

**Assignment: Dissertation Primary Source Outline Draft # 002**

Gustavo Alfonso Rincon

Meeting with Advisor Dr. JoAnn Kuchera-Morin

Date: 09.08.15

## **How to Write a Thesis**

by Umberto Eco

### ***Bibliography:***

Eco, Umberto, Caterina Farina, and Geoff Farina. *How to write a thesis*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2015. Print.

### ***Contents:***

***The Definition and Purpose of the Thesis***

***Choosing the Topic***

***Conducting Research***

***The Work Plan and the Index Cards***

***Writing the Thesis***

***The Final Draft***

***Conclusions***

## **01. THE DEFINITION AND PURPOSE OF THE THESIS:**

### **1.1 What is a Thesis, and Why is it required?**

PhD - a doctoral thesis, a dissertation.

- a piece of original research through which the candidate must demonstrate his/her scholarly capability of furthering his discipline.

- a piece of original research, in which one must not only know the work of other scholars but also “discover” something that other scholars have not yet said. In the humanities this “discovery” will rarely be a sweeping invention such as atomic scission, theory of relativity, or a medicine that cures cancer. PhD candidates in the humanities make more modest scholarly discoveries: a new way to interpret and understand a classic text, the attribution of a manuscript that illuminates an author’s biography, a reassessment of secondary studies that ripens ideas once wandering lost in various other texts.

...the scholar must produce a work that, in theory, other scholars in the field should not ignore, because it says something new.

... a literature review is longer and more extensive and time intensive.

### **1.2 For Whom Is This Book Written?**

...This book is for students who want to do rigorous work, despite the fact that they can only dedicate a few hours each day to study. This book is also for students who want to write a thesis that will provide a certain intellectual satisfaction, and that will also prove useful after graduation.

...the rigor of a thesis is more important than its scope. One can even collect soccer trading cards with rigor, as long as he identifies the topic of the collection, the criteria for cataloguing it, and its historical limits.

### **1.3 The Usefulness of a Thesis after Graduation**

... write a thesis that becomes the foundation of a broader research project that will continue into the years ahead.

Skills learned:

1. Identified a precise topic,
2. Collected documents on that topic,
3. Ordered these documents,
4. Reexamined the topic in light of the documents collected
5. Organized all this work into an organic form,
6. Ensured that his readers have understood him,
7. Provided the necessary documentation so that readers may reexamine the topic through his sources.

...Writing a thesis requires a student to organize ideas and data, to work methodically, and to build an "object" that in principle will serve others. ...the research experience matters more than the topic.

...The student who was able to carefully research ... will have trained himself to methodically collect, organize and present information,

#### **1.4 Four Obvious Rules for Choosing a Thesis Topic:**

.."You must write a thesis that you are able to write."

1. The topic should reflect your previous studies and experience. It should be related to your completed courses; your other research; and your political, cultural, or religious experience.
2. The necessary sources should be materially accessible. You should be near enough to the sources for convenient access, and you should have the permission you need to access them.
3. The necessary sources should be manageable. In other words, you should have the ability, experience, and background knowledge needed to understand the sources.
4. You should have some experience with the methodological framework that you will use in the thesis. For example, if your thesis topic requires you to analyze a Bach violin sonata, you should be versed in music theory and analysis.

## **02. CHOOSING THE TOPIC:**

### **2.1 Monograph or Survey?**

The first temptation of any student is to write a thesis that is too broad.

...survey vs. monograph

..."monograph" is the study of a single topic, and as such it is opposed to a "history of," a manual, and an encyclopedia. A monograph can analyze many writers, but only from the perspective of a specific theme.

..."The theme of "The World Turned Upside Down' in Medieval Writers," and it could explore the paradox in which fish can fly, birds can swim, and so on. The student could write an excellent monograph on this topic if he worked rigorously. However, this topic would include a vast amount of readings, as the student would need to familiarize himself with all the writers who treated the subject, however minor or obscure. The student might do well to narrow his cope to "The Theme of 'The World Turned Upside Down' in Carolingian Poets."

A student may consider a survey more exciting than a monograph, if only because focusing on the same author for one, two, or more years may seem boring. But the student should understand that a strict monograph also involves the author's cultural and historical context.

...Finally, remember this fundamental principle: the more you narrow the field, the better and more safely you will work. Always prefer a monograph to a survey. It is better for your thesis to resemble an essay than a complete history of an encyclopedia.

### **2.2 Historical or Theoretical?**

This choice only applies to certain subjects.

...A thesis in history of mathematics, Romance philology, history of German literature, and other similar subjects can only be historical.

...A thesis on experimental subjects such as architectural compositions, nuclear reactor physics, or comparative anatomy is usually theoretical. But there are other subjects such as theoretical philosophy, sociology, cultural anthropology, aesthetics, philosophy of law, pedagogy, or international law that allow a thesis of both kinds.

...In a theoretical thesis, a student confronts an abstract problem upon which other works may or may not have already reflected: the nature of human will, the concept of

freedom, the notion of social role, the existence of God, or the genetic code. (Not Realistic) ...thinkers have devoted themselves to such topics...usually did so after decades of reflection.

In the hands of less experienced students, these topics can generate two outcomes. The first...is a survey. The second outcome is more tragic, because the candidate presumes he can solve the question of God or define the concept of freedom, within only a few pages.

Let us hypothesize that the student believes he has understood an important problem. Since nothing is born from nothing, the student must have developed his thoughts under a particular author's influence. In this case, he should transform his theoretical thesis into a historiographic thesis. In other words, he should not discuss the problem of being, the notion of freedom, or the concept of social action; but develop a topic such as "The Question of Being in Early Heidegger," "The Notion of Freedom in Kant," or "The Concept of Social Action in Parsons."

...original ideas will emerge as he grapples with the author's ideas, as it is possible to say new things about freedom while studying an author's work on the concept.

...If he is ambitious, he can transform the theoretical thesis that he originally conceived into the final chapter of his historiographic thesis. Consequently readers will understand his original ideas in the context of a previous thinker, and the concepts he proposes will gain support from their proper frame of reference.

Even the brightest young writer will find it difficult to work in a vacuum and establish an argument *ab initio*. He must find a foothold in past scholarship, especially for questions as vague as the notions of being and freedom. Even if someone is a genius, and especially if someone is a genius<sup>8</sup>, he will never be diminished by starting from another author's work.

