

Commentary on critical essay.

First paragraph starts out with an immediate critical statement. No warmups here. The sentences could be shorter but the problems are clearly identified.

Second paragraph says McNeil assumes X (that leaders set goals) but there are good reasons for thinking Y (that they don't have all that much control). Notice the author didn't spend time reciting to me a bunch of stuff from the article. He could have given a little more, but a lot is unnecessary. Then – at “If, following...” – he argues for what difference it makes that McNeil has made the assumption (we could miss where the real power is). That's the most powerful sentence of the paragraph.

Third paragraph is good because it makes plausible, in a tangible way, the last point of the second paragraph. If I had not been convinced that the criticism was a good one, this paragraph would provide extra punch to bring me along.

Fourth paragraph is about the second criticism, which is basically “so what?” The argument here is that society can't function well without authority and that there's precious little in Weber on which to base a strong critique of bureaucracy. I don't agree with the author's criticism because I think that Weber is much more equivocal about domination this paper says. But that's really a matter of interpretation. The good thing about the paragraph is the author is being concise and clear about what he means. Each sentence is fairly closely related to the others.

Fifth paragraph starts out strong—this is a ‘what difference it makes’ sort of statement. It says, “well, even if domination is inherent in buro it may be misguided to miss its positive aspects.” Next sentence uses something from McNeil—his claims about organizations and power—and follows it with a different evaluation of the same thing. Author weakens the statement when he says “could be considered”—this is passive writing that fails to make a commitment about what the author believes. “Could be?” Well, is it or isn't it? Rest of the paragraph is good, though, because it shows what difference it makes if the criticism is right (and I think it's not right).

Last paragraph is ok but would be stronger if he'd ended by coming back to McNeil's central concern in some way.

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Please don't think you have to copy this author's format or logic. I'm giving this out just so you'll have some idea of how to proceed. Also, please don't wait until the last minute. The exercise is more difficult than you suspect—trust me—and it'll take longer than you want it to. The rewards for doing it, though, are high. I look forward to reading your first reviews!