



## Critical Inquiry Seminar

### *Manifest versus Scientific Image*

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- Some of the material on this handout comes from Jim Pryor's excellent paper writing guidelines (<http://www.princeton.edu/~jimpryor/general/writing.html>). See our course website for link.
- Be sure to review the guidelines from previous writing assignments.

### **Rewriting a Paper**

My overarching advice: take the term 'rewrite' literally!

At this stage, you have written only one complete draft of your piece. What you have on paper is your first attempt to articulate an objection, and while it was your second attempt to describe the Austin vs. Stroud debate in writing, you were aiming to present a concise summary of only the parts of the debate relevant to your objection.

But now that you've written about the debate and discussed it in class, you should be much more familiar with the two author's positions. You should have a much better feel for what aspects of their positions are critical for their arguments. So you should be in a position to write a much better paper.

### **Make an Outline**

Start with a fresh piece of paper, draw up a crystal clear, bullet point presentation of what you intend to do in the paper.

1. Any position you intend to discuss should be concisely described in a sentence or two.
2. Lay out the structure of any argument for or against a position you will discuss.
3. Describe your criticism in an equally clear way. You should be able to give a concise description of your criticism that relies only on what is presented by 1) and 2). That is, any premise, principle, or bit of reasoning that you want to criticize should be in a previous bullet point.

Here is an example.

- Abortion is the deliberate killing of a fetus.
- Thomson grants (for the sake of argument) that the fetus is a person, and, as such, has rights.
- Thomson argues that abortion is still morally permissible.
  - Thomson challenges the assumption that it is never permissible to kill an innocent person.
  - Thomson presents the violinist case. [Ordinarily there'd be a concise description of the case here. But we might read Thomson's paper, and I don't want to spoil it for you.]

- Thomson thinks the salient features of violinist case are X and Y. [Note that you will want this bullet point to say *more* than: Thomson thinks the violinist case shows that it is sometimes permissible to kill an innocent person. That's not terribly informative.]
- Because of features X and Y, Thomson thinks we should all agree that it is permissible to kill the violinist.
- Thomson claims the violinist is analogous to an unborn fetus. The case of a pregnant mother also has features X and Y.
- ...
- I object to Thomson's argument because I think she has failed to consider Z, the real salient feature of the violinist case.
  - Feature X does not have the significance Thomson attaches to it because...
  - ...

Think of this outline as your road map for the paper: now that you've been over the terrain a few times, you're in a much better position to create a map.

At this point, you may want to talk to someone else about your ideas. It's hard to state someone's view or your own criticism concisely. You may wonder: are these three bullets really the main points of X's view? Does my objection make sense? Is there an obvious reply that I'm missing?

You can talk these things over with another student in the class. Amazingly, the College also pays people who specialize in the area to talk to students about this sort of thing. Imagine that.

### **Structure and Signposting**

With your map in hand, you can now begin writing your paper. In some cases, you may want to refer back to your previous draft, if you thought you explained a position or a bit of reasoning particularly well. But in many cases, the concise description in your outline will be better than what you had previously. Or it may make you realize that what you had previously was confused, or unhelpfully vague. (Or maybe I told you in my comments that I didn't understand what you were trying to say.) It is okay at this stage to simply ignore your previous draft, and really rewrite.

Your outline will have a very easy-to-follow structure. You want to make sure that you convey this structure to your reader. Make it obvious to her with signposts. At every stage, tell the reader what you've done so far and what you're going to do next. Here are some common "signpost" expressions:

- I will begin by...
- Before I say what is wrong with this argument, I want to...
- These passages suggest that...

- I will now defend this claim. . .
- Further support for this claim comes from. . .
- For example. . .
- X thinks that this example shows that. . .

These signposts really make a big difference. Consider the two paper fragments from Pryor:

... We've just seen how X says that P. I will now present two arguments that not-P. My first argument is. . .

My second argument that not-P is. . .

X might respond to my arguments in several ways. For instance, he could say that. . .

However this response fails, because. . .

Another way that X might respond to my arguments is by claiming that. . .

This response also fails, because. . .

So we have seen that none of X's replies to my argument that not-P succeed. Hence, we should reject X's claim that P.

I will argue for the view that Q.

There are three reasons to believe Q. Firstly. . .

Secondly. . .

Thirdly. . .

The strongest objection to Q says. . .

However, this objection does not succeed, for the following reason. . .

As Phe notes, the structure of these papers is transparent. In your paper, you want to make sure your reader is never struggling to understand why you are saying what you say.

### **Reviewing Your Paper**

You now have a new draft of your paper. Read over my comments of your previous draft, and check is whether you've repeated any of the same mistakes in the new draft.

Check the structure of your paper: is it very obvious at each stage what's going on in the paper?

Have someone read over your paper. Do they agree that you've presented the views and arguments of others fairly? Do you agree that you have a cogent objection?

Finally, examine your paper sentence by sentence. As you read each sentence, ask yourself whether the sentence says exactly what you want to say. Does it make sense? Will someone unfamiliar with the topic understand what you mean? Are you repeating yourself? Is it

unnecessarily ornate (and is there a simpler way to say it)? Is the connection between this sentence and the previous one obvious? Etc.

All these steps take time. Start early! The night before is probably not enough time.

**Pitfall**

Avoid the temptation to simply revise your previous draft by going through and responding to my comments by changing a word or two here, inserting a sentence or two of explanation there. Unless you got an A or A– on your first draft, this won't be adequate. You really need to make a fresh start and follow the steps above.