Building on a previous author's work...in fact the student can demonstrate the author's errors and limits.

Medieval writers saw themselves as "dwarves" compared to the "giant" ancients they revered, and yet they could see further than the ancients because they were "dwarves standing on the shoulders of giants."

...a good laboratory researcher will not begin an experiment without having compiled a literature review that examines the results of similar experiments.

Therefore an experimental thesis requires library research, laboratory work, and an established research method.

Here the student should follow the examples of the medieval authors and climb onto the shoulders of a giant, at least one of modest height, or even onto another dwarf. The student will always have the chance to develop his own original ideas later in his career.

### **2.3 Ancient or Contemporary?**

...using the term “ancient” in the most general sense of “very old,” referring to authors whose works have survived and been studied by scholars.

Let us state from the outset that a thesis on a contemporary author is always more difficult. It may be true that scholarship on a contemporary author generally involves a smaller bibliography of easily accessible texts, and that the student can accomplish the first phase of the research by reading .... Rather than sitting in a library. The problem arises when the student begins to comment on the author, considering that the thesis will be flawed if he simply repeats what other critics have said. Since opinions of most contemporary authors are still vague and divided, the student’s critical skills will be hindered by lack of perspective, and the project will become enormously difficult.

On the other hand, the texts of ancient authors are usually supported by a solid foundation of interpretation upon which the student can build. Certainly a thesis on an ancient author involves more laborious reading, and more careful bibliographical research, but the titles are more organized, and complete bibliographies are common. Moreover, if the student approaches his thesis as a chance to learn how to properly conduct research, a thesis on a past author will provide better training. And even if the student has a flair for contemporary criticism, the thesis can provide a final opportunity for him to challenge himself with literature of the past, and to exercise his taste and reading skills. He would be in good company, for many great contemporary authors, even avant-garde authors, wrote their thesis on Dante or Foscolo rather than Montale or Pound.

...I can confidently provide only this advice: work on a contemporary author as if he were ancient, and an ancient one as if he were contemporary. You will have more fun and write a better thesis.

### **2.4 How Long Does It Take to Write a Thesis?**

Let us state from the outset: no longer than three years and no less than six months.

...if the student has failed to delimit his topic and find the necessary sources after this period, he has one of the following problems.

1. The student has chosen an overwhelming topic that is beyond his skill level.
2. The student is one of those insatiable persons who would like to write about everything, and who will continue to work on his thesis for 20 years.
3. 3. The “thesis neurosis” has begun: the student abandons the thesis, returns to it, feels unfulfilled, loses focus, and uses his thesis as an alibi to avoid other

challenges in life, that he is too cowardly to address. The student will never graduate.

If the student is to write a good thesis, he must discuss his work incrementally with his advisor, at least within reason.

...writing a thesis is like writing a book, working incrementally with the professor is a communication exercise that assumes the existence of an audience, and the advisor is the only competent audience available to the student during the course of his work.

If the student completes the thesis hastily, the advisor will only have time to skim the text. Moreover, if the student presents the thesis to his advisor at the last minute, and if the advisor is dissatisfied with the results, he will challenge the candidate at the defense. This will produce unpleasant results not only for the student but also for the advisor, who should never arrive at a defense with a thesis he does not support.

...if the advisor notices that the candidate is having trouble, he must immediately inform the candidate, and suggest either that the student pursue another topic or that he postpone his thesis until he is better prepared.

*There are three requirements for a six-month thesis:*

- 1. The topic should be clearly defined.*
- 2. The topic should be contemporary, eliminating the need to explore a bibliography that goes back to the ancient Greeks. Alternatively, it should be a marginal subject on which little has been written.*
- 3. The primary and secondary sources must be locally available and easily accessible.*

## **2.5 Is it Necessary to Know Foreign Languages?**

One would hope that these students know the language on which they write their thesis.

Better still, one would hope that a student studying a French author writes his thesis in French, as many universities around the world rightfully require.

The observations... are no substitute for learning the language.. spending time... However this is an expensive solution...

[Let us pose the problem of an a student needed to read the language in another language. ]

...In these cases, the student generally uses the thesis as an excuse to learn the language. If the student is motivated by the topic and up to the challenge, he will begin to gain understanding.

The main tenant is this: we should not choose a topic that involves foreign language skills that we do not currently possess, or that we are not willing to acquire.

1. We cannot write a thesis on a foreign author if we do not read his texts in the original language.
2. We cannot write a thesis on a topic on which the most important secondary sources are in a language we do not know.
3. We cannot write a thesis on an author or topic by reading only the sources written in familiar languages.

Additionally, the thesis will inevitably introduce the student to a smattering of general terminology in all ... languages.

...if our Italian student does not know any foreign languages, and if he cannot seize this precious opportunity that the thesis provides to acquire them, the most reasonable solution is for the student to choose a specifically Italian topic, so that he can eliminate the need for foreign sources completely, or at least rely on the few sources that have been translated into Italian.

Obviously, the student should never begin his work based on such optimistic assumptions, and he should always consult available bibliographies to determine which foreign authors have written on his topic.

## **2.6 “Scientific” or Political?**

### **2.6.1 What Does it Mean to be Scientific?**

Some identify science with natural sciences or quantitative research. In other words, they believe research is only scientific if it contains formulas and diagrams. From this perspective, research on Aristotle’s ethics would not be scientific...Clearly this is not the meaning that academia assigns to the term “scientific.”

...research is scientific when it fulfills the following conditions:

1. The research deals with a specific object, defined so that the others can identify it.

The term “object” need not necessarily have a physical meaning.

Defining the object therefore means defining the conditions by which we can talk about it, based on rules that we establish, or that others have established before us.

If we establish the conditions that allow anyone to discern an integer above 3,725 when he encounters it, we have established our object's rules of identification.

...Here our object becomes publicly recognizable and identifiable, because we are dealing with texts (verbal or visual) in which these ... appear.

Second, we can conduct a hypothetical investigation to determine which characteristics a ....should possess in order to be ....

Then we would have to define the conditions of existence of this possible world, taking care to inform our readers that all of our discussions is developed within this hypothesis. If we remain rigorously faithful to the initial assumption, we have defined an object appropriate for scientific investigation.

