

Knowledge and Reality A: Lecture Five

1. Structure and Independence

You are not Kant; your 1500 word essay is not a treatise on the universe; you are not an internet crank. Cranks think they prove *amazing* things in 1500 words. You are **remarkably** unlikely to be able to do so, least of all in first year. So stick to a moderately sized, contentious, conclusion.

By focusing it's easier to achieve independence. As I said last lecture independence is demonstrated either by further reading or your own ideas (or suitably referenced ideas from your course mates). If you do *lots* of things you won't have enough time to talk about that stuff! **AND THAT'S THE IMPORTANT STUFF!**

Writing 500 words on Gettier, 500 words on Clark's response and 500 words on Goldman. **WRONG!**

Writing 500 words on Gettier, 700 words on Goldman, and 300 words summing up the reply from the lecture. **WRONG!**

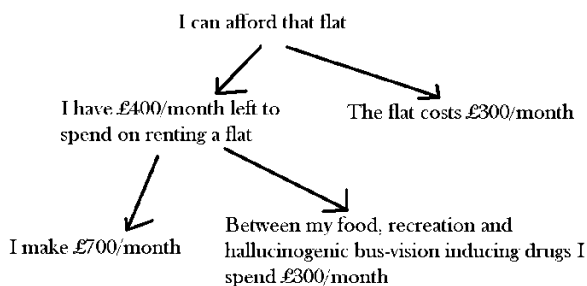
Writing 500 words on Gettier, 500 words on Goldman, 400 words summing up the reply from lecture and 100 words on something said in seminar about why it doesn't work. **WRONG!**

Writing 200 words on Gettier, 300 words on Clark, 500 words replying to him and 500 words replying to *that*. **RIGHT!**

2. Worked Example

So you might take something from seminar. For instance, in seminar you may have got together as a group and figured out a counterexample to Clark. You might have argued that it's too *strong*. Recall: It's too strong when things that *should* count as knowledge *don't* according to the criteria.

Imagine I am trying to figure out whether I can afford a flat. I total all my incomings and total all my outgoings. If my incomings are higher than my outgoings I can live there. But imagine I made a *minor* error in my calculations. Imagine I spent an £1 every month on food because I forgot I by a lottery ticket ('moron tax'). Now my belief is *not* fully grounded.



But surely *that* doesn't affect whether I know whether I can afford the flat or not? Or imagine if the flat cost £1 million pound. Even if I made a major error in my calculations I'd still know I *couldn't* afford the flat! So Clark's Fully Grounded Analysis is too strong. It seems to prevent us from knowing things we are meant to know! So imagine that you figured that out.

Explaining that idea is **independent**. Explaining that idea is **where most of the marks are**. Therefore **explaining that idea should take up most of the essay**. And a *response* to that would be **even better**. Can you do that in 1500 words? You can if you're *really* clear and succinct.

So this structure is a bit like a game of ping pong: Gettier says knowledge can't be analysed thus and so; Clark responds; we've just seen a response to Clark (right back at him!). To make the essay better, you **develop** that argument: a response to the response (*preferable*); a different response to Clark (*okay*); don't just start a new discussion (say about Goldman!). You're marked on depth, not breadth, so talking about Goldman 'just to fill up the words' is pointless. The word count is a limit **not** an aim.

3. Clarity

Sentences must be: grammatically well formed; form a continuous, flowing prose rather than randomly stating facts; be readable to the lay-reader (*that's* your target audience); succinct.

Clark's analysis of knowledge is too strong, too powerful, forcing too much knowledge to not count as knowledge and that's an invalid argument method in philosophy. It is semantically the case that Clark brings it about that one cannot know certain things one should. To demonstrate consider the following example relying upon paying rent. Imagine I have to pay rent in Selly Oak, but I miscalculate and so don't know what I need to pay as it isn't fully grounded.

Clark's analysis rules out me knowing some things I should. Imagine I am renting a house. If my belief that I can pay the rent is justified by my belief that I spend £300 on food then if that second belief is wrong, the former would not be grounded. But it could easily be wrong – I might spend £301 because I forgot to factor in my weekly lottery ticket. Just forgetting the lottery ticket *doesn't* mean I don't know I can pay the rent – but in this situation my belief that I can pay the rent wouldn't be fully grounded and according to Clark I would not know it to be true. Ergo Clark is wrong.

Succinctness and clarity is hard to achieve. Note the lack of pretension! This is an essay, not a poem. Philosophy essays demand that impersonal / broadsheet newspaper style writing. A business would demand it too! *Redraft*: Stick it in a drawer and leave it for a week or so. Then look at it again with a clear mind. Get someone **else** to read it! If they can't understand it, **your essay is crap**.

