understanding of the text. Some students did not enter class knowing that re-reading is important for understanding. If students do not know that re-reading is important for understanding when they arrive in core curriculum and early major philosophy classes, then they are likely to think that the understanding garnered from a first read *is* a rich understanding. Without explicit reading instruction many students will not know that they did not fully understand a text that they just read. Consequently, many students will take no steps to increase their understanding. This fact is further evidence of the importance of explicit background information, metacognition, and "How To" instruction. Students need to be taught what constitutes rich understanding and how to assess how well they are doing in their attempts to develop it.

APPENDIX

How to Read Philosophy

(*Warning: Do not use a highlighter when reading this. As you read on, you'll learn why*.)

Introduction
Even if you are very smart and very literate, as I assume you are, confusion and frustration may occur if you do not read philosophy in the way philosophers expect you to. There is more than one *way* to read. In this handout, I describe the basics of How to Read *Philosophy*.

What to Expect
Reading philosophy is an activity and, like any activity (e.g., playing volleyball), it takes practice to become good at it. As with any attempt to learn a new skill, you will make some mistakes along the way, get frustrated with the fact that you are progressing more slowly than you would like, and need to ask for help. You may become angry with authors because they say things that go against what you were brought up to believe and you may become frustrated because those same authors argue so well that you cannot prove them wrong. It is likely that you will find unfamiliar vocabulary, abstract ideas, complexly organized writing, and unsettling views. I mention this because it is normal to have certain reactions, such as confusion, outrage, and frustration, when first encountering philosophy. *Don't confuse these reactions with failure*. Many students who have come before you have had the same initial reactions and succeeded, even your professor.

The Ultimate Goal
Your aim is to develop, or become more confident in, your personal belief system, by building on what you already know about yourself and the world. By evaluating arguments regarding controversial issues, you

should learn to take a well-justified stand that you are able to defend. When you read philosophy you should look for arguments, reasons, and conclusions, not facts, plot or character development, to help you reach your goal of evaluating the plausibility of various positions a person might take on some issue.

Basic Good Reading Behaviors[16]

- Take care of yourself (take breaks, sit where you won't be distracted, give yourself enough time to read well, sit in an uncomfortable chair to avoid dozing off, etc.)
- Interact with the material (talk to your friends and classmates about what you have read, use a dictionary and philosophical encyclopedia while reading, remember you are reading one person's contribution to an ongoing debate, disagree with the author)
- Keep reasonable expectations (you may not understand everything without some effort, you may need to ask for help or clarification).
- Be able to state the author's conclusion and the gist of the argument for that conclusion BEFORE you come to class.
- Evaluate the gist of the author's argument BEFORE class.
- FLAG and TAKE NOTES. (Flagging is explained below)

Important Background Information

Reading for Information versus Reading for Enlightenment

You are familiar with reading for information: You pass your eyes over some words until some information about the world sticks in your head. Reading for enlightenment may be less familiar. When you read for enlightenment you use a text as an opportunity to *reflect* upon yourself and your beliefs. Part of the reason why reading for enlightenment is not easy is because self-evaluation often results in personal growth and sometimes when we grow, we experience growing pains.

Problem-Based, Historical or Figure-Based Philosophy Classes

This is a problem-based class. In problem-based classes, students spend most of their time identifying, reflecting upon, and defending their beliefs. This is *not* a historical or figure-based course. In historical classes, students spend most of their time learning certain themes in the history of philosophy. In figure-based classes, students spend most of their time mastering what certain philosophers think.

In problem-based courses like this one, students read relatively short primary and secondary sources. A secondary source is a text that describes what other people have argued. The textbook for this class is a secondary source. A primary source is a text where a person actually argues that a certain position is correct. The course packet contains primary sources.

So, *you are in a problem-based course where you are supposed to read primary sources for enlightenment*. But how, exactly, does one read for enlightenment? Well, strong philosophy readers, people who read with care, do three things. As people increase their ability to read philosophy well they gradually become unaware that they do facet one and they combine facets two and three. However, it is a good idea for non-experts to do one thing at a time.

A Three-Part Reading Process

Facet One—Stage Setting

(1) Pre-Read:

For a very short time, examine the general features of the article. Look at the title, section headings, footnotes, bibliography, reading questions, and biography of the author. The goal of the pre-read is to get a basic idea of what the article is about. If you know what an article is about, it is easier to make sense of the individual sentences in it. Also, skim the first and last paragraph to see if you can easily identify a focal or thesis statement. A focal statement describes the topic of the text. Focal statements often begin with phrases such as "I will discuss X, Y, and Z." A thesis statement is a more specific description of the author's goal. Thesis statements often begin with phrases such as "I will show that X is true and Y and Z are false."