Third we can produce sufficient evidence to prove that centaurs are in fact real. In this case, to build a realistic object of discussion, we should present evidence... so that others might agree that, regardless of the correctness of our hypothesis, there is something we can talk about.

...my purpose is to show how it is always possible given certain conditions, to constitute a publicly recognizable object of research.

2. *The research says things that have not yet been said about this object, or it revises the things that have already been said from a different perspective.*

A mathematically correct thesis that proved the Pythagorean theorem with traditional methods would not be a scientific work, because it would not add anything to our knowledge.

At best, it would provide clear instruction on how to solve the theorem, much as a manual provides instruction on how to build a doghouse using wood, nails, a plane, a saw, and a hammer.

... in section 1.1, a literature review can also be scientifically useful because the author has collected and organically linked together the opinions expressed by others on a particular topic.

Similarly, an instruction manual on how to build a doghouse is not a scientific work, but a work that discusses and compares all known doghouse-building methods can make a modest claim of scientific value.

*However, bear in mind that a literature review has scientific value only if something similar does not already exist in a given field.*

3. *The research is useful to others.*

An article that presents a new finding on the behavior of the elementary particles of physics is useful. An article that presents a transcription of an unpublished letter by the Italian romantic poet Giacomo Leopardi, and that recounts the circumstances of its discover, is useful.

The work is scientific if, in addition to fulfilling the two conditions above, it advances knowledge of the community, and if all future works on the topic will have to take it into consideration, at least in theory.

...scientific relevance is commensurate with the contribution's significance. Scholars must take certain contributions into account in order to say anything relevant on a particular topic, while they can leave others behind without serious consequences.

4. *The research provides the elements required to verify or disprove the hypotheses it presents, and therefore it provides the foundation for future research.*

This is fundamental requirement.

For example, to prove that centaurs live in Peloponnesus I must do the following with precision:

- a. produce proof (as we have already said, at least a tail bone);
- b. recount exactly how I discovered and exhumed the archeological find;
- c. instruct readers on how more evidence can be unearthed;
- d. if possible give examples of the precise type of bone (or other archaeological find) that would disprove my hypothesis, were it to be discovered in the future.

If I accomplish these four goals, I have not only provided the evidence to support my hypothesis, but I have facilitated the continuation of research that may confirm or challenge it.

The same is true for any topic.

In these terms, there is clearly no opposition between a scientific and a scientific and a political thesis, and as we have seen, one can write a "scientific" thesis without using logarithms and test tubes. On one hand, every scientific work has a positive political value in that it contributes to the development of knowledge every action that aims at stopping the process of knowledge has a negative political value); but on the other hand, every political enterprise with a chance of success must be grounded in the scientific diligence I have described.

### **2.6.2 Writing about Direct Social Experience**

...is it more useful to write an erudite thesis on an established, scholarly topic, or one tied to practical experiences and direct social activities? In other words, is it more useful to write a thesis that involves famous authors or ancient texts, or one that calls for a direct participation in the contemporary world, be it of a theoretical nature ... or of a practical nature....

As we have already said, the experience of writing a thesis is always useful for our future work (be it professional or political) not so much for the chosen topic, but instead for the training that it demands, for the experience of rigor it provides, and for the skills required to organize the material.

...the thesis will provide the last opportunity to acquire historical, theoretical, and technical knowledge; to learn systems of documentation; and to reflect in a more dispassionate manner on the theoretical and historical assumptions of ...[the]... work.

Occasionally a student will hastily prepare a hundred pages of flyers, ...recordings, activity reports, and statistics(perhaps borrowed from some previous study) and present his work as a ...thesis. But this work is a joke, ...because it betrays the university's thesis criteria...

A political thesis in particular risks superficiality for two reasons. First, unlike a historical or philological thesis that requires traditional methods of investigation, a thesis on a specific current social phenomenon often requires the student to invent his methodology. Secondly, a political thesis risks superficiality because a large segment of "American-style" social research methodology has fetishized quantitative statistical methods, producing enormous studies that are dense with data, but not useful for understanding real phenomena.

### **2.6.3 Treating a "Journalistic" Topic with Scientific Accuracy**

To build a reliable typology, I could draw a table that compared the possible characteristics as they appear in the stations I have examined. I could present the characteristics of a given radio station vertically, and the statistical frequency of the given characteristic horizontally.

(See Table 2.1)

...how then do we obtain this data?

Official records

Managers' statements

Listening protocols:

## **2.7 How to Avoid Being Exploited by Your Advisor**

### **03. CONDUCTING RESEARCH:**

#### **3.1 The Availability of Primary and Secondary Sources**

##### **3.1.1 What are the Sources of a Scientific Work?**

A thesis studies an object by making use of specific instruments. Often the object is a book and the instruments are other books.

For a thesis on “Adam Smith’s Economic Thought,” the object is Adam Smith’s bibliography, and the *instruments* are other books on Adam Smith. In this case, we can say that Adam Smith’s writings constitute the *primary sources* and the writings about Adam Smith are the *secondary sources* or the *critical literature*.

But there are also cases in which the object is a real phenomenon. ...In these cases, primary sources may not yet exist in an organized written form. Instead you must gather and create your primary documents, including statistical data, interview transcriptions and sometimes photographs or even audiovisual documents. The critical literature in these cases will not differ greatly from that of our thesis on Adam Smith, although it may consist of newspaper articles, and other kinds of documents, instead of books and journal articles.

You must be able to clearly distinguish primary sources from critical literature. The critical literature often reproduces quotes from primary sources, but ---as we will see ....these are indirect sources.

...a student conducting hasty and disorderly research can easily mistake the arguments contained in primary sources with those of the critical literature.

...I should promptly define the true object of my thesis so that I can determine the availability of my sources from the outset.

In section 3.2.4, I will demonstrate how to start a thesis from scratch with no preconceived bibliography, and how to obtain all the sources I need from a single, small library. Although this procedure is possible, the situation will rarely occur, because realistically I would not choose a topic unless I already knew:

- a. where I could find the sources
- b. whether they were easily accessible
- c. whether I was capable of fully understanding them.

It would be imprudent of me to accept a thesis on a particular set of ... manuscripts without knowing ...[where] they reside (if I knew their location) knowing full well that I would never be able to travel ...[to view]

It would be equally unwise to enthusiastically accept a topic on a private collection of documents belonging to a family that is overly protective of them, and that reveals them only to renowned scholars.

