

6.9 Think for Yourself

CONSTRUCTING A LIST OF PRIOR QUESTIONS

Formulate a complex question to which you would like to find an answer. Then use the procedure of constructing prior questions until you have a list of at least 10 questions. Afterward, see if you have gained insight into how the first question has to be thought through in light of the prior questions you formulated.

Focus Your Questions on Domains of Thinking

When you are addressing a complex question that covers more than one domain of thought, you can target your prior questions by figuring out the domains of thinking inherent in the question. Does the complex question, for example, include an economic dimension? Does it include a biological, sociological, cultural, political, ethical, psychological, religious, historical, or some other dimension? For each dimension of thinking inherent in the question, you can formulate questions that force you to consider complexities you otherwise may miss. Consider the following question, some of the domains imbedded in the question, and some of the questions imbedded in those domains.

Complex question: What can be done about the number of people who abuse illegal drugs?

Domains inherent in the question, along with some questions we would have to address within each domain before we could answer our complex question, are:

1. Economic
 - What economic forces support drug use?
 - What can be done to minimize the influence of money involved in drug sales?
2. Political
 - What possible solutions to drug abuse are politically unacceptable?
 - Are there any realistic solutions that the power structure would accept?
 - To what extent does the political structure exacerbate the problem?
3. Social/Sociological
 - What social structures and practices support drug abuse?
 - How does gang membership contribute to drug abuse?
 - How does membership within any group contribute to the problem or, conversely, insulate group members from abusing drugs?
4. Psychological
 - How do factors such as stress, individual personality differences, and childhood traumas support drug abuse?
 - What role, if any, does human irrationality play in drug abuse?

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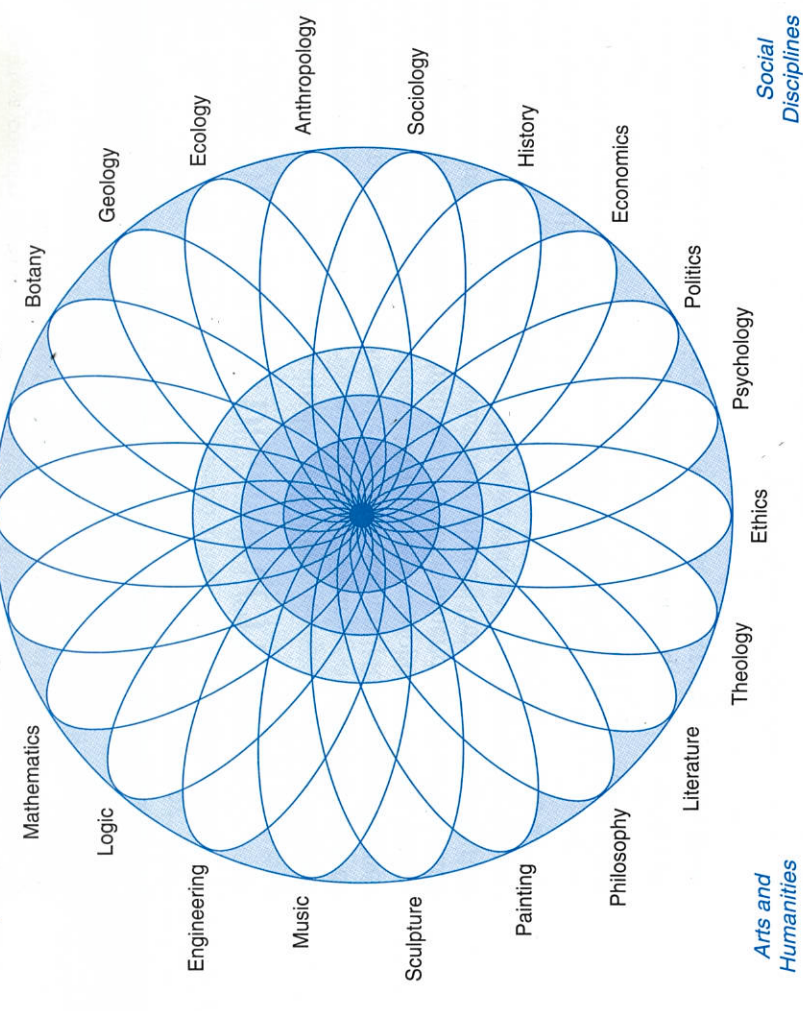
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EXHIBIT 6.4 Complex questions have multiple domains.

Mathematics and Quantitative Disciplines



Physical and Life Sciences

Arts and Humanities

Social Disciplines

DOMAINS OF QUESTIONS
(by discipline)

5. Biological
 - How do genetics play a role in drug abuse?
 - What biological changes in the body resulting from drug abuse contribute to the problem?
6. Educational
 - What role are educational institutions now playing to support or diminish the problem?
7. Religious
 - What can religious institutions do to reduce the incidence of drug abuse?
 - What role are they now playing in regard to drug abuse?
8. Cultural
 - What cultural beliefs support the drug-abuse problem?
 - What can we learn from cultures that have a low incidence of drug abuse?