While doing the pre-read, ask yourself "How am I doing?" by answering the following questions:

Is this a primary or secondary text? Should I expect an argument or a description of an argument?

Am I reading for information or enlightenment?

What is the focal statement of the article? Is there a thesis statement? What is it?

What should I expect to find in the text in light of the title?

Are there section headings? If yes, what can I learn about the article from them?

Is there a bibliography? If yes, what can I learn about the article from it?

Are there footnotes? Are they essentially documentation or do they say something? (This lets you know whether you need to read them when you see a number in the text.)

Are there reading questions attached? If yes, in light of these questions, what can I expect to find in the text?

(2) Fast-Read:

Read the entire article fairly quickly. The goal of the fast-read is to develop a basic understanding of the text. When doing the fast read, remember to do the following:

- Identify the thesis statement.

Warning: You may not be able to do this until you reach the end of the article. Mark anything that seems like it might be a thesis statement or conclusion when you first notice it, then pick the one that seems most central when you are done. In some cases, the author may not even actually write a thesis statement down, so you may need to write one for the author.

- Look up definitions of words you don't know and write them in the margins.
  Warning: Don't get bogged down while doing this. If it is too difficult to figure out which meaning of a term an author seems to have in mind, or if you have to read an entire encyclopedia entry to figure out the meaning, just move on. (If you read near a computer see On-line Dictionary: http://dictionary.reference.com/ and Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy: http://www.utm.edu/research/iep/.)
- FLAG the structure of the article in as much detail as possible without getting bogged down. When you flag a text you put marks in it that will allow you to reconstruct the meaning of the text without having to re-read the entire text again. *See below for specific suggestions on how to flag an article.*
- Don't let anything stop your progress. This is a fast read. You may skim long examples.

While doing the fast-read, ask yourself "How am I doing?" by answering the following questions:

Have I identified the thesis statement and written it down?

Do I know what the conclusion of the author's argument is and have I marked places in the text where important steps toward that conclusion occur?

Facet Two—Understanding

Develop a sophisticated understanding of the text. You should be able to explain to a friend how the author defends her/his conclusion. Once you are able to coherently explain the article in your own words, you have truly internalized it—good job. When reading for understanding, remember to do the following:

- Re-read the entire article VERY CAREFULLY.
- Correct and add to your previous flagging.
- Take lots of notes. In these notes, rephrase what the author says in your own words.
  Remember: You should practice the principle of charity when taking notes. Describe the author's view in the most favorable way possible. If you have trouble taking notes, stop at the end of every section or paragraph (sometimes even every sentence) and mentally rephrase the meaning of the text in your own words.
- Draw diagrams or flow charts of the major moves in the article if doing so helps you.

- Bring together all your work so far into a summary that is detailed enough that you won't have re-read the article again to remind yourself of the author's argument.

While reading for understanding, ask yourself "How am I doing?" by answering the following questions:

Do I know *exactly* what the author is saying? Have I re-re-read passages that were confusing at first?

Can I connect the dots? Can I explain in my own words why the author concludes what she or he concludes? (In the fast-read you find the conclusion and do your best to figure out the steps to it. In the read-for-understanding, you come to fully understand each step in detail.)

Facet Three—Evaluating

Now that you have made yourself a concise and easy to articulate summary of the author's argument, it is time to evaluate it. When evaluating, your main tool is the summary you made, but you will need to re-re-read certain passages. At this stage, you are entering the debate, rather than simply learning about it. When evaluating a text, remember to do the following:

- Fix any mistaken flagging as you re-re-read important passages.
- Write down anything new that you discover as you go through the text again.

While evaluating a text, ask yourself "How am I doing?" by answering the following questions:

Have I looked to see if every conclusion in the text is well defended?

Have I thought about how an undefended conclusion could be defended? (Have I been charitable?)

Do I think the arguments for the conclusions are persuasive? Why or why not?

Can I think of any counter-examples to any assertion made by the author?

Can I put my finger on exactly what bothers me about what the author says? Can I explain where and why I think the author made a mistake?

Have I thought about how the author might respond to my criticism?

Have I identified some of my own beliefs that can't be true if the author is right?