...I should not accept a topic that deals with...scripts, no matter how accessible that they are, if I lack the proper training needed to read them.

Once the problem of the primary sources is resolved the same questions arise for the critical literature.

[Note: Review the thesis examples for detailed clarity of concepts.]

### **3.1.2 Direct and Indirect Sources?**

Regarding books, a direct source is an original edition or a critical edition of the work in question.

*A translation is not a direct source*

*An anthology is not a direct source*

*The critical works of other authors, no matter how rich with quotations, are not direct sources:*

Indirect sources can take many forms.

...my sources should always be direct, within the limits set by the object of my research.

The only absolute rule is that I should not quote my author through another quote. In theory, a rigorous scientific work should never quote from any quote, even if the material that I wish to quote is from someone other than the object of my thesis.

Nevertheless, there are reasonable exceptions... [review]

What you should never do is quote from an indirect source pretending that you have read the original. This is not just a matter of professional ethics.

After you declare that you are citing an indirect source in your thesis, it may be prudent to check other indirect sources to determine the accuracy of a certain quote, or the reference to a certain fact or opinion. If you find inconsistencies that raise suspicion, you can either choose not to quote the data, or search for the direct source.

The same issue arises in regard to bibliographical entries. In a rush, you may decide to include in your bibliography sources you have not read; you may discuss these works in

footnotes, or what's worse, in the body of the text, all along drawing from information that you gathered indirectly.

[Read and review all used bibliographies. Triple check]

## **3.2 Bibliographical Research**

...we often go to the library to compile a bibliography, and this means searching for sources that we do not yet know exists.

A good researcher can enter a library without having the faintest idea about scholarship on a particular topic, and exit knowing more about it, if only a little more.

### **3.2.1 How to Use the Library**

The catalog The library offers some resources that allow us to find relevant sources about which we have no previous knowledge. Naturally the first is called the subject catalog. ...also arranged author catalog that is useful to those who already know what they want.

Bibliographical Indexes These are the safest resources for a student who already has a clearly defined ideas about a topic.

The librarian

Union catalogs, electronic catalogs, and interlibrary loan

### **3.2.2. Managing Your Sources with the Bibliographical Index Card File**

...to compile a basic bibliography you must consult many books.

...in addition to consulting the catalogs in the reference room, you should preliminarily inspect each book. When you find a chapter and its accompanying bibliography that pertain to your topic, you can skim the chapter (you will return to it later), but be sure to copy all of the chapter's bibliography.

Together with the chapter that you have skimmed, its bibliography (and if it is annotated, the bibliography's comments) will show which books the author considers fundamental among those he cites, and you can begin by borrowing those.

Additionally, if you cross-check the bibliographies with some reference works, you will determine which books are cited most often, and you can begin to establish a first hierarchy of sources for your topic.

Begin to document your bibliography.

A better system is to create a bibliographical index card for each book.

On each card you can record an abbreviation that signifies the library where the book is available, as well as the call number of the book. [ISBN or Bibliography]

You can then file your cards in a small index card box. A bibliography file.

The virtue of the index card system is that you can easily reorganize the cards as the bibliography grows and changes, and your cards will always be in true alphabetical order.

...using this system when you need to use your bibliography file to pursue a related project later..., and ...will have an organized system...

...other types of index card files:

Reading file

The idea file

Quote file

Reading files should only contain index cards dedicated only to the books (or articles) that you have actually read. Here you can document summaries, assessments, and quotes, although you may wish to dedicate an entire file exclusively to quotations. ..on each card in your reading file you can document everything you will need when you actually begin writing your thesis and your final bibliography.

...bibliography file must also contain index cards for all the books you must find, not only for the ones you have already located and read.

...you should take your bibliography file with you every time you go to the library. Its index cards contain only a book's essential information, and the libraries and call numbers under which the book can be found. At most, you can annotate "very important according to author X," "absolutely must find," "so-and-so says this is worthless work," or even buy this. But any further annotation should be left for the readings file. An entry in the readings file can absorb multiple index cards, whereas each item in the bibliography file comprises one and only one index card.

...construct your bibliography file with care. The better you make your bibliography file, the easier it will be to preserve and supplement for future research. It will be

more valuable to lend or even sell, and therefore it is worth ensuring that it is legible and well organized.

...the bibliography file will provide the foundation for the final bibliography, provided that it contains thorough documentation on the books you have found, read, and archived in the readings file.

...documentation guidelines,

1. The bibliography file,
2. The reading file,
3. References in notes
4. The final bibliography

### **3.2.3 Documentation Guidelines**

Books

Journals

Multiple authors and an editor

Multiple authors and no editor

Anonymous authors and pseudonyms

Reprints

Citing Newspapers

Citing official documents or monumental works

Citing classic works

Citing unpublished works and private documents

Originals and translations

### **3.2.4 *An Experiment in the Library of Alessandria***

Table 3.1 - SUMMARY OF DOCUMENTATION GUIDELINES

Table 3.2 - EXAMPLE OF A BIBLIOGRAPHICAL INDEX CARD

### **3.2.5 *Must you Read Books? If so, What Should You Read First?***

... Writing a thesis involves putting together a great number of books.

...in this kind of thesis it is necessary to contextualize the experiment with a discussion of previous scientific literature...

...this book addresses the vast majority of theses written on books, and using only books.

...thesis employs two kinds: the books it talks about, and the books that help it talk.

In other words, the texts that are the object of the study are the primary sources, and the critical literature on those texts constitutes the secondary sources.

Regarding our experiment in Alessandria, the original texts of the baroque treatise writers are the primary sources, and all those who wrote about the baroque treatise writers are the secondary sources.

...Should a student deal immediately with the primary sources, or first cover the critical literature? The question may be meaningless for two reasons:

- a. because the decision depends on the situation of the student, who may already know his author well and decide to study him in depth, or may be approaching for the first time a very difficult and perhaps seemingly unintelligible author;
- b. this is a vicious circle, because the primary source can be incomprehensible without the preliminary critical literature, but it is difficult to evaluate the critical literature without knowing the primary source.

...approach two or three of the most general critical texts immediately, just to get an idea of the background against which your author moves. Then approach the original author directly, and always try to understand exactly what he says. Afterward, explore the rest of the critical literature. Finally, return to examine the author in the light of the newly acquired ideas.

