#GradComments

Draft: 11/11/2022

Newest draft always available here:

http://korman.faculty.philosophy.ucsb.edu/GradComments.pdf

This document is meant to serve as a key for the hashtagged abbreviations I leave as comments on grad student papers. It can also be read as a series of writing tips. Nearly all of the comments concern ways of fine-tuning your writing to make the paper a coherent whole, with the sort of attention to fine details that journals want to see.

Generating and catching the sorts of errors I flag below is a normal part of the writing process. I catch them all the time when I'm editing my own writing. You'll even find them in published papers. In fact, I bet this document contains some of the very errors I discuss below (oops!).

This is a work in progress, so let me know if there are things you find unclear, misspelled, etc.

And thanks to Tom Costigan, Alex Lebrun, and Teresa Robertson Ishii for helpful feedback!

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#Anaphora

When you use pronouns in a paper, the reader needs to be able to look back to earlier in the sentence, or to the previous sentence, to figure out what the pronoun is referring to. Pronouns that have their reference determined in this way are called *anaphoric* pronouns—to be distinguished from *deictic* pronouns which get their referent by demonstration (like when I point at you and say "*that*'s my favorite student").

If I've left this comment, it's because you've used a pronoun—often 'this', 'that', 'this F', or 'that F'—without a clear referent. Whenever you say 'this' or 'that', there should be a clear

answer to the question ‘what?’, and whenever you say ‘this F’ or ‘that F’, there should be a clear answer to ‘which F?’

Suppose you said:

> (A) Whenever a hedonist makes a value judgment, **that thing** must be pleasurable.

You meant for ‘that thing’ to refer to *the thing being judged to be valuable*. But the only thing explicitly referenced earlier in the sentence is the judgment itself, so the only available reading of (A) is one that (weirdly) says the judgment itself must be pleasurable.

Next, consider (B):

> (B) Hedonism seems to entail that only pleasure is intrinsically valuable. But many deny **this**.

The problem with (B) is that there are too many candidate referents for ‘this’, and thus too many possible interpretations of what it is that many are being said to deny. Many deny that only pleasure is intrinsically valuable? Many deny that hedonism has that entailment? Many deny that hedonism *seems* to have that entailment? Even if there are enough clues in the surrounding context for a charitable reader to figure out what ‘this’ is supposed to refer to, it’s best to rewrite the sentences so that the unintended readings are no longer grammatically available.

Also be careful about using ‘they’ without first explicitly introducing its referent. Consider:

> (C) **Hedonism** is the thesis that only pleasure is intrinsically valuable. **They** would say that knowledge is at best instrumentally valuable.

The ‘They’ is evidently meant to refer to hedonists. But hedonists (themselves) are not mentioned in (C) and thus are not an available referent for ‘They’. To fix the problem, the first sentence could be changed to something like ‘Hedonists hold that only…’, or ‘They’ in the second sentence should be replaced with ‘Hedonists’.

Similar remarks apply to definite descriptions purporting to refer back to previously mentioned items, like ‘the objection’, ‘the counterexample’, or ‘the thesis in question’.

Get into habit of seeing these terms as “whiplash words”. When you’re editing your paper, and you see a term like ‘this’, ‘this objection’, or ‘the objection’ your head should whip back to what was just said, to make sure that the intended referent is (grammatically) within reach.

#Anticipate

You’ve made some argument or raised some objection, and I think you ought to try to anticipate and address ways your opponents might respond to or resist what you’ve said. Obviously, doing this plays an important role in convincing your opponents. Less obviously, it helps build trust with readers who aren’t entirely familiar with the debate (or paper) you’re weighing in on. When

I'm reading a paper outside my main area, and I see (what looks like) a powerful argument against some major position or major figure—with no discussion of how opponents would respond—I get suspicious. Even if *I* can't see any flaw in your reasoning, I start wondering: "Can it really be *that* easy? Do your opponents really have *nothing* to say in response? Have you even checked to see how they would (or do) respond?" Anticipating and addressing one or more sensible responses you opponent might give helps assuage these doubts, and can also help clarify and strengthen whatever point or argument you're making.

#ArguesHow

You've mentioned that some author argues for a certain claim, without telling us what their argument is. Sometimes that's fine, but other times you really ought to tell us what the argument is if you're going to mention it at all—and if I've left this comment, then this is one of those other times. Perhaps you've told us that they argued for p, and then you challenge p, in which case readers will wonder how you would reply to their aforementioned argument for p (and what that argument is). Or perhaps you've told us that they argued for p, and then you start giving your own argument for p, in which case readers will wonder how your argument is supposed to be different from or an improvement on the author's aforementioned argument (and what that argument is).

In some cases, for instance when it is entirely irrelevant *how* the author argues for p, the fix is just to say that the author *endorses* p, rather than saying that they argue for it. This avoids raising questions (in readers' minds) about what the argument is.

#BareMinimum

You're providing extraneous information that the reader doesn't really need to know. (Or at least I suspect that you are.) (Or at least you're not doing enough to assure me that the reader needs to know all of this.)

The problem most commonly arises while summarizing someone else's views or arguments. When you're giving background information about some article you want to engage with, you don't need to summarize everything that happens in that article. When you're giving background information about some debate, you don't need to summarize every twist and turn of the debate. Rather, your aim should be to tell the reader the *bare minimum* that they need to know in order to make sense of (i) the arguments you're going to go on to give and (ii) why the issues you're addressing are under discussion or worth discussing in the first place.

Suppose, for instance, you're discussing Garcia's paper, which is structured like this:

- §1: She states her own preferred form of hedonism and contrasts it with nearby theses
- §2: She argues that this is the form of hedonism that Bentham himself endorsed
- §3: She advances an argument for this form hedonism
- §4: She defends her argument against a certain objection

Now, suppose the point of *your* paper is to raise a new objection to Garcia's §3 argument, different from the objection she addresses in her §4. In that case, there's likely no need to say anything about what happens in §2 and §4 of her paper, or anything about the "nearby theses" she discusses in §1.

#BarePlurals (*previously labeled #Some/Most/All*)

This is probably the most frequent comment I leave on graduate student writing. I've left this comment because you've used a sentence of the form ***Fs are G*** (or ***an F is a G***), and such constructions are notoriously difficult to interpret. To appreciate just how elusive these constructions are, consider the following list of sentences (drawn from Cappelen and Dever's *Bad Language*, chapter 8):

(A) Birds fly
(B) Ducks lay eggs
(C) Deer ticks carry Lyme disease
(D) Prime numbers are odd

The subject terms in these sentences are called bare plurals, "bare" in comparison to constructions where the plural term is part of a complex expression like "all birds", "some birds", "most birds", or "normal birds". Notice what different truth conditions each of these sentences have. (A) is true, even though some birds don't fly; so *Fs are G* doesn't always mean *all Fs are G*. (B) is true, even though only around 50% of ducks—the female ones!—lay eggs. (C) is true even though only about 1% of deer ticks carry Lyme disease. And yet (D) is false, even though only one prime number (i.e., 2) is even, and all the rest are odd. Wtf!