Is there is a conflict between what I believe and what the author says? If so, to avoid being a hypocrite I must ultimately change my mind or show that the author's reasoning fails in some way. *Simply identifying a disagreement does not constitute an evaluation.*

Have I figured out, exactly, what the author got wrong so that I may continue to believe as I always have with confidence?

Have I figured out, exactly, which of my beliefs I must change in light of what I have learned from the author?

Have I looked for some point that the author did not consider that might influence what I think is true?

Two Important Details

(1) Flagging

When you flag a text you put short notes, preferably in pencil, in the margins of the text (unless you are using a library book) that will remind you of many details in the text so that you will not have to re-read an entire text to reconstruct its meaning in your head. Flagging marks allow you to pick out various important features of the text for further study.

Flagging is better than highlighting because flagging is more detailed than highlighting. If all you're interested in doing is distinguishing something that seems important from other stuff that doesn't seem important then highlighting is fine. But you want to do more than just distinguish important from unimportant. There is more than one kind of important thing in a philosophy text, and you want to mark your text in such a way that you can tell the difference. Another good thing about flagging is that you can "unflag" and you can't "unhighlight." The flexibility to change your notes is important because sometimes as you read further into a text, or read it a second time, you realize that something that seemed important really isn't important.

There are many ways to flag a text. You should develop your own method and notations. You should use whatever marks help you attain the goal of noting the different types of important parts of a text. A part of the text is important when it must be present for the author's conclusion to make sense. On some occasions important things are a sentence or a clause in length, but other times important things are a paragraph or a page long. The following are suggestions of abbreviations that have been particularly useful to me. But, again, feel free to use terms not on the list that you find helpful and ignore any, or all, of these if you find them unhelpful. In addition to these terms, I circle "list" words (e.g., First, second, [i], [ii]) and I underline definitions.

Tracking the Flow[17]

Focal	General topic this article will discuss
Thesis	Specific claim the author hopes to prove
Dfn	Definition
Dst	Distinction
e.g.	Example
Asn	Assertion of fact or an important claim the author will argue is true
Discuss	A discussion or explanation of a view, assertion, or problem

Rsn	Reason supporting an assertion or conclusion, a justification of a claim
Arg	An argument (combination of an assertion and a reason)
Obj	Objection to an argument or reason
Reply	Reply to an objection
Rejoin	Rejoinder or response to a reply
Con	Conclusion of an argument
Sum	Summary
Spost	A signpost or statement that explicitly marks an important transition in the text

Self-Monitoring

???	What? I don't get it. I must reread this passage carefully
=x?	This means what exactly?

Reader Evaluation

Why?	Why should someone agree with this?
[Underline]	This is important

Flagging should naturally evolve into note taking. If you are inclined to write "???" in a margin, it is a good idea to write out more fully what confused you. If you can articulate your confusion you are a good way down the road to figuring out what's going on. During your reread for understanding make sure to spend as much time as necessary to fully grasp what is going on in the "???" section.

(2) Key Words

Some students find the following list of words or phrases that signal a significant moment in a text helpful. However, there are many texts where authors will not use any of these terms or phrases. These are words or phrases to be aware of so that if they come up you are ready, but you should not read a text as if you are on a treasure hunt for these words or phrases.

Focal statements are often signaled by phrases such as I will discuss Consideration will be given to My main concern is	*Thesis statements are often signaled by phrases such as* In this paper I argue that I hope to conclude that I will show that
Premises, Reasons, or Assertions are often signaled by words or phrases such as Because, Since, For, Whereas Secondly, It follows that Given that As shown or indicated by The reason is that	*Objections or criticisms are often signaled by words or phrases such as* Moreover, However It could be objected that Opponents of my view might claim Critics might say, On the other hand There is reason to doubt
Replies or Rejoinders are often signaled by words or phrases such as This criticism fails because My opponent does not notice that In response we should remember Nevertheless, On the other hand	*Conclusions are often signaled by words or phrases such as* In summary, Thus, Therefore, So, Hence, Accordingly, Consequently As a result We may infer, Which entails that

A Final Complication

Linear versus Dialogical Writing

Students sometimes ask me one or all of the following questions: (1) Why does the author contradict herself? (2) Why does the author repeat himself so much? (3) Why is this reading so wordy? Students ask these questions, I think, because they expect the reading to be linear when, in fact, philosophical writing is usually dialogical. So, let me tell you a little bit about dialogical writing and then I will answer each question individually.