...In reality, students tend to follow the rhythm of their desire, and often there is nothing wrong with consuming texts in a disorderly way.

Naturally, the approach depends on the researcher's psychological structure. There are monochromic people and polychromic people.

**Monochronic** succeed only if they work on one endeavor at a time. They cannot read while listening to music; they cannot interrupt a novel to begin another without losing the thread; at their worst, they are unable to have a conversation while they shave or put on their makeup.

**Polychronic** are the exact opposite. They succeed only if they cultivate many interests simultaneously; if they dedicate themselves only on one venture, they fall prey to boredom.

The monochronic are more methodical but often have little imagination. The polychromic seem more creative, but they are often messy and fickle.

...if you explore the biographies of great thinkers and writers, you will find that there were both polychromic and monochromic among them.

**Summary:**

-----  
Do a complete bibliographical analysis and research.  
Creation of a timeline.

- 01. Primary sources - Top researchers of the field. (Articles, Journals, & Books)
  - 02. Secondary sources - Critical literature
  - 03. Tertiary sources -
- 

**Notes:**

Creation of Bibliographical Indexing (Source Notation). Skimming through material.

**04. THE WORK PLAN AND THE INDEX CARDS:**

**4.1 The Table of Contents as a Working Hypothesis**

Imagine that you have a week to take a 600-mile car trip. Even if you are on vacation, you will not leave your house and indiscriminately begin driving in a random direction. You will make a rough plan.

...so it happens with your thesis.

Make yourself a provisional table of contents and it can function as a working hypothesis, and it can be useful to immediately define the limits of your thesis.

Better still if this table of contents is a summary, in which you attempt a short description of every chapter. By proceeding in this way, you will first clarify for yourself what you want to do.

Secondly, you will be able to propose an intelligible project to your advisor.

Thirdly, you will test the clarity of your ideas.

...projects that seem quite clear as long as they remain in the author's mind, but when he begins to write, everything slips through his fingers.

The thesis is like a chess game that requires a player to plan in advance all the moves he will make to checkmate his opponent.

...your work plan should include the title, the table of contents and the introduction.

Composing a good title is already a project. I am not talking about the title on the first page of the document that you will deliver to the Registrar's Office many months from now, one that will invariably be so generic as to allow for infinite variations.

I am talking of the "secret title" of your thesis, the one that then usually appears as the subtitle. T

After you have formulated this question, you must subdivide your topic into logical sections that will correspond to chapters in the table of contents.

Another method to compose the hypothetical table of contents is the tree structure:

...Whatever method you use, a hypothetical table of contents should contain the following:

1. The state of the issue,
2. The previous research,
3. Your hypothesis,
4. Your supporting data,
5. Your analysis of the data,
6. The demonstration of your hypothesis,
7. Conclusions and suggestions for further research.

The third phase of the work plan is to draft the introduction. The draft should consist of an analytical commentary related to the table of contents: " With this work we propose to demonstrate this thesis. The previous research has left many questions unanswered, and the data gathered is still insufficient. In this first chapter, we will attempt to establish this point; in thesis second chapter we will tackle this other point. In conclusion, we will attempt to demonstrate a, b, and c. We have set these specific limits for the work. Within these limits, we will use the following method."

The function of this fictitious introduction (fictitious, because you will rewrite it many times before you finish your thesis) is to allow you to give your ideas a primary direction that will not change, unless you consciously restructure the table of contents. This way you will control your detours and your impulses. This introduction is also useful for telling your advisor what you want to do. But it is even more useful for determining whether your ideas are organized.

...The table of contents already establishes the logical subdivision of the thesis into chapters, sections, and subsections. On the modalities of this subdivision see section 6.4. Here too, a good binary subdivision allows you to make additions without significantly altering the original order. For example:

- 1 Central Question
  - 1.1 Subquestions
    - 1.1.1 Principal Subquestion
    - 1.1.2 Secondary Subquestion
  - 1.2 Development of the Central Question
    - 1.2.1 First Ramification
    - 1.2.2 Second Ramification

Table 4.1

## **4.2 Index Cards and Notes**

### **4.2.1 Various Types of Index Cards and Their Purpose**

*Table 4.2 Quote Index Cards*

*Table 4.3 Connection Index Cards*

### **4.2.2 Organizing the Primary Sources**

#### **4.2.3 The Importance of Readings Index Cards**

1. Record precise bibliographical information
2. Record the author's information
3. Write a short (or long) summary of the book or article.
4. Transcribe the full text of passages you wish to quote
5. Record your personal comments throughout your summary

6. Mark the card with the appropriate abbreviation or color so that you are clearly corresponds to the correct section of your work.

*Table 4.4 Readings Index Card*

#### **4.2.4 Academic Humility**

***Summary:***

-----  
Create an thesis outline:

Create an Outline:

Title (Public and private)

Introduction:

Conclusion:

Note: Each section of the Dissertation should have an introductory paragraph.  
-----

### ***05. Writing the Thesis***

#### **5.1 The Audience**

...If you read the great scientists or the great critics you will see that, with a few exceptions, they are quite clear and are not ashamed of explaining things well.

...Let us then say that a thesis is a work that, for pragmatic reasons, you should address to your advisor, but that is also meant to be read and consulted by others, even scholars who are not well versed in that particular discipline.

So, in a philosophy thesis, it will certainly not be necessary to begin by explaining what philosophy is, and similarly it will not be necessary to explain what a volcano is in a thesis on volcanology. But immediately below this level of obvious knowledge, you should provide the readers with all the information they need to understand your thesis.

## 5.2 How to Write

I could at least recommend that you rewrite your thesis many times, or that you take on other writing projects before embarking on your thesis, because writing is also a question of training.

Suggestions:

*You are not Proust.* Do not write long sentences.

*You are not e. e. cummings.* Cummings was an American avant-garde poet who is known for having signed his name with lower-case initials. ....he did all the things that an avant-garde poet can and should do.

But you are not an avant-garde poet. Not even if your thesis is on avant-garde poetry. If you write a thesis on Caravaggio, are you then a painter? And if you write a thesis on the style of the futurists, please do not write as a futurist writes.

...This is important advice because nowadays many tend to write “alternative” theses, in which the rules of critical discourse are not respected.