Back to your paper. You've written something like:

(E) **Pleasurable things** are intrinsically valuable.

Notice how this admits of (at least) the following different readings:

(F) **Some** pleasurable things are intrinsically valuable.
(G) **All** pleasurable things are intrinsically valuable.
(H) **For the most part,** pleasurable things are intrinsically valuable.

And obviously it can make a huge difference which of these you mean. Suppose I can think of a pleasurable thing that isn't intrinsically valuable. That would be a problem for (G), but not for (F) or (H). This leaves me unable to tell whether I should object to (E), and unable to assess any claims you go on to make about what does or doesn't follow from or support (E).

Similar remarks apply to (I):

(I) **A** pleasurable thing is intrinsically valuable

This is most naturally read as (G), but can also be read as (H). (Compare: 'A zebra has stripes' is true, even though there are some stripe-less zebras.) So, it's best to replace (I) with (G), which is unambiguous.

This sort of problem commonly arises with attributions, as in (J):

(J) **Hedonists claim** that knowledge is only instrumentally valuable

Like (E) and (I), (J) admits of multiple readings—all hedonists? some? most?—making it hard to evaluate what it's saying and what can be inferred from it.

#BeConsistent

You're shifting between two ways of labeling, referring to, or thinking about something.

In some cases, the problem is just that it makes the writing inelegant. For instance, perhaps sometimes 'The Hedonist Principle' is capitalized, and other times it's in lowercase. Or perhaps you introduce an acronym like 'HP' for 'the hedonist principle', but then later on write out 'the hedonist principle', neglecting to use the acronym.

In other cases, the shift in terminology may leave it unclear whether you're using the relevant terms interchangeably. For instance, perhaps you say:

(A) **Hedonism** is the thesis that only pleasurable things are intrinsically valuable. It follows from **the hedonist account** that knowledge isn't intrinsically valuable.

This leaves room for the reader to wonder whether 'the hedonist account' refers to hedonism, or whether it refers to something else, perhaps a broader cluster of views including hedonism plus some auxiliary claims. This, in turn, makes it difficult to assess the truth of the second sentence of (A) (see #DoesItFollow). If you *are* using them interchangeably, you should either clarify that 'the hedonist account' just means hedonism, or (better) pick one of the two and stick with that one throughout the paper. If you *aren't* using them interchangeably—if 'the hedonist account' really is meant to pick out something broader than hedonism—you'll need to state what the hedonist account is (see #StateIt).

Or perhaps you written something like:

(B) Hedonism is the thesis that only pleasurable things are **intrinsically** valuable. However, I contend that knowledge is always **inherently** valuable despite not always being pleasurable.

Notice that there's room to wonder whether you're using 'inherently' and 'intrinsically' interchangeably. Accordingly, the shift from the one to the other makes it hard to evaluate the logical relations between the two claims in (B). You need to clarify what the relationship is between inherent and intrinsic value, or—assuming that you did mean to be using them

interchangeably—pick one of those terms, and always just use that one, so the question of how the different terms are related doesn't even arise.

(Claudia Mills reports getting similar advice from Judith Jarvis Thomson: "For one paper, [Thomson] commented on my tendency to switch terminology: I'd talk about 'duties' for a while, and then, to add some interest, I'd vary my vocabulary a bit and start talking about 'obligations'. She taught me not to do that, that the reader was going to become alarmed: wait, a new term has been introduced, why?")

Finally, it may be the you're waffling between two substantially different ways of *thinking* about something. For instance, perhaps in some places you talk about hedonism as if it is a view about what people *actually* value, and in others you talk about it as a view about what people *ought* to value. Or, perhaps you've explicitly defined a thesis (or term) "twice over", offering two different statements of what the view is that aren't (or aren't obviously) equivalent.

#Citations

One of two things has happened.

First, perhaps you've attributed something to a specific author, but you haven't properly cited the source. Perhaps you cited it several pages ago, and I'm suggesting you cite it again right here. Or perhaps you did cite the source right here, but I think you ought to provide specific page numbers. Providing page numbers enables readers to double-check your attribution if they're skeptical that the philosopher in question actually said the thing you're attributing to them—especially important when what you're citing is a whole book.

Second, perhaps—without naming names—you've said that some people have endorsed a certain view, and I want to see some citations to substantiate what you said. After all, you're making an empirical claim that there are actual people who say this. If you've phrased things in such a way as to suggest that multiple (or many) people say a certain thing, or that a certain objection is a "common objection", you should be able to cite multiple people to substantiate your empirical claim.

Alternatively, you can rephrase what you've said to avoid making any empirical claims. For instance, you can replace (A) with (B):

> (A) Hedonists often insist that knowledge is indeed valuable, but only instrumentally.
> (B) It is open to hedonists to insist that knowledge is indeed valuable, but only instrumentally.

(B) no longer makes an empirical claim—that there exist some people who say this—and instead just makes a conceptual claim about what a hedonist is permitted to say. So, unlike (A), (B) does not *need* to be substantiated with citations. That said, if you're aware of hedonists who do make this move, you should cite them.

#Decisify

One of two things has happened: (i) you're misusing or overly reliant on "hedging terms" or (ii) you're misusing or overly reliant on disjunctions. ('Decisify' is not a real word; I just think it's funny.)

Decisifying Hedging

You're using hedging terms like 'might', 'may', 'seems', 'could', or 'arguably', in places where you need to be more decisive. I get it. You may not feel entirely confident about what you're saying (philosophy is hard!), and hedging is how we signal that humility to one another. But, in philosophical writing, hedging can end up confusing your readers and compromising your arguments.

As an illustration, suppose that in order to defend some claim or argument you're making, you have to show that hedonism has a certain problematic implication. The argument, let's suppose, is supposed to go like this:

> (A) According to hedonism, pleasure is the only thing that's intrinsically valuable. But knowledge isn't pleasurable. So hedonists are forced to deny that knowledge is intrinsically valuable.