4. Referencing and Plagiarism

If it doesn't come wholly and solely from you, you need to reference it. Referencing is not just for when you take something word for word. You reference anything that comes from elsewhere. So if that bit about the rent came from, say, an article I'd written you'd reference it thus:

Clark's analysis rules out me knowing some things I should. Imagine I am renting a house. As Effingham (2010, 49-50) argues, if my belief that I can pay the rent is justified by my belief that I spend £300 on food then if that second belief is wrong, the former would not be grounded. But it could easily be wrong – I might spend £301 because I forgot to factor in my weekly lottery ticket. Just forgetting the lottery ticket *doesn't* mean I don't know I can pay the rent – but in this situation my belief that I can pay the rent wouldn't be fully grounded and according to Clark I would not know it to be true. Ergo Clark is wrong.

And that's only if it's not word for word **or close to it**. If you sit there and copy it word for word, it has to be a quote: enclosed by quotation marks if short (~25 words or less); inset without quotation marks if long; with page numbers! And no italics!

Clark's analysis rules out me knowing some things I should. Imagine I am renting a house. As Effingham argues

[...] if my belief that I can pay the rent is justified by my belief that I spend £300 on food then if that second belief is wrong, the former would not be grounded. But it could easily be wrong – I might spend £301 because I forgot to factor in my weekly lottery ticket. Just forgetting the lottery ticket *doesn't* mean I don't know I can pay the rent – but in this situation my belief that I can pay the rent wouldn't be fully grounded and according to Clark I would not know it to be true. Ergo Clark is wrong. (2010, 49)

But if you did **that** then that'd be crazy. You're marked on your understanding, **not** your ability to select quotes and reference them! You want to paraphrase it, or broadly explain what it says (**and reference it correctly**), in your own words. Generally, only use quotes when (i) no-one could say it better. At all. Say, in a definition; (ii) you intend to do a close textual analysis of that quote (e.g. Kant said 'blah', I understand bladdy-blah by this). Particularly important when your analysis is **contentious**.

To ensure it's not too close, read it - *understand* it. **Close the book and go away**. Write it up in your own words. For every sentence there are thousands of ways to rewriting it. The only way to achieve that is to **really understand** the material and write it up yourself. Referencing is easy. In the study guide, and attached to your handout, are the details of what to do. **DO EXACTLY THAT! DO WHAT OUR DEPARTMENT DEMANDS NOT OTHERS!** It's a simple mechanical task.

So, just as with numerous typos and bad grammar, bad referencing can force your mark down. If you need to reference something not on the list, go here:

<http://libweb.anglia.ac.uk/referencing/harvard.htm>

Although you will have to tailor what it says to our specifications, it's basically the same. There's simply **no excuse** to not get the referencing style correct. If you want to know more it's all in the Study Guide.

How to avoid plagiarism (from the Study Guide p. 32-4)

Let's see an example of how you might use an author's view in an essay.

In her book *Descartes* (London: Routledge 1978), Margaret Dauler Wilson says the following:

Why should the imperfection of objective being relative to real existence not mean that a cause with n degrees of formal reality ... bring about an idea of $n+m$ degrees of objective reality? (137)

Wilson is here raising a (rather difficult to understand) objection to Descartes' 'Trademark Argument' for the existence of God. Now, suppose you are writing an essay on the Trademark Argument (which appears in Descartes' *Third Meditation*), and you want to mention Wilson's objection. There are various ways you might do it:

The First Way

One objection to the Trademark Argument is, why should the imperfection of objective being relative to real existence not mean that a cause with n degrees of formal reality bring about an idea of $n+m$ degrees of objective reality?

THIS IS PLAGIARISM! The author has simply copied Wilson's words and made no attempt to show that they, or the ideas they express, are not the author's own.

The Second Way

One objection to the Trademark Argument is this: there is no reason why the imperfection of objective being relative to real existence should be such that an idea of $n+m$ degrees of objective reality cannot be brought about by a cause with n degrees of formal reality.

THIS IS STILL PLAGIARISM! The author has changed some of the words and the structure of the sentence, but the both the form of words and the ideas they express are still quite clearly the work of Wilson and not the author.

The Third Way

One objection to the Trademark Argument is this: there is no reason why the imperfection of objective being relative to real existence should be such that an idea of $n+m$ degrees of objective reality cannot be brought about by a cause with n degrees of formal reality. (Wilson 1978, 137)

THIS IS *STILL* PLAGIARISM! (Though it is a marginal case, not nearly as serious as the first two cases.) The form of words is still primarily Wilson's and not the author's own, and the author has made no attempt to make this clear to the reader. Also, while the author mentions the text where the original passage is to be found, he or she has not actually *said* that the stated objection is Wilson's; the reader is merely directed to Wilson's book for reasons that are not made explicit.