...But the language of the thesis is a metalanguage, that is, a language that speaks of other languages.

...I am not saying that it is wrong to express oneself in the manner of the so-called mentally ill. IN fact, you could reasonably argue that they are the only ones who express themselves the way one should.

..But here you have two choices. Either you do not write a thesis, and you manifest your desire to break with tradition by refusing to earn your degree...or you write a thesis, but then you must explain to everyone why the language of the .... Is not a “crazy “ language, and to do it you must use a metalanguage intelligible to all.

... The pseudo-poet who writes his thesis in poetry is a pitiful writer (and probably a bad poet).

*Begin new paragraphs often.* Do so when logically necessary, and when the pace of the text requires it, but the more you do it, the better.

*Write everything that comes into your head, but only in the first draft.*

... Your thesis exists to prove the hypothesis that you devised at the outset, not to show the breadth of your knowledge.

Use the advisor as a guinea pig. You must ensure that the advisor reads the first chapters (and eventually, all the chapters) far in advance of the deadline. Do not play the solitary genius.

Do not insist on beginning with the first chapter. Perhaps you have more documentation on chapter 4. Start there, with the nonchalance of someone who has already worked out the previous chapters. You will gain confidence. Naturally your working table of contents will anchor you, and will serve as a hypothesis that guides you (see section 4.1)

Do not use ellipsis and exclamation points, and do not explain ironies. It is possible to use language that is referential or language that is figurative.

... Ideally, a critical essay or a scholarly text should be written referentially (with all terms well defined and univocal), but it can also be useful to use metaphor, irony, or litotes.

Always define a term when you introduce it for the first time.

Do not explain the location of Rome without the explaining the location of Timbuktu.

If you write a thesis on Eliot (English poet), have the humility to provide all the information about him in the text. If not in the text, at least provide it in a note near the beginning, and be honest and precise enough to condense all of his necessary biographical information into ten lines. The reader, as much as he may know the subject, will not necessarily have memorized Eliot's Birthday.

... Take this into consideration when you write a work on a minor author of past centuries. Do not presume that everyone knows of him. One never knows. Immediately introduce him, his cultural context, and so on. ... But even if the author was Moliere, how much will it cost you to insert a note with a couple of dates?

I or we? Should the student introduce his opinions in the first person? Should he state, "I think that ..."? Some believe that this is more honest than using majestic plural. I disagree.

... A writer says "we" because he presumes that his readers can share what he is saying. Writing is a social act. I write so that you as a reader accept what I propose to you.

... I think, the student can try to avoid personal pronouns by adopting more impersonal expressions such as "therefore one should conclude that," ...

## 5.3 Quotations

### 5.3.1 When and How to Quote: 10 Rules

*...you will quote many texts by other authors in your thesis: the textual object of your work or the primary source or sources; and the critical literature on your topic, or the secondary sources.*

...There are two kinds of quotes

- a. quotes from a text that you will interpret;
- b. quotes from a text that you will use to support your interpretation.

... It is difficult to say abstractly whether you should quote abundantly or sparingly. It depends on the type of thesis you are writing.

Rule 01: Quote the object of your interpretive analysis with reasonable abundance.

Rule 02: Quote the critical literature only when its authority corroborates or confirms your statements.

...These two rules imply some corollaries.

First, if the passage you wish to analyze exceeds half a page, it means something is wrong. Either your analysis is too general and you will not be able to comment on the text point by point; or you are discussing an entire text rather than a passage, and presenting a global criticism rather than analysis.

...In these cases, if the text is important but too long, present it in full in an appendix, and quote only short passages over the course of your chapters.

Second, when quoting or citing critical literature, be sure that it says something new, or that it confirms authoritatively what you have said.

Rule 03: If you don't want readers to presume that you share the opinion of the quoted author, you must include your own critical remarks before or after the passage.

Rule 04: Make sure that the author and the source(print or manuscript) of your quote are clearly identifiable.

...You can do this by including one of the following:

- a. a superscript number and a corresponding note (see section 5.4.2) especially when you mention the author for the first time;
- b. The author's name and the work's publication date, in parentheses after the quote (see section 5.4.3);

c. The page number in parentheses, but only when the entire chapter (or the entire thesis) centers on the same work by the same author. Table 5.1  
...once you have clarified to which edition you refer, cite your primary source with the page number in parentheses in the text, and cite the critical literature in the note.

Table 5.1 Example of the Continuous Analysis of a Single Text

Rule 05: Quote your primary source from the critical edition, or the most canonical edition. In general for ancient and classical authors it is sufficient to cite sections, chapters, and lines according to current usage.

Regarding contemporary authors, if various editions are available, it is better to cite either from the first, or from the most recent if it is revised and corrected. The first edition is preferable if the following editions are simply reprints, and the last edition is preferable if it contains revisions, additions, or updates. ...your reference should specify both the first edition and the most recent edition, and should clarify from which one you are quoting.

Rule 06: When your primary source is foreign, quote it in the original language. This rule is mandatory for literary works. This rule is mandatory for literary works, in these cases, adding a translation in parentheses or in a note may be useful, but follow your advisor's suggestions on this.

Rule 07: The reference to the author and the work must be clear.

Rule 08: When a quote does not exceed two or three lines, you can insert it into the body of the text enclosed in quotation marks.

...When the quote is longer, it is better to set it off as a block quotation.

Rule 09: Quotes must be accurate.

First, transcribe the words exactly as they appear. (To this end, it is always a good idea to check the quotes against the original in your final draft, because errors or omissions may have occurred when you copied them by hand or typed them.)

Second, do not omit text from a quote without indicating your omission with an ellipsis, three consecutive periods with or without brackets, in place of omitted part.

Third, do not make interpolations without clearly signaling them; each of our comments, clarifications, and specifications must appear enclosed in brackets.

Finally, we must also indicate emphases that are ours rather than the author's by adding, after the quote and enclosed in brackets, a formula such as "emphasis mine."

If the author that you quote, despite worthiness of mention, makes an evident mistake, you must respect his mistake, but you must indicate it to the reader. At the very least, indicate the mistake with the following expression enclosed in square brackets: [sic], liberally meaning “so.”

Rule 10: Quotes are the testimony in a trial, and you must always be able to track down the witnesses and demonstrate their reliability. For this reason, the reference must be exact and accurate (do not quote from an author without indicating the book and page number), and it must be verifiable.