But suppose you've sprinkled in some hedges:

> (B) According to hedonism, pleasure is **arguably** the only thing that's intrinsically valuable. But knowledge isn't pleasurable. So hedonists are forced to deny that knowledge is intrinsically valuable.
> (C) According to hedonists, pleasure is the only thing that's intrinsically valuable. But one **might** deny that knowledge is pleasurable. So hedonists are forced to deny that knowledge is intrinsically valuable.
> (D) According to hedonists, pleasure is the only thing that's intrinsically valuable. But knowledge isn't pleasurable. So hedonists **may** be forced to deny that knowledge is intrinsically valuable.

Each of these hedges compromises the argument. The argument requires that hedonism *does* say this, not just that it arguably does (contra B), and that knowledge *isn't* pleasurable, not just that one might deny that it is (contra C). The conclusion simply doesn't follow from these weaker, hedged claims.

And (D) is likely to confuse readers. It clearly follows from what's been said that hedonists *are* forced to deny that knowledge is intrinsically valuable. So why are you merely saying that they *may* be forced to deny it? The hedging suggests that there is room for doubt as to whether it really follows from what was previously said that they have to deny it, sending readers on a wild goose chase trying to figure out whether there truly is room for doubt, or why you think there is.

Relatedly, perhaps there's some claim p that plays an ineliminable role in your own argument, but when introducing the claim you say "I suspect that p" or "probably p". As with (D) above,

this leaves careful readers—who recognize that p is a key premise of your argument—wondering why *you* think you're in a position to be noncommittal regarding p.

This is not to say that you should never use hedging terms. Sometimes they are entirely appropriate. For instance, perhaps you're trying to explain the reasons that drive *some* people to reject hedonism, but—given the scope of your paper—you don't actually have to take a stand on whether these are good reasons. In that case, (E) is better than (F):

> (E) Hedonism entails that knowledge isn't intrinsically valuable, yet knowledge **does seem to be** intrinsically valuable
> (F) Hedonism entails that knowledge isn't intrinsically valuable, yet knowledge **is** intrinsically valuable

See #UnwantedImplication for another situation in which it's good to hedge.

Decisifying Disjunctions

The second reason I might have left this comment is that you're using seemingly unnecessary disjunctions in a way that makes you seem indecisive. For instance, perhaps you've said something like:

> (G) According to hedonism, things other than pleasure can only be **extrinsically or instrumentally** valuable. Hedonists must therefore admit that knowledge, if valuable at all, is only instrumentally valuable.

Notice, first, how the disjunction in the first sentence of (E) jeopardizes the inference in the second sentence. Given what you said in the first sentence, readers will wonder why the hedonist has to say that knowledge is *instrumentally* valuable, when they also have the option of saying that it's *extrinsically* valuable.

Perhaps you meant to be using 'extrinsically' and 'instrumentally' interchangeably, in which case you ought to pick one and delete the other, eliminating the redundancy and the associated possibility of confusion (see #BeConsistent). Or perhaps you *don't* think they mean exactly the same thing, in which case you ought to figure out which of the two you want, and drop the other. Unless, that is, you *absolutely* need the disjunction for some reason, in which case you'd need to adjust the second sentence (and other relevant claims in the paper) to say 'extrinsically or instrumentally'.

The same problem can arise with *conjunctions*. If you say 'knowledge is extrinsically and instrumentally valuable', readers will assume that you must something different by 'extrinsically' and 'instrumentally'—otherwise, why the redundancy?—will wonder what you take the difference to be, and will get anxious if they can't figure out what the difference is supposed to be.

#DoesItFollow?

You've used an entailment term like 'thus', 'so', 'therefore', 'hence', 'this implies…' or 'it follows that…', but what comes after the entailment term doesn't actually follow from what came before it, or at least I can't figure out how it does. I might also leave this comment if you say something like "If X then Y" or "Y, since X" or "X. Accordingly, Y.", and I don't see how X is supposed to support or explain Y or why I'm supposed to infer Y from X.

Alternatively, perhaps you've said that a certain thesis entails a certain thing (e.g., "If hedonism is true, then…"), and I think you need to walk the reader through how to get from the thesis to the alleged consequence. Or perhaps you haven't explicitly told us what that thesis is (see #StateIt), and I'm unable to assess whether it's true that the thesis has that implication.

Get into habit of seeing these entailment terms as "whiplash words". When you're editing your paper, and you see one of these terms, your head should whip back to what was previously said, to check that you're "earned" your 'thus' or 'therefore'.

#ExplainQuotes

You've included a direct quotation from some author, and I'm suggesting that *if* you're going to include the quote, then you should do more to explain it.

Perhaps you've included a quotation from some paper you're discussing, and I'm suggesting that you restate the quoted material in your own words and/or explain how it's supposed to relate to what you've said before or after the quote. Unless both the meaning and relevance of the quoted material is crystal clear, it's important to provide some sort of gloss in your own words, in part to get everyone on the same page about what the quoted material is supposed to be saying and how it's supposed to be relevant to what you're saying.

Or perhaps you've included some quoted material that contains jargon or allusions that the reader won't be able to understand without your help. For instance, perhaps you want to quote Garcia in support of your claim that hedonists don't have to deny that knowledge is intrinsically valuable:

> (A) According to Garcia, "hedonists and other proponents of the **PR-principle** are, **in this way**, able to avoid having to deny that knowledge is **inherently** valuable."

Having quoted this passage, it is now your responsibility to explain to your readers what Garcia means by 'the PR-principle', and what (in the context of her paper) she is alluding to when she says 'in this way'. You have to do this even if understanding the PR-principle and "this way" is otherwise irrelevant to your paper. Moreover, because she says 'inherently', not 'intrinsically', you now have to connect the dots for the reader, demonstrating how her claim about inherent value is related to your claims about intrinsic value, perhaps requiring further textual evidence that she uses 'inherently' and 'intrinsically' interchangeably.

In principle, you could avoid these issues in (A) with something like this:

(B) According to Garcia, “hedonists … are … able to avoid having to deny that knowledge is [intrinsically] valuable.”

With the ellipses and the bracketed replacement of ‘inherently’, you avoid having to explain the jargon, allusions, and terminological discrepancies. But the downside of (B), apart from being an eyesore, is that it’s suspicious: when readers see all these ellipses and brackets, they wonder what you’re hiding, and whether you’re manipulating the quote to say something it really isn’t saying.

In many cases, providing the needed reiteration and explanation of a quote is more trouble than it’s worth—because it ends up introducing redundancies and unnecessary complications into your paper—and the best option is simply to remove the quote (see #QuoteRule).