The Fourth Way

Wilson objects to the Trademark Argument on the grounds that there is no reason why the imperfection of objective being relative to real existence should be such that an idea of $n+m$ degrees of objective reality cannot be brought about by a cause with n degrees of formal reality. (Wilson 1978, 137)

This is borderline plagiarism. The reader is left in no doubt that the *ideas* expressed in the passage are Wilson's rather than the author's. But the paraphrase of Wilson's words is still *very* close to the original text. When you express another person's view by paraphrasing rather than quoting, you are implicitly claiming that while the *ideas* are not your own, the *form of words* used to express those ideas *is* your own. In this case, however, the form of words is still primarily Wilson's.

The Fifth Way

Wilson raises the following objection: 'Why should the imperfection of objective being relative to real existence not mean that a cause with n degrees of formal reality ... bring about an idea of $n+m$ degrees of objective reality?' (Wilson 1983, 137)

This is most certainly not plagiarism. The reader is explicitly told that both the form of words and the ideas they express belong to Wilson and not the author.

However, if the above is *all* you say about Wilson's objection, while you will not lose marks (or worse) for plagiarism or inadequate referencing, you won't be gaining many marks either – for you have not given any indication that you actually *understand* what the objection is. A good way of improving your essay marks is to follow through as far as you can. Show that you understand the objection by rephrasing it in your own words, explaining how exactly it tells against Descartes' argument, and discussing whether there is any way of rebutting the objection.

The general rule of thumb when it comes to avoiding plagiarism is: If you read it in a book, or even in your lecture notes, SAY SO. **This applies both to ideas and to the form of words used to express those ideas.** For example, if the author described in the First and Second Ways above had adequately paraphrased Wilson's objections, they would still have been guilty of plagiarism because they are passing off Wilson's *ideas* (though not her form of words) as their own. Whereas the

author described in the Fourth Way is not attempting to pass off Wilson's ideas as his or her own, but *is* (implicitly) attempting to pass off her *form of words* as his or her own.

The Harvard system of referencing and bibliography (from the Study Guide p. 36-8)

Referencing

The Harvard style of referencing is a short form of referencing used by many philosophy journals and book publishers. In the Harvard style, the bibliography at the end provides the *complete* reference, while a note in the text provides **only** author's/co-authors' surname(s), year, and page(s). The Harvard style reserves numbered footnotes for explanatory footnotes. The Harvard style of referencing uses a, b, etc. when the bibliography lists more than one source for the same author(s) for the same year.

Examples

(1) Frank Jackson, himself a proponent of the two-level view, regards the idea that dispositional properties might be causally operative as implying 'a curious and ontologically extravagant kind of overdetermination' (Jackson 1997, 202).

(2) Craig, for example, argues that 'a definition of cause, for Hume, is a statement of the conditions under which belief in the cause-effect relationship does in fact come about' (Craig 1987, 104).

Bibliography

The entries in the bibliography should appear in alphabetical order, by authors' surnames. Here are examples of what the entries should look like, with explanations of what is needed. The exact style can differ from publisher to publisher, e.g. some don't put the year of publication in brackets. This kind of variation isn't important, but do be consistent within your own bibliography.

If you are citing two works by the same author published in the same year – Frank Jackson in 1997, say – designate one of them 'Jackson 1997a' and the other '1997b'. (Make sure you get them the same way around in the references and the bibliography.)

- Book

Heil, J. (2003) *From an Ontological Point of View* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

The '2003' is the date of publication. You can find this on the information page at the front of the book. The 'Oxford' is the place of publication (found in the same place). Sometimes there are several offices of the publisher listed and it's hard to tell which one to use. Picking the first one listed is generally right, but don't worry too much about this, you won't lose marks if you pick the wrong one! The 'Oxford University Press' is the publisher, which is also found in the same place.

- Journal article

Broughton, J. (1983) 'Hume's scepticism about causal inferences', *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 64, 3-18.

For journal articles, you must give not only the year of publication (1983) but the volume number (64). This is normally on the spine of the journal.

- Chapter in an edited collection

Crane, T. (1998) 'Intentionality as the Mark of the Mental', in A. O'Hear (ed.), *Current Issues in Philosophy of Mind*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 229-51.

The information for the collection itself is the same as for a book entry (see 'Book' above). Don't forget the '(ed.)', which signifies that O'Hear is the editor of the collection. Note that the entry as a whole is for Crane (i.e. the author of the chapter) and not O'Hear (the editor of the collection).

- Newspaper or magazine article

Sutherland, J. (2006) 'Come on in, but only if you have lots of money', *Times Higher Education Supplement*, 25.8.06, 12.

- Source taken from the Web

Goldfinch, A. (date unknown), 'Popper on Induction', www.frozenfrontier.com/popper.htm, accessed 23.8.07.

There are no very good rules for how to list web sources (except in the case of the Stanford Encyclopedia, where the website tells you exactly what to do). Just make sure you give as much information as you can, and ALWAYS give the author's name. Do not use web sources whose author cannot be discerned unless you have a very good reason to do so.