facts. AND
The mind is aware of that storage of useless facts.
THEREFORE the mind is still entirely uneducated.*

But this is not the author’s argument. The author thus appears to consider an irrelevant opposing view. (If it had been relevant, s/he would have uncovered another nuance in the meaning of “education”.)

14. This final sentence is an attempt to summarize the paper. The summary should have been in a final paragraph and should have summarized all the relevant points. It’s not clear what the author means precisely by “broad sense of the word ‘education’”. S/he *appears* to be referring to the belief that knowledge of useless facts still constitutes some education. If this is so, s/he should have been more explicit.

The general strategy of this author is very good: s/he restates what she took to be an argument into the *standard form of an argument* in order to identify clearly the premise and conclusion; correctly identifies words that needed to be clarified; attempts to find the most charitable interpretation; and considers an opposing view.

However most of the strategy is badly applied: s/he unnecessarily “clarifies” a word; improperly evaluates both the support and truth of the premise; misinterprets the implications of his/her evaluation; considers an irrelevant (not the best) opposing view; and misinterprets the proverb as an argument when it is just a simple statement.

The last paragraph had a few unclear sentences. There should have been a short introduction. The final paragraph should summarize what has been accomplished, and should not introduce new issues.

“F” paper
Forgiveness for the Dead Man Walking

Dead Man Walking is a gripping portrayal of a man on death row made it one of the most powerful films to out of Hollywood in recent memory. But believe it or not, it only told half the story and it left out the best part. The power of *Dead Man Walking* was its portrayal of the inherent dignity and value of even a hardened criminal. But the story, the story of the victim goes even further, depicting the uniquely Christian message of forgiveness. [1]

Sixteen-year-old Debbie was out on a date with her boyfriend, Mark, one Friday evening. After pizza and a movie, they stopped for milkshakes. A stranger put a revolver to Mark’s head, their pleasant night out turned into several hours of torture, rape, and attempted murder. It ended with Mark shot, but alive, and Debbie deeply wounded. [2] But Debbie would not find true healing until she was able to comprehend and embrace the forgiveness only God can provide. [3]

Although the film *Dead Man Walking* depicted Debbie’s kidnappers as one man, there were actually two men. They kidnapped and robbed them, leaving Mark for dead. Before releasing Debbie, they tormented and raped her repeatedly. The two men were captured with one man receiving five life sentences and the other receiving the death sentence. Debbie’s anguish did not end with a man being sentenced to die. [2] Despite those who urged her to “get on with her life,” her emotional ordeal continued. “Justice doesn’t heal all wounds.” [4]

Debbie found the grace [5] to forgive the man the day he was sentenced to be executed [6]; she finally knew release from suffering through prayer, for herself and the man to be executed [7]. She discovered that only God’s grace is sufficient to bind up the wounds of the human heart. [8]

Forgiveness, you see, is much more than telling us that an offense just doesn’t matter anymore. On the contrary, forgiveness recognizes the debt for what it is and it doesn’t just liberate the debtor from his debt, it transforms the heart of the one who forgives. [9] Forgiveness is an imitation of God’s own act of forgiveness on the cross. [10] By forsaking [11] what we are legitimately owed, we recognize that we, too, have been forgiven a debt we can never repay [12]. That’s why true forgiveness is both a beacon and a scandal to the secular mind. The secular society has nothing that resembles the forgiveness that the Gospel makes possible, what Debbie experienced. [13]

It simply cannot make sense of parents who would forgive the killers of their children, like those murdered at Columbine. [14] Remember those scenes, so vivid on television? Of the parents forgiving the accused. Viewing the crosses on the side of the hill. [15] Their forgiving witness is an unmistakable presentation of the transforming love of the Gospel. [16]

We may never be called to forgive an offense as grave as that inflicted on Debbie or the families involved in the Columbine murders, but we must be prepared to forgive, not only for our own sakes, but for the sake of our Christian witness [17]. When we learn to forgive we give the world something better than a good movie plot, we give them a glimpse of The Greatest Story Ever Told, “Forgiveness.”

1. What precisely is the author's goal? Is it that even hardened criminals have human dignity? Is it about forgiveness, or that Christianity has a unique message of forgiveness, or...?
2. What is the relevance of all this information? Does it help the author to reach his/her goal? I can't answer this because I still don't know what his/her goal is.
3. (a) Will the author clarify what “true healing” means? This is necessary in order to determine whether forgiveness is necessary. (b) Will the author show that forgiveness is necessary for true healing?
 “Debbie would not find true healing until she was able to comprehend and embrace the forgiveness only God can provide.” The author is making the controversial claim that “only God can provide” forgiveness. Will s/he establish this? Does the author need to assert this controversial claim in order to reach his/her goal? I can't answer this because I still don't know what the goal is.

4. Is it true that justice does not heal wounds? Do not some emotional ordeals of victims of crimes end once the criminals are condemned after a just trial? What distinguishes such cases from Debbie's case? Is it necessary for the author to pursue this line of reasoning to reach her/his goal? I can't answer because I still don't know what the goal is.
5. What is the author trying to say here: "found the grace" to forgive? Could she not have realized that she had to forgive in order to heal completely from the terrible experience? The author is adding controversial ideas to the issue of forgiveness. Is this necessary?
6. Would she have been able to forgive him if he had not been sentenced to death, for instance, if he had never been caught? Is this complex example really helping the author to say what s/he wants to say about forgiveness? I can't answer because I still don't know what the goal of the paper is.
7. Is the author making an important point that needs more elaboration?
8. What is the evidence that "only God's grace is sufficient to bind up the wounds of the human heart"? Why can't an atheist, agnostic, pagan, non-Christian heal the wounds of his/her heart simply by realizing by him/herself the emotional necessity of forgiving, and deliberately forgiving by him/herself? Is the author's goal to show that God is involved in our forgiving of transgressors, or that forgiving is necessary for deep healing, (or a combination of both)? Given the limited space, the author should have focused on only one issue.
9. The author is finally beginning to explore the concept of forgiveness, but a lot more needs to be said about it. S/he needs to elaborate more on: "an offense just doesn't matter anymore"; "forgiveness recognizes the debt for what it is" (Is there always a "debt"? What exactly does the metaphor of "debt" mean?). Does forgiveness really "liberate the debtor from his debt"? If it really did this, then should he have been executed after her forgiveness? The claim, "it transforms the heart of the one who forgives", *seems* important in this paper, but what sort of transformation is the author talking about? Do such transformations always occur when we forgive?
10. Does this extreme comparison really help us to understand what forgiveness is?
11. Is "forsaking" the best word to express what the author is trying to say?
12. Is "forsaking what we are legitimately owed" sufficient to make us "recognize that we, too, have been forgiven a debt we can never repay"? Does this really help us to understand what forgiveness is?
13. Where's is the evidence that Debbie's forgiveness was due to the Gospel? To what kind of forgiveness is the author referring in the Gospel? Since secularists and non-Christians can also forgive horrendous crimes, is it true that "forgiveness is both a beacon and a scandal to the secular mind"? What was the author trying to say? Are these comments really helping us to understand the concept of forgiveness?
14. Is the author exaggerating here?
15. These are not grammatical sentences. What is the relevance of this information?
16. Belief in the Gospels can have various transformative influences, and can make it easier to forgive horrendous crimes. Does this help us to understand forgiveness?
17. The author appears to be making an important point, but s/he should express it in a way that would appeal to all reasonable humans, not just to Christians (unless s/he knows that his/her audience will consist of only Christians).