#Footnotes

Footnotes should be reserved mainly for citations. Footnotes (especially lengthy ones) making substantial points can be pretty distracting and disruptive. Encountering a footnote forces the reader to decide between skipping the footnote and potentially missing something crucial, or reading the footnote and potentially losing track of the line of thought in the text. Even worse is when a paper reads like a “garden of forking paths”, peppered with footnotes and forcing the reader to make these hard decisions with each new sentence. Worse still is when there’s a footnote in the middle of a sentence, forcing the reader to make this decision mid-sentence and more or less guaranteeing that they lose their train of thought.

Of course, there are situations in which putting something in the text would be *more* distracting than having it in a footnote, for instance addressing an objection that in all likelihood only a tiny fraction of readers will care about. And certainly there’s no harm in putting things in footnotes in the initial draft of the paper, when you’re not yet sure how to fit them into the text. But, as you edit, you should interrogate each substantial footnote, and demand to know why it is hiding at the bottom of the page and whether the point you’re making is genuinely essential to the paper or can simply be deleted. Always be scheming for non-distracting ways to weave substantial footnotes into the main text and/or ways of removing the need for the footnote in the first place. (Sometimes a simple tweak to a sentence in the text renders the point in the footnote unnecessary, allowing you to delete the whole thing.) When you must include a footnote, make every effort to keep it short, so that readers can take it in at a glance without losing the thread in the text.

#ForExample

You’ve said ‘for example’ or ‘for instance’ or ‘e.g.’, and the context doesn’t make it crystal clear what the thing you go on to mention is meant to be an example *of*. Or, alternatively, you’ve misdescribed what it’s meant to be an example of. Consider:

(A) Many different sorts of theorists reject hedonism. **For example**, knowledge is often held to be intrinsically valuable even when it is not pleasurable

The wording suggests that we are about to get an example of a *sort of theorist*. But what we instead get is an example of a *reason for rejecting hedonism*.

Get into habit of seeing these terms as "whiplash words". When you're editing your paper, and you see one of these terms, your head should whip back to what was just said, to check that you're "earned" your 'for example'.

#IntroBalance

Naomi Zack says this in the introduction to her book *Race and Mixed Race*: "[This introduction] is a writer's interpretation of her own work, which, as an attempt at summarization, necessarily fails, because what has required a book [or whole paper] to say cannot be compressed into a few pages without raising new questions" (p.6). It's an exaggeration to say that the attempt "necessarily fails". But it's true that it's no small feat to get it right. A delicate balance is required, identifying the right details to leave out, and the right level of generality for presenting those details that you do leave in. If I left this comment, then you haven't quite struck the right balance.

When writing introductions, including the introductory section of the paper or the introductory paragraphs of later sections, you need to ask yourself: (i) what is it helpful for the reader to know at this point in the paper, and (ii) what will the reader be able to understand at this point in the paper. You have to give the reader a sense of where you're headed (#Signposting). But you also have to be concise, which requires suppressing lots of information and abstracting away from important details. Yet if you abstract away *too* much (or in the wrong way), readers won't be able to understand what you're saying and/or won't get anything useful.

As an illustration, perhaps you wrote a paragraph like this:

(A) In §1, I explain what hedonism is and explain why it is meant to be unable to account for the value of knowledge. In §2, I draw a distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic value. Then, in §3, I respond to **a reductio** argument against treating knowledge as merely extrinsically valuable.

The final sentence contains extraneous information: the fact that the argument has the form of a reductio isn't especially useful or illuminating information for a reader trying to get a sense of where you're heading. And notice that the middle sentence leaves it unclear *why* you're drawing this distinction, making it not especially helpful as a roadmap to the paper. Compare (A) with (B):

(B) In §1, I explain what hedonism is and explain why it is meant to be unable to account for the value of knowledge. **In §2, I show how the objection can be addressed by**

drawing a distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic value. Then, in §3, I respond to an argument against treating knowledge as merely extrinsically valuable.

Notice how the middle sentence of (B) serves as a sort of bridge between the first and last sentence, illuminating both how the distinction is relevant to what happened in §1, and how the argument in §3 is relevant to §2.

#Invalid

The labeled premise/conclusion argument in your paper isn't logically valid. Whenever you present such an argument, make sure one can actually, mechanically, and in an obvious way get from the premises to the conclusion using modus ponens, modus tollens, or other such standard forms of argument you learn in symbolic logic.

In some cases, it may be a fairly minor problem, for instance that the phrasing changes from one premise to the next in a way that compromises the validity of the argument. For example:

(A1) If knowledge is **intrinsically** valuable, then hedonism is false
(A2) Knowledge is **inherently** valuable
(A3) So, hedonism is false

Since the antecedent of A1 is not a verbatim repetition of A2, this is not a valid modus ponens argument.

In other cases, there may be a more serious problem. For instance:

(B1) Hedonists say that only pleasurable things are intrinsically valuable.
(B2) But there's good reason to think that other things can be intrinsically valuable.
(B3) Knowledge is often held to be intrinsically valuable.
(B4) Pain can likewise be intrinsically valuable, for instance when the person in pain deserves it.
(B5) So, in light of these observations, we ought to reject hedonism.

There's nothing especially wrong with this line of reasoning, and it would be fine if it were just written out in paragraph form. But framing it as a labeled premise/conclusion argument misleadingly suggests that B5 is supposed to be a logical consequence of these premises—which it certainly isn't.

If you're not sure how to construct a logically valid argument, or how to check for validity, have a look at Appendix A in my textbook *Learning from Arguments*, available on my website.

#Italics

Try not to overdo it with italics. Every sentence has *some* point of emphasis, and your reader can often find it for themselves without your help. (See what I *did* there?) In the tweeted words of Quill Kukla: "I'm literally begging you to go through your draft one more time and take out 95% of the italics."

Sometimes the problem with italics isn't just that they're overdone; it's that they're being abused. It can be tempting to use italics in place of explicitly spelling out a line of reasoning. It's as if you're telling the reader that if they really focus hard on the word you have italicized, they'll be able to see the elusive point or connection that you're seeing, without you having the spell it out for them. As another twitterer put it: "I think the comment I make most often in reviews is 'italicised words are no substitute for explanations'. I don't know how so many professional philosophers still don't know that."

#Labels

If I've left this comment, something is amiss with your use of acronyms, abbreviations, and other such labels.

First, perhaps you're relying too heavily on them. It's common practice in philosophy papers, and often helpful, to label various theses, examples, arguments, premises, and principles. But using too many can make the writing difficult to follow, as in (A):

> (A) A proponent of HD** might resist E4 of the TK-argument by removing condition (ii) from the Modified Weak Instrumentality principle.

