

## ❖ Sample Writing Fellow Comment

*Here is an example of the kind of commentary you and your students can expect from the Fellows. (The assignment, from an upper division philosophy class, asked that the writer analyze, interpret, and take a stand on Kant's theory of evil.)*

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

I enjoyed reading your explanation of the complexities that arise when the propensity to evil is seen as “sometimes innate.” You treat the subject in a very accessible yet scholarly tone, which makes it easy for me as a reader to follow the line of your argument without becoming hindered by the language. Also, you have done a nice job incorporating quotations into the material—doing so helps me to understand more precisely how Kant thinks so that I can compare it with what you say.

Here are some things for you to consider as you revise your paper:

- 1) **Scope.** You mention that you are concerned with the amount of material you cover in such a small space. It certainly is all very interesting; however, considering the page limit of the assignment, I think that you are correct to say that it may need to be constrained. How might you condense the material in the first part of the paper (approximately through paragraph 5, perhaps?), while still constructing a complete explanation of propensity to evil and its implications? I think that doing this will focus your argument so that you are not trying to do too many things at once. There were times when in first half of the paper (the analysis of the propensity to evil) when I was not sure how this explanation was relevant, considering that you ultimately show propensity to be flawed.
- 2) **Quotations.** There are certain places where you use quite a few direct quotations from Kant. After each one, instead of letting it speak for itself, make sure that you sufficiently explain your interpretation of this quote and how it furthers or complicates your argument. For example, paragraph 8 contains almost one quote per sentence—a lot for a paper of this length; it might benefit from you incorporating the ideas into your own by paraphrasing them, or from a short elaboration after each one. Since you seem to agree with Kant at certain points and disagree at others, your readers can benefit from you clarifying the intent with which you use each quote.
- 3) **Topic sentences.** Many of your topic sentences are already good, but there are places where they could further guide the reader in the journey of your argument. For example, instead of using a question (paragraph 9) or a re-statement of Kant's explanations, take it one step further and explain where this idea fits in within your thesis statement. By relating each topic sentence back to the thesis, and by making each one a mini-thesis for the paragraph, you will ensure that a) each paragraph plays a distinct role in your argument and b) that your reader will easily follow and (more likely) be convinced by your logic.

I look forward to meeting with you and discussing your paper further at our conference—your paper's already got a lot going for it, so through revision it will only become even stronger still. Look over your paper, and bring any questions or ideas that you may have for us to talk about. See you then!