

Exercise: Pyramid of Specificity

Due by e-mail: Tuesday evening, February 11th

Goal:

The goal of this exercise is to work on being concise, while retaining clarity and accuracy. Mastering this skill is crucial for philosophical writing, because you will frequently have cause to *briefly* introduce material from a paper you have read, so that you can discuss something particular from it. When you write an introductory paragraph to your own paper, you need to briefly encapsulate what is going to happen in the rest of the paper, conveying in one paragraph the core of what will take you 15- pages or more to actually do.

This exercise has three parts. For the first part, you will have to write *exactly* 12 sentences, one for each section of Book 2, part 1. Each sentence should be a concise statement of what Hume is doing in that section. I don't have a set word-count or length for the sentences you write, but, I suspect you will all know when you are trying to cheat and cram multiple sentences together. You may talk to each other about what is going on in the sections, but your one sentence summaries should be your own.

The second part of the exercise is for you to write a one paragraph (5 to 8 sentence) summary of Book 2, Part 1. Note that summarizing 2.1 as a whole may require you to convey something about the relationship among the individual sections, and will definitely require you to further compress what you said in your answers to part 1.

The third part of the exercise is for you to briefly (but without the same fixed constraints as above) describe: (a) where you encountered difficulty/frustrations in completing parts 1 and 2, (including sections where you felt that there were multiple, conflicting, but roughly equally good, one sentence summaries available) and (b) any particularly interesting or insightful points by Hume that you had to omit, because they did not seem central enough to make the cut.