Remember, there's a real live reader, with a puny human brain, trying to process all this. Heavy use of such labels is especially problematic when a great many pages have elapsed since the labels were introduced and/or last used. As a rule of thumb, aim to introduce a label or acronym only under two conditions. (1) You use it frequently throughout the paper: at least five times, and at least every couple of pages. (2) It's going to disappear from the paper almost as soon as you introduce it: you only need to discuss the labeled thesis or principle for one or two paragraphs, and then you never discuss it again. By following these rules of thumb, you avoid introducing an abbreviation on page 3, and then not using it again until page 17, by which point the reader has surely forgotten what it stands for.

Second, perhaps you've used the same label for two different theses or premises. It's confusing if you've got two different arguments in the paper—in close proximity—both with premises labeled (P1), (P2), (P3). Later in the paper, when you refer to "P1", it may not (100%) clear which P1 you're referring to. Likewise for having multiple things labeled (i), (ii), (iii). Obviously, this isn't always a problem; I've got about 30 different things labeled "(A)" in this document, and that hasn't caused any confusion. If you do ever re-use a label in your paper, just make sure there's no (realistic) possibility of confusion.

#LessOrMore

If I've left this comment, then: (i) you've made some point or argument that I found confusing, (ii) I suspect that you could just delete it from the paper altogether, but (iii) I think that *if* you decide to keep it in the paper then you need to do more to unpack the idea.

Often the problem is that you're trying to articulate *and* address some minor objection in just one or two sentences, but it's too condensed and readers won't be able to understand what the worry is and what your response is. It's such a minor point that it would be a pity to devote a whole paragraph to unpacking it. And yet it's unlikely that you'll be able to make the point intelligible without a whole paragraph. So, you have to make a decision: drop it, or develop it.

As one of my colleagues puts it, it sometimes feels like a portion of the paper is in "an awkward teenage phase": not arguing for the view or defending it against objections as much as one wants, but explaining the view and giving arguments just enough that the reader will engage argumentatively with it—and be unsatisfied!

#NotInQuote

You've quoted some passage, and you've attributed something to its author on the basis of the quote, but it isn't clear (to me) that the quote says or supports precisely the thing you've attributed to them. Philosophers are often very meticulous in how they phrase things, so if they don't *quite* say the thing you're wanting to pin on them, that may have been a deliberate decision on their part. In order to pin it on them, you either have to find the passage where they say it explicitly; find something they do say that strictly and straightforwardly entails the thing you want to pin on them; or *argue* that, given their other commitments, they have no choice but to accept it.

#OddAs

There are some uses of 'as' that are inelegant, unnecessary, or potentially confusing. In some cases, the 'as' wrongly signals some sort of contrast, as in:

(A) Hedonism should be rejected **as** a theory of value

The problem with (A) is that the 'as' signals that it should be rejected in one respect but not in another, as in:

(B) Age should be rejected **as** a criterion for hiring decisions

(B) signals that the author is leaving open that age could still be accepted as a criterion for something else, perhaps eligibility for voting. Similarly, (A) signals that the author is leaving it open that hedonism could still be accepted as something else. But, since hedonism just is a

theory of value, it's not clear what that "something else" could possibly be. Accordingly (A) should be replaced with something like (C) or (D):

(C) Hedonism should be rejected
(D) Hedonism is not the correct theory of value

A different sort of problem is the "lazy as", where 'as' is used in place of a more explicit statement of how two things are connected. Compare (E) and (F):

(E) Hedonists defend a thesis of intrinsic value **as** pleasure
(F) Hedonists defend the thesis that pleasure is the only thing that is intrinsically valuable

Whereas (F) explicitly states how pleasure and intrinsic value are connected according to the hedonist, (E) leaves it unclear, conveying little more than that hedonists take them to be related somehow or other.

#PlayByPlay

One of two things has happened.

First, you're presenting the views and arguments of some author you want to engage with, but you present the various elements of the author's position in no discernible order. You should aim to have a well-organized presentation of the background, which reads more like a logical reconstruction than an unstructured list of things they say.

Second, you're telling me the order in which things happen in the paper you're engaging with, by saying things like 'Garcia **begins** by saying…' or '**Then** she says…' That's extraneous information as well. Your job is just to supply a well-organized presentation of the relevant (#BareMinimum) elements of the paper you're engaging with. It's not necessary for the order in which you present those elements to match the order in which its author presented them, and even if they do match that's not something your reader needs to know.

#QuotationMarks

You're shifting between single quotes and double quotes in (what seems to be) an unprincipled way, and I want you to be consistent. Here's my own principle. I use single quotes only as mention quotes: for talking *about* words, phrases, or sentences—as in (A) below. (See #Use/Mention.) I use double quotes in two situations. First, for direct quotations—as in (B) below. Second, for scare quotes, that is, when I want to distance myself from some term, signaling that I think term is unclear or problematic—as in (C) below.

(A) The term 'hedonist' has been used to denote a variety of different views.
(B) According to Garcia, "hedonists needn't deny that knowledge is valuable."
(C) Hedonists will insist that knowledge is not "inherently" valuable.

The scare quotes in (C) signal that I have some reservations about the term 'inherently': that I recognize *other* people use it, but that I refuse to be complicit in (uncritically) using it.

#QuoteRule

You're relying too much on direct quotation. For instance, perhaps you've quoted some unremarkable sentence from an article you're citing, leaving readers to wonder why you aren't able to just say it in your own words. Or perhaps the quoted material does more harm than good, because it contains unclarities or jargon or because there are mismatches between the terminology you use in your paper and the terminology used in the quote (see #ExplainQuotes).

My rule of thumb is to directly quote from a book or article *only* in the following three situations.

First, you plan to circle back and scrutinize the exact wording of the quoted passage.

Second, you're explaining some author's view, and *you* suspect that *readers* will suspect that you've mischaracterized that author's views—perhaps because the view you're attributing to them sounds crazy, or because you know that the author is widely misunderstood, or because your response to the author is so powerful and obvious that readers will suspect you *must* be misinterpreting them. In such cases, the quoted material serves as evidence that the attribution is accurate.

Third, you're trying to motivate your project. For instance, if your paper is devoted to addressing a certain objection, a few concise quotes from key figures in the debate advancing the objection can help demonstrate the significance of your paper.

Otherwise, it's typically best to avoid direct quotation and instead put things in your own words, providing citations as necessary in the footnotes.

#Reiteration

You've used a reiteration term like 'in other words', 'that is', or 'i.e.', and one of two things has happened.

