

## Critical Inquiry Seminar

### *Manifest versus Scientific Image*



### Final Paper, Due Monday December 13

Your last assignment is to write your final paper. As with the rough draft, this should not seem like a monumental task, since you've already written a full draft and you've received a good deal of feedback. You have an outline of the paper with my comments, you have your draft of the paper, and you have comments on your draft from one (or more) of your peers. Now that you've had a few days away from your draft, you can work on tightening up the draft and integrating some of your commentators' suggestions.<sup>1</sup>

As always, clarity is the paramount concern. Now that you have a good idea where your paper is going to wind up, you are in a better position to state things clearly.

- It's only now that you know where you're going in the paper that you're in a position to write an introduction. Early on in the semester we talked about the uninformative nature of statements like, "In this paper, I'm going to talk about the idea of skepticism." The reason why you might be tempted to lead off a paper with that kind of wimpy statement is that you don't yet know what you're going to say about skepticism. With this paper you're much further along, so you're in a position to write a helpful introduction.
- Your paper is not a story with a surprise ending. Your reader shouldn't feel like she is uncovering your position a little bit at a time as you the writer discover what that position will be. For example, rather than giving me your analysis of free will a piece at a time in response to objections you consider, give me the whole thing up front, and then use signposting to explain your strategy for defending various parts of the analysis. Here's a more detailed example:

Thomson grants that the unborn fetus is a person, and argues that abortion is still morally permissible. She uses the example of a kidnapped violinist case to challenge the assumption that it is never permissible to kill an innocent person. [Describe case.] Thomson argues that the violinist is analogous to an unborn fetus, and hence if it is permissible to kill the violinist, it is permissible to abort the unborn fetus.

There are three critical features of the actual violinist case, X, Y, and Z. A feature that isn't present in the violinist case but is present in similar cases is feature W. Thomson thinks that the salient features of violinist case are X and Y, and that because of features X and Y, we should all agree that it is permissible to kill the violinist. I think Thomson has misdiagnosed the salient feature of the case. I will first present Thomson's reasons for thinking that it is features X and Y that make it permissible to kill the violinist. I will then argue that Thomson underdescribes the violinist case, and that the story can be filled out in one of two ways. On the first way of filling out the story, it is feature Z that is salient, not features X or Y. On the second way of filling out the story, X is not a feature of the case but W is, and it is W that makes it permissible to kill the violinist. The upshot is that it is features Z or W which makes it permissible to kill the violinist; I argue that neither feature Z nor W is present in the case of an unborn fetus, and hence Thomson's defense of abortion fails.

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<sup>1</sup> It's often hard to remove or change passages that you've *just written*. That's why it helps to leave a little time between the draft and the final version, so don't feel quite so attached to the way you've said something.

- As you can see in this example, I make *extensive* use of signposting. Even though I suggested you signpost in your draft, chances are you didn't do enough of it. It's always clear to you the writer what the connection between point A and point B is. You want to be quite sure your reader sees this connection as well.

In writing the rough draft you were not aiming to be concise, and you were not trying to find the perfect way to state your point. Now is the time for you to go back through your draft and tighten up sentences or passages where you're being a bit unclear or a bit redundant. Your peer comments will help with this. The comments will help you identify which passages need to be reworked, and your commentator may have even given you constructive suggestions on how to do so.

Don't feel you have to accept every one of your commentator's criticisms or suggestions. This is, after all, your paper. Take those criticisms or suggestions which make sense to you.

After you integrate your commentator's suggestions, read through your draft again – SLOWLY. It's easy when you read your own writing to speed up in anticipation of what's coming next. Slow down. Try to think what it would be like for someone else to read your words. It might help to read your paper aloud. You want to be sure that what you've written is really what you mean, and sometimes hearing, rather than reading, your words can help you pick up on problem areas.

I'm anticipating that your final paper will be roughly 7–8 pages, but I don't want you to worry too much about length. It is okay if it is a *little* longer or a *little* shorter (it is not okay if it is a *lot* longer). Email me your paper before 5 p.m. on Monday.