

How to Write an Introduction

The purpose of this article is to explain how you put together the introduction to a book of essays, a philosophical treatise, or a collection of scientific articles, to be published, ideally, by a university press or its equivalent, all in accordance with the rules long established in the academic world.

In the paragraphs that follow I will clarify, as succinctly as possible, why an introduction must be written, what it must comprise, and how to list the acknowledgments: for skill in making acknowledgments is the hallmark of the thoroughbred scholar. It can sometimes happen that a scholar, his task completed, discovers that he has no one to thank. Never mind. He will invent some debts. Research without indebtedness is suspect, and somebody must always, somehow, be thanked.

In preparing this article I have drawn on a long and invaluable familiarity with scholarly publications; these have been brought to my attention by the Min-

istry of Public Education of the Italian Republic, the Universities of Turin and Florence, the Polytechnic Institute of Milan, and the University of Bologna, as well as New York University, Yale University, and Columbia University.

I could not have completed this work without the patient and impeccable collaboration of Signora Sabina, thanks to whom my study, which by 2 A.M. is reduced to an undefined mass of cigarette stubs and waste paper, every morning is found in acceptable condition once more. My special thanks also to Barbara, Simona, and Gabriella, whose efforts have saved my hours of reflection from the importune interruption of transatlantic calls inviting me to conferences on the most disparate subjects, alike only in being remote from my personal interests.

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My children have been a source of great comfort to me and have provided me with the affection, the energy, and the confidence to complete my self-imposed task. Thanks to their complete, Olympian detachment from my work, I have found the strength

to conclude this article after a daily struggle with the definition of the intellectual's role in a postmodern society. I am indebted to them for inspiring an unshakable determination to withdraw into my study and write these pages, rather than encounter in the hall their best friends, whose hairdresser follows esthetic criteria that revolt my sensibilities.

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were rolling and, that at all costs, I had to provide the final footnotes.

Obviously, they are in no way accountable for the scholarly content of what appears on these pages; any defects in the present article, as in those of the past and the future, are my responsibility alone.

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