First, it's unclear what exactly you're reiterating. Perhaps you've said something of the form: "If A, then B. In other words, C." Is *C* supposed to be a reiteration just of *B* or is it a reiteration of the whole conditional *if A then B*? Even if it's clear what the most charitable reading is, it's best to rewrite things in such a way that the only available reading is the one you intend.

Second, what comes after the reiteration term isn't clearly (or clearly isn't) a reiteration of what came before it. Sometimes the problem is that what follows the reiteration term goes beyond what preceded it, perhaps by giving a reiteration of the claim *as well as* a previously unstated rationale for the claim. Other times, the problem is that what follows the reiteration term says *less* than what preceded it, perhaps by only stating a consequence or instance of the earlier claim.

Other times, the problem is just that they're saying slightly or substantially different things. In any of these cases, you can fix the problem either by changing the sentences so that they do say the same thing, by simply deleting one of them, or by replacing the reiteration term with some other term that better captures the relationship between them. For instance, perhaps the second sentence is actually a consequence of the first, as opposed to a reiteration, in which case you should replace the reiteration term with an entailment term, like 'thus'.

Get into habit of seeing these terms as "whiplash words". When you're editing your paper, and you see one of these terms, your head should whip back to what was just said, to check that you're "earned" your reiteration term.

#Signposting

This comment indicates that you need to do more to explain the pertinence of some point that you're making or the role that it's playing in the paper. How does this sentence or paragraph or section connect to the sentences or paragraphs or sections around it, and/or how does it fit into the larger structure of the paper?

Perhaps you've begun telling us what some author says, and I'm wanting you to clarify why you're telling us this. Because you're going to challenge them? Because it's an objection to something you've already said? Because it supports something you've said or that you're going to say?

Or perhaps you're mentioning some objection to an argument, and I want it to be clearer (from the start) whether it's an objection you ultimately endorse, or one you're going to dismiss as inadequate.

Or perhaps you've got a vague transition between sentences, for instance "This leads us to the following principle: …", and I want a more precise indication of what the relation is between what you've just finished saying and the principle you're about to present. Is the principle *entailed* by what precedes it? Or is that which precedes it one premise of an argument, and the principle is going to be the second premise of the argument? Or is the principle going to be part of an objection to what precedes it?

To fix the problem, you incorporate language that can serve as "signposts" on the road that is your paper, indicating (e.g.) that we are now leaving the Town of Explaining the Argument for Hedonism, that we are now entering Smith's Bad Objection to the Argument (population: the remainder of this section), and that the Township of Your Superior Objection to the Argument is still two sections down the road.

Borrowing from Jim Pryor's writing tips, here is the sort of phrasing you can use in your paper to serve as signposts:

> 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...

To help see the importance of signposting, suppose you encounter a paragraph like this:

(A) Some will object that hedonism entails that knowledge isn't valuable. **The problem is that** something can be valuable without being intrinsically valuable. Knowledge is instrumentally valuable.

Notice how unclear it is what's going on in this passage. Is "the problem" a problem for the hedonism, or a problem for the objection? And why is this a problem? Now compare (A) with (B):

(B) Some will object that hedonism entails that knowledge isn't valuable. To see that this objection is misguided, notice that hedonism only says that *intrinsically* valuable things must be pleasurable. Accordingly, hedonism is entirely compatible with nonpleasurable things like knowledge being valuable, if only instrumentally. All hedonists must deny is that knowledge is intrinsically valuable.

One common issue connected to a lack of signposting is that you've transitioned too subtly, perhaps mid-section or mid-paragraph, from *presenting* some idea to *challenging* the idea, and I'm wanting a more explicit indication that this transition has occurred. For instance, perhaps you've written something like this:

(C) Hedonists often insist that putative counterexamples can be handled by attending to the difference between intrinsic and instrumental value. For instance, they will often say that, while knowledge cannot be intrinsically valuable, it is however instrumentally valuable. Knowledge must at least in some cases be intrinsically valuable. After all, [[insert argument that knowledge is sometimes intrinsically valuable]].

When first reading this, it's natural to hear the penultimate sentence ('Knowledge must…') as a continuation of the hedonist's reasoning. But in fact, as you probably realized after you read it

(and then re-read it), the paragraph has abruptly shifted, without warning, from presenting the hedonist's line of thought to attacking it. What's needed here is more signposting, perhaps inserting a paragraph break after the second sentence, and beginning the new paragraph with something like:

> (D) However, as we are about to see, there are some versions of the objection that cannot be handled by this sort of strategy.

#Singular/Plural

You've used the plural form of some expression, when what you need is the singular (or vice versa). Here are some common examples:

Singular	**Plural**
Criterion	Criteria
Datum	Data
Desideratum	Desiderata
Explanandum	Explananda
Phenomenon	Phenomena
Quale	Qualia

#Some/Most/All

Relabeled #BarePlurals; see above.

#Sprinkles

You've sprinkled in a word (typically an adjective or adverb), and it's unclear what it's adding. You should either delete the word (which is often the best fix) or at least clarify what work it's doing in the sentence.

For instance, perhaps you wrote something like (A):

> (A) Hedonists cannot accept that knowledge is **strictly** valuable

These sentences leave me thinking: "Okay, they can't accept that it's *strictly* valuable. Is there some distinction here between strict value and non-strict value?" Philosophers choose their words carefully, so a careful reader may spend (and waste) some time trying to figure out what work this extraneous word is doing.

Notice how sprinkled words can even end up inadvertently jeopardizing the validity of an argument:

(B) If hedonism is true, then knowledge isn't strictly valuable. But knowledge is valuable. So, hedonism is false.

The argument is invalid. To get the conclusion that hedonism is false, you need the second sentence to also include the sprinkled word: "But knowledge is strictly valuable."

#StateIt

You've mentioned some thesis (or perhaps a view or principle or argument or account), but you haven't made it clear *what* it is. More often than not, one of two things has happened. (i) You've made a claim about what some thesis entails or what its defenders can or can't or must say, and I'm wanting you to provide an explicit statement of the thesis so I can check for myself what it entails or commits one to. (ii) You've said *something* about the thesis, but what you've said falls short of being a *statement* of the thesis.

Here is the canonical form for stating a thesis:

(A) Hedonism **is the thesis that** only pleasurable things are intrinsically valuable.