...how should you proceed if important information or criticism comes from a personal communication, a letter, or a manuscript? In a note, you can use one of these expressions:

1. Personal communication with the author, June 6, 1975
2. Personal letter to author, June 6, 1975
3. Recorded statements, June 6, 1975

...Source 3 is vague because the term “recording” does not specify whether you are talking about a magnetic audio recording or stenographic notes.

In these extreme cases, it is always good practice, after you have given a final form to the quote, to send a letter to the author with a copy of the text, and to ask for a letter of authorization in which he acknowledges the ideas you have attributed to him.

...If you are dealing with enormously important unpublished information (e.g., a new formula resulting from secret research), you should put a copy of the letter of authorization in the thesis’s appendix.

Minor rules: If you want to be precise about text you have omitted, consider punctuation marks as you insert the ellipsis (the three ellipsis periods with or without the square brackets);

### **5.3.2 Quotes, Paraphrases, and Plagiarism**

When you created your reading index cards, you summarized the various points of the author in question. ...you paraphrased the author, rewording the author’s thought. In other instances you quoted entire passages enclosed in quotation marks. When you then begin writing your thesis, you no longer have the text in front of you, and perhaps you will copy entire passages from your index cards into your thesis.

...you must be sure that the passages that you copy are really paraphrases and not quotes without quotation marks. Otherwise you will have committed plagiarism.

.. This form of plagiarism is very common.

How can you make sure that you are paraphrasing and not plagiarizing? First of all, a paraphrase is generally much shorter than the original. But there are cases in which the author of a sentence or fairly short paragraph says very juicy things.

...Here you do not have to worry neurotically about each of your words being different from the author's, and in fact sometimes it is inevitable or even useful that some of the author's terms remain unchanged.

The most reassuring test of your paraphrases will come when you are able to paraphrase the text without looking at it.

...This will mean not only that you have avoided plagiarism, but also that you have understood the text you are paraphrasing.

...your readings index card would have reproduced the passages verbatim, or paraphrased it beyond suspicion.

If there are no quotation marks on the index card, you must be able to trust that the card contains an honest paraphrase that avoids plagiarism.

## **5.4 Footnotes**

### **5.4.1 The Purpose of Footnotes**

...a thesis or a book with copious notes exhibits ... many authors ... tone...are useful.

Cases that require notes

#### 01. Use a note to indicate the source of a quote.

...To many bibliographical references in the text can interrupt your argument and make your text difficult to read.

...there are ways to integrate essential references into the text, thus doing away with the need for notes

...author-date system (see section 5.4.3)

...notes provide an excellent way to avoid burdening the text with references. If your university doesn't mandate otherwise, use a footnote for bibliographical

references rather than an endnote that is, a note at the end of the book or the chapter), because a footnote allows the reader to immediately spot the reference.

02. Use notes to add additional supporting bibliographical references on a topic you discuss in the text.

03. Use notes for external and internal cross-references.

...once you have treated a topic, you can include the abbreviation “cf” (for the Latin confer, meaning “to bring together”) in the note to refer the reader to another book, or another chapter or section of your text.

If your internal cross-references are essential, you can integrate them into the text.

04. Use notes to introduce a supporting quote that would have interrupted the text. If you make a statement in the text and then continue directly to the next statement for fluidity, a superscript note reference after the first statement can refer the reader to a note in which a well-known authority backs up your assertion.

05. Use notes to expand on statements you have made in the text. Use notes to free your text from observations that, however important, are peripheral to your argument or do nothing more than repeat from a different point of view what you have essentially already said.

06. Use notes to correct statements in the text.

You may be sure of your statements, but you should also be conscious that someone may disagree, or you may believe that, from a certain point of view, it would be possible to object to your statement. Inserting a partially restrictive note will then prove not only your academic honesty but also your critical spirit.

07. Use notes to provide a translation of a quote, or to provide the quote in the original language. If the quote appears in its original language in the main body of the text, you can provide the translation in a note. If ...you decide for reasons of fluidity to provide the quote in translation in the main text, you can repeat the quote in its original language in a note.

08. Use notes to pay your debts. Citing a book from which you copied a sentence is paying a debt. Citing an author whose ideas or information you used is paying a debt. Sometimes, though, you must also pay debts that are more difficult to document. It is a good rule of academic honesty to mention in a note that, for example. A series of

original ideas in your text could not have been born without inspiration from a particular work, or from a private conversation with a scholar.

Whereas notes of types 1,2, and 3 are useful as footnotes, notes of types 4 through 8 can also appear at the end of the chapter or of the thesis, especially if they are very long.

...A note should never be too long; otherwise it is not a note, it is an appendix, and it must be inserted and numbered as such at the end of the work.

...be consistent: use either all footnotes or all endnotes.

...If you use short footnotes and longer appendices at the end of the work, do this consistently throughout your thesis.

#### **5.4.2 The Notes and Bibliography System**

Let us now consider the note as a means for citation. If in your text you speak of an author or quote some of his passages, the corresponding note should provide the necessary documentation.

This system is convenient because, if you use footnotes, the reader knows immediately what author, and work you are citing. Yet this process imposes duplication because you must repeat in the final bibliography the same reference you included in the note.

In fact, the final bibliography provides the material you have consulted at a glance, and it also serves as a comprehensive source for the literature on your particular topic.

Moreover, the final bibliography provides more complete information than do the notes.

For example, citing a foreign author, the note provides only the title in the original language, while the bibliographical entry will also include a reference to translation.

...while usage suggests citing an author by first name and last name in a note, the bibliography presents authors in alphabetical order by last name. Additionally, if the first edition of an article appeared in an obscure journal, and the article was then reprinted in a widely available miscellaneous volume, the note may reference only the miscellaneous volume with the page number of the quote, while the bibliography will also require a reference to the first edition.

Table 5.2 Example of the Notes and Bibliography System

Table 5.3 Example of a Corresponding Standard Bibliography

### 5.4.3 The Author-Date System

In many disciplines (and with increasing frequency) authors use a system that allows them to eliminate all reference notes, preserving only content notes and cross-references. This system presupposes that the final bibliography is organized by authors' names, and includes the date of publication of the first edition of the book or article.

What does this bibliography entry allow you to do?