Alternatively, you can provide an indented, labeled statement of the thesis:

(B) Here, then, is the hedonist thesis that I plan to defend.
Hedonism: Only pleasurable things are intrinsically valuable

It's important to provide such statements even if it's a familiar thesis in whatever debate you're engaging in. After all, different authors may provide slightly or significantly different formulations, and the truth of your claims about what defenders of the thesis are committed to might turn on which of the various formulations you have in mind. In such cases, you have some leeway to choose whichever formulation best fits your purposes in the paper. The main thing is just to be entirely clear about what you take the thesis to be.

To see what *doesn't* count as stating a thesis, contrast (A) with (C) and (D):

(C) **Hedonists say that** only pleasurable things are intrinsically valuable.
(D) **According to hedonism**, only pleasurable things are intrinsically valuable.

Notice that both of these formulations leave the reader room to wonder whether that's the *whole* of hedonism. For all you've said, (C) and (D) may merely be reporting one part of, or one consequence of, hedonism. Worse, (C) doesn't even clearly affirm that hedonism entails, or that hedonists *must* say, that only pleasurable things are intrinsically valuable. Perhaps this is merely something that they *tend* to say, but aren't strictly committed to simply by virtue of endorsing hedonism. By contrast, formulations like (A) tell you unambiguously *what* hedonism is.

Alternatively (and related to #Anaphora), perhaps I left this comment because you have said *too much*. For instance, perhaps you've just written a whole paragraph, in which you sketch a view, some its motivations, and some of its consequences, and then at the end of the paragraph you say something like (E) or (F):

(E) Call **this view** 'hedonism'
(F) If **this account** is correct, then …

In such a case, it will be unclear what exactly you're calling 'hedonism', or what exactly 'this account' is meant to refer to. The claim made in the immediately preceding sentence? The conjunction of every claim made so far in the paragraph? The conjunction of some unspecified subset of claims in the paragraph?

#SuchAWhat?

You've written 'as such' when you should have written 'accordingly'. Whenever you say 'as such', there always needs to be a grammatically available answer to the question "as a what?" Compare:

(A) She's a hedonist and, **as such**, must deny that knowledge is intrinsically valuable.
(B) She accepts hedonism and, **as such**, must deny that knowledge is intrinsically valuable.
(C) My argument is effective against any reductive theory of value. **As such,** it applies to hedonism as well.
(D) This is an argument that applies to any reductive theory of value. **As such**, it applies to hedonism as well.

(A) is fine, since there is a grammatically available answer to 'as a what?', namely, *as a hedonist*. But since only hedon*ism* is mentioned in (B), and not hedonists (themselves), there's no grammatically available answer to the question 'as a what?', making the sentence ungrammatical. Similarly, there's no grammatically available answer to 'as a what?' in (C). One fix would be to replace (C) with (D), which does contain the answer: as an argument that applies to any reductive theory of value. Alternatively, you can simply replace 'As such' in (C) with 'Accordingly'.

#SuchThat

The use of 'such that' is often used as a substitute for making the connection between two things explicit, as in (A) and (B):

(A) Garcia is a hedonist such that she insists knowledge cannot be intrinsically valuable
(B) Knowledge is valuable such that it leads to pleasurable experiences

Notice how (A) leaves it unclear how what precedes and what follows the 'such that' are supposed to be connected. Is she a hedonist because she insists that knowledge cannot be intrinsically valuable? Or is it the other way around: she says this because she's a hedonist? Is the suggestion that being a hedonist *entails* affirming that knowledge cannot be intrinsically valuable (or vice versa)? Likewise for (B). Is it telling us why knowledge is valuable? Or is it saying that being valuable causes it to lead to pleasurable experiences?

Better to replace (A) and (B) with (C) and (D) (respectively), which do make the connection explicit:

(C) Because Garcia is a hedonist, she insists that knowledge cannot be intrinsically valuable
(D) Knowledge is valuable only insofar as it leads to pleasurable experiences

#UnwantedImplication

You've said something in a way that carries a certain implication or entailment or presupposition, which I suspect you don't really mean to endorse. For instance, suppose you're writing a paper *defending* hedonism, and in characterizing a certain objection to hedonism you say:

(A) Here is how Smith **refutes** hedonism…

The term 'refute' carries an implication of success: if someone has indeed *refuted* something, then they have successfully shown it to be false. So, in asserting (A), you are thereby inadvertently agreeing that Smith's argument is successful. To fix it, you'd need something like (B) or (C):

(B) Here is how Smith **challenges** hedonism…
(C) Here is how Smith **attempts to refute** hedonism…

(B) avoids the problem because 'challenge' doesn't carry the unwanted implication of success. And the addition of 'attempts to' in (C) cancels the implication of success ordinarily carried by 'refute'. Similarly for (D) and (E):

(D) Smith **points out that** hedonists cannot account for the value of knowledge
(E) Smith **observes that** hedonists cannot account for the value of knowledge

'Points out that' and 'observes that' likewise carry an implication of success. So, unless *you yourself* mean to be agreeing that hedonists cannot account for the value of knowledge, you need to replace (D) or (E) with something like like (F):

(F) Smith **maintains that** hedonists cannot account for the value of knowledge.

Words like ‘the’ and ‘this’ also carry implications—specifically, implications of existence. If Smith says that a certain claim is a consequence of hedonism, and you deny that it is, you can’t refer to it as ‘the consequence’ or ‘this consequence of hedonism’—you have to say ‘this **putative** consequence of hedonism’ or ‘the consequence that Smith **takes hedonism to have**’.

Relatedly, you may have phrased things in a way that has unwanted implications about what *other* people believe. For instance, perhaps you’re discussing a certain attempt to refute hedonism, and now you want to discuss how Garcia defends hedonism against the objection. You can’t say:

(G) Garcia says that **this refutation** of hedonism rests on a false assumption.

Putting it this way suggests that Garcia herself conceptualizes the objection *as* a refutation. But of course she doesn’t; she thinks the objection fails and therefore isn’t a refutation. So you have to rephrase it to say something like ‘Garcia says that this **putative** refutation…’ or ‘Garcia says that this **objection**…’.

#Use/Mention

You’ve made (or seem to be making) a use/mention error. In other words, you have attributed something to a linguistic item (a word or phrase or sentence) that should instead be attributed to its referent, or vice versa. Some examples:

(A) ‘Garcia’ is a hedonist.
(B) ‘Hedonism’ is a thesis about value.
(C) Garcia contains six letters.
(D) Hedonism refers to a thesis about value.

(A) says that the *word* ‘Garcia’ is a hedonist; the quotation marks need to be removed in order to correctly say that Garcia *herself* is a hedonist. (B) wrongly says that the eight-letter word ‘hedonism’ is itself a thesis. But the word isn’t a thesis; rather, the thesis is the thing that the word refers to. (C), rather than making the true claim that Garcia’s *name* contains six letters, instead makes the weird claim that Garcia *herself* contains six letters (perhaps she swallowed them?). (D) wrongly says that hedonism itself refers to a thesis. But hedonism *is* a thesis, and theses don’t (ordinarily) refer to theses. (D) should be changed to say that ‘hedonism’ refers to a thesis about value.

Note that concepts and propositions are not themselves words or terms. So you shouldn’t say:

(E) Hedonists put a lot of weight on the concept ‘intrinsic’.
(F) Hedonists endorse the proposition ‘only pleasurable things are intrinsically valuable’.

‘Intrinsic’ is a word, not a concept, so (E) ought to be rephrased in one of the following ways:

(G) Hedonists put a lot of weight on the concept of being intrinsic.

(H) Hedonists put a lot of weight on the concept INTRINSIC.
(I) Hedonists put a lot of weight on the concept *intrinsic.*

Likewise, (F) needs to be changed to something like:

(J) Hedonists endorse the proposition that only pleasurable things are intrinsically valuable.
(K) Hedonists endorse the proposition expressed by the sentence 'only pleasurable things are intrinsically valuable'.

Relatedly, be careful not to describe propositions as containing words. Propositions aren't (typically) made up of words; rather, it's the sentences that express them that contain words.

Finally, be careful with belief attributions. The objects of belief are propositions, not sentences. So (L) is wrong, and needs to be replaced with something like (M) or (N).

(L) Hedonists believe 'only pleasurable things are intrinsically valuable'
(M) Hedonists believe that only pleasurable things are intrinsically valuable
(N) Hedonists believe that the sentence 'only pleasurable things are intrinsically valuable' is true.

#Variables

Perhaps you've used some variable without specifying whether it is meant to be bound by an existential or universal quantifier, or whether it's meant to be a schematic variable, and I'm suggesting that you ought to make this explicit. For instance, perhaps you wrote (A) and I'm suggesting that you replace it with something like (B):

(A) According to hedonists, if x is valuable but isn't pleasurable then x must be valuable in virtue of y.
(B) According to hedonists, **for all x**, if x is valuable but isn't pleasurable then **there must be some y such that** x is valuable in virtue of y.

Or perhaps you mean for a variable to be **schematic**. To see what I mean, imagine that you want to talk about a certain form of argument, and you want to emphasize that hedonists will respond in different ways depending on what's plugged in for X:

(C) If hedonism is true, then X isn't valuable
(D) X is valuable
(E) So hedonism is false

There's no implicit quantifier in (C) or (D); (D) isn't meant to be read as "for all X, X is valuable" or "for some X, X is valuable". (C) and (D) aren't meant to be meaningful claims that can be evaluated for truth or falsity. Rather, this is a *schema* for producing meaningful arguments

with truth-evaluable premises, and you produce such arguments by plugging something in for the schematic variable X:

(F) If hedonism is true, then knowledge isn't valuable
(G) Knowledge is valuable
(E) So hedonism is false

(H) If hedonism is true, then a beautiful vista no one ever sees isn't valuable
(I) A beautiful vista no one ever sees is valuable
(E) So hedonism is false

If that's what you have in mind, then you should explicitly refer to C-D-E as an "argument schema", and you can refer to F-G-E and H-I-E as "instances" of the schema.

Alternatively, perhaps I've left this comment because you're somehow misusing the formalism. For instance, perhaps you wrote something like this:

(J) According to hedonists, if x isn't pleasurable then x isn't intrinsically valuable. But I will argue that x is intrinsically valuable.

In the first sentence of (J), x is functioning as a bound variable, whereas in the second sentence it is being used as if it were a name or pronoun picking out a particular thing. This is the equivalent of writing:

(K) According to hedonists, if something isn't valuable then it isn't intrinsically valuable. But I will argue that **it** is intrinsically valuable.

There's nothing for the 'it' in the second sentence of (K) to pick out.

#WhoseVoice?

It's not clear—or at least not *crystal* clear—whether whatever you've just said is something you mean to be saying in your own voice, or something you're attributing to your opponent. For instance, perhaps you've written:

(A) According to hedonists, only pleasurable things are intrinsically valuable. Knowledge is not intrinsically valuable.

Are *you* endorsing, in your own voice, that knowledge is not intrinsically valuable? Or are you just saying that hedonists say this—do you mean to be putting this claim in their mouths? In some cases, the context may make it clear enough what you mean. But, other things equal, it's best to be explicit. For instance, you could say:

(B) According to hedonists, only pleasurable things are intrinsically valuable. Knowledge, **they will say**, is not intrinsically valuable.

In other cases, the opposite problem arises: you *do* mean to be saying something in your own voice, but your own voice is getting lost in the shuffle (through insufficient use of first-person pronouns). For instance, perhaps your aim in this part of the paper is to attack hedonism, and you have a brand-new way—never before seen in the literature—of showing that the familiar hedonist response to the familiar "knowledge objection" is problematic. And suppose you've written the following:

> (C) Some argue that hedonism is committed to denying that knowledge is valuable, since it is not pleasurable. One might reply by conceding that knowledge isn't intrinsically valuable, but insisting that knowledge is at least *instrumentally* valuable. **Someone may object**, however, that knowledge must at least in some cases be intrinsically valuable. After all, [[insert argument that knowledge is sometimes intrinsically valuable]].

It's easy for the reader to get lost in this sort of paragraph, wondering where *you* stand on all this. There's no indication that the objection mentioned in the third sentence is your own new contribution to the debate, or even that you *endorse* that objection. The fix is to incorporate some explicit signposting (see #Signposting) indicating that something new is coming, for instance replacing the third sentence with:

> (D) However, as I will now argue, knowledge must at least in some cases be intrinsically valuable.

#WrongTransition

Above I describe several ways in which the words used to transition from one sentence to the next might misrepresent the connection between the two sentences. For example, you might start a sentence with "For example…", but what follows isn't really an example of anything mentioned in the previous sentence. Or you start a sentence with "Therefore," but what comes next doesn't really follow from what was said in the preceding sentence(s). Or you say "In other words," but what comes next isn't really a reiteration of the preceding sentence. Those ones are common enough to get their own hashtags (#ForExample, #DoesItFollow?, #Reiteration).

If I've said #WrongTransition, it's the same sort of problem—the phrasing misrepresents the connection between the two sentences—but doesn't fall into any of those other more specific categories. Look closely at the sentences and think harder about what exactly the connection is between the sentences. Hopefully, upon reflection, you will see why I think that you misrepresented the connection.