When you must discuss this book in the text, you can eliminate the entire footnote (the superscript note reference number in the text, the footnote itself, and the reference in the footnote) and proceed as follows:

*As Chomsky wrote, "mathematical study of formal properties of grammars is, very likely, an area of linguistics of great potential" (1962, 62).*

Or

*"It is quite apparent that current theories of syntax and semantics are highly fragmentary and tentative, and that they involve open questions of a fundamental nature" (Chomsky 1965, 148).*

When the reader checks the final bibliography, he understands that "Chomsky 1965, 148)" indicates "page 148 of Naom Chomsky's 1965 book Aspects of the Theory of Syntax,..."

This system allows you to prune the text of the majority of the notes. In addition, it means that, at the writing stage, you only need to document a book once. For this reason, this system is especially appropriate when the student must constantly cite many books, or cite the same book often, allowing him to avoid annoying little notes full of "ibid."

This system is indispensable even for a student writing a condensed review of the critical literature on a particular topic.

...The author-date system works only under certain conditions:

01. The bibliography must be homogeneous and specialized, and readers of your work should already be familiar with your bibliography.

If instead you are writing, for example, a thesis on Italian culture... in which you will cite novelists, poets, politicians, philosophers, and economists, the author-date system no

longer works well because few readers can recognize a book by its date of publication alone.

Even if the reader is a specialist in one field, he will probably not recognize works outside that field.

02. The bibliography in question must be modern, or at least of the last two centuries. In a study of Greek philosophy it is not conventional to cite a book by Aristotle by its year of publication

03. The bibliography must be scholarly/academic.

Table 5.4 Example of the Author-Date System

Table 5.5 Example of a Corresponding Reference List

You will ... notice that the author-date system shows at a glance when a particular text was published for the first time...For this reason, this system is useful in homogeneous treatments of a topic in specific disciplines, since in these fields it is often important to know who proposed a certain theory for the first time, or who completed certain empirical research for the first time.

... With the author-date system, you do not have this problem; [Changing over 100 footnotes numbering system]

simply insert the name and the date of publication in parentheses, and then add the item to the general bibliography.

If you use the author-date system in a thesis with a homogeneous bibliography, you can be even more succinct by using multiple abbreviations for journals, manuals, and conference proceedings.

[see examples.]

## **5.5 Instructions, Traps, and Conventions**

Do not credit or cite notions of common knowledge.

Do not attribute to an author an idea that he cites as belonging to someone else.

Do not add or delete notes only to force the numbering to add up.

There is a method for citing from indirect sources while still observing the rules of academic honesty.

*It is always better not to cite secondhand information*

Always give precise information on critical editions, revisions, and the like.

*Specify if an edition is a critical edition and indicate its editor. Specify if a second or more recent edition is revised, enlarged, or corrected. Otherwise you risk misrepresenting the opinions that an author expressed in the 1970 revised edition of his 1940 work as if he had actually expressed them in 1940, when some discoveries had perhaps not yet been made.*

Pay attention when you quote a pre-1900 author from foreign sources.

*Different cultures name the same figures differently.*

*How do we learn these naming conventions, of which there are many hundreds? We read various texts in various languages on the same topic. We join the club.*

Those who do not know these things are considered naïve or provincial. A literature student who discusses in his thesis the relationship between Arouet and Voltaire after reading a few secondary sources might be considered “ignorant” instead of merely provincial.

*Pay attention when you find numbers in foreign texts.*

*Pay attention to references to centuries in foreign sources.*

*Acknowledgments.*

If someone other than your advisor provided verbal suggestions, lent you rare books, or gave you similar kinds of help, it is good practice to acknowledge them in a section at the beginning or end of your thesis. It also shows that you were diligent enough to consult knowledgeable people.

## **5.6 Academic Pride**

There is nothing more annoying than a thesis in which the author continuously gives unsolicited excuses...

You have devoted months and maybe years to the topic you have chosen, you have presumably read everything there was to read on it. You have reflected on it, taken notes, and now you say that you are not qualified? If you are not qualified, do not defend your thesis.

If you defend it, it is because you feel ready...

...once you have illustrated other scholars' opinions, once you have illuminated the particular difficulties of the issue, and once you have clarified that there can be alternative answers to a specific question, jump in a the deep end.

When you speak, you are the expert.

Be humble and prudent before opening your mouth, but once you open it, be dignified and proud.

By writing a thesis on topic X, you assume that nobody has discussed this topic so exhaustively or clearly before you.

On the topic [chosen] you must be the utmost living authority.

## **06. The Final Draft:**

## **6.1 Formatting the Thesis**

### **6.1.1. Margins and Spaces**

### **6.1.2. Underlining and Capitalizing**

### **6.1.3 Sections**

### **6.1.4 Quotation Marks and Other Signs**

### **6.1.5 Transliterations and Diacritics**

### **6.1.6 Punctuation, Foreign Accents, and Abbreviations**

### **6.1.7 Some Miscellaneous Advice**

## **6.2. The Final Bibliography**

## **6.3. The Appendices**

## **6.4 The Table of Contents**

## ***7. CONCLUSIONS:***

I would like to conclude with two observations. First, writing a thesis should be fun. Second, writing a thesis is like cooking a pig: nothing goes to waste.

...What really matters is that you write your thesis with gusto. If you choose a topic that interests you, and if you truly dedicate to your thesis the time you have allotted, however short ..., you will experience the thesis as a game, as a bet, or as a treasure hunt.

...There is the satisfaction of competitive sports in hunting a text that is difficult to find; and there is the satisfaction of solving an enigma in discovering, after long reflection, the solution to an apparently insoluble problem. You must experience the thesis as a challenge. You are the challenger. At the beginning you posed a question which you did not yet know how to answer. The challenge is to find the solution in a finite number of moves.

...Sometimes, you can experience the thesis as a game between you and your author; he seems to conceal his secret from you, and you must trick him, question him gently, compel him to say what he does not want to say, but what he should have said.

...Sometimes, the thesis is a game of solitaire; you have all the pieces, and the challenge is to make them fall into place.

...If you play the game with competitive gusto, you will write a good thesis.

...If you devote yourself to your research, you will find that a thesis done well is a product of which nothing goes to waste.

...Your thesis is like your first love: it will be difficult to forget. In the end, it will represent your first serious and rigorous academic work, and this is no small thing.