Linear writing moves in a straightforward way from one idea to the next, without examining (m)any supporting or contradictory ideas. Dialogical writing explicitly acknowledges and responds to criticism. It may be helpful to think of philosophical writing as a monologue that contains a dialogue.[18] The author is speaking directly to you, delivering a monologue for your consideration. But in the monologue, the author is telling you about a dialogue or debate that she or he knows about, while giving you reasons for thinking that her or his understanding of that debate is right. As you know, in some debates there are more than two sides and sometimes people on the same side have different reasons for believing what they believe. Authors will take the time to tell you about as many sides, or different camps within one side, as they think you need to know about to understand, and be persuaded by, their view. This confuses people sometimes because it is hard to keep track of whether the author is arguing for their side or talking from another point of view or camp within the same side for the sake of (good) argument.

Points to remember about dialogical philosophical texts

- Authors sometimes support their views with thought-experiments (i.e., examples that ask you to imagine how things would be if something that is not true, were true).
- Authors sometimes argue that other thinkers haven't noticed an important difference between two things. Authors draw distinctions.
- Authors sometimes argue that another philosopher's views or arguments ought to be rejected.

  There is something really tricky here. Fair-minded writers will practice the principle of charity. According to the *principle of charity*, one should give one's opponents the benefit of the doubt; one should respond to the best thing that someone who disagrees with you could say, even if they didn't notice it. Sometimes attempts to abide by the principle of charity results in authors presenting arguments for the correctness of views they ultimately reject. That is, for the sake of (good) argument some authors will present reasons for thinking that their critics are right. *Try to avoid mistaking charitable elucidation for the author's main argument.*

Now that you are more familiar with dialogical texts I can answer the questions students sometimes ask about them.

Frequently Asked Questions

(1) Why does the author contradict herself?
Sometimes thinkers do unwittingly contradict themselves. Most of the time, however, people perceive a contradiction where there isn't one because they fail to notice a change in "voice." Authors will describe many sides, and camps within a side, but they will voice agreement with only one side or camp. If you lose track of the fact that the author is considering an alternative view, you will mistakenly think that a fair-minded examination of a different point of view is a contradiction. Keeping track of where you are in the argument is crucial to understanding. If you think you see a contradiction, double or triple check your flagging to make sure that you are not simply missing something.

(2) Why does the author repeat himself so much?
Usually philosophers do not repeat themselves all that much. Sometimes, however, they use examples that are so long, or discuss material that is interesting but ultimately tangential for such a long time, that they (correctly) assume that their readers have lost track of the point being made. In such cases, a simple repetition may occur for the benefit of the reader. More often, however, people lose track of where they are in an argument and consequently mistake something new for repetition. Again, keeping track of where you are in an argument is crucial to understanding and flagging really helps readers keep track of where they are.

(3) Why is the writing so wordy?
Some people think philosophers use all sorts of fancy words to intimidate their readers or show off. This reaction is understandable but mistaken in at least three ways. First, it is a mistake to become angry with an author because you have a limited vocabulary. There is an opportunity for learning here. Take it.

Second, there is an international community of philosophers, and like all specialized communities (such as you and your friends), there are certain patterns in the way members of that community talk to one another. Metaphorically, when you enrolled in philosophy class you walked into a room where a bunch of people have been having a conversation for a very long time. You need to adapt to their idiosyncratic ways of talking if you want to participate in their conversation. Of course, philosophers shouldn't be rude and intentionally try to exclude you with their words. But it is important to realize that they didn't know you were coming, so they might not have done everything possible to make your inclusion as easy as *you* would like. Whatever the author's faults, do your part—be open to what is being said, try your

hardest to understand, and don't assume the worst about the author, even if the author doesn't always behave as you would like.

Third, and most importantly, not every complex idea can be stated in simple terms. Sometimes simplification is over-simplification, where the important nuances of what a person really thinks are lost. It is true that some philosophical writing is more complicated than it needs to be, but not all of it is. Some philosophical writing needs to be complicated to express a complicated idea. Part of the beauty of philosophy is its complexity. Do your best to appreciate the beauty of complexity.

Summary: What Successful Philosophy Readers Do

- Abide by the "Basic Good Reading Behaviors"
- Before class, complete all three facets of reading well
- Flag and Take Notes to keep track of where you are in the dialogue

Notes

I gratefully acknowledge support from the Lumina Foundation for Education, which allowed me to undertake this study. I have benefited from conversations with fellow grantees Bill McGrath, Dale Hahn, Reza Ahmadi, and Wendy Schmidt. I thank the students in my "Introduction to Philosophy" classes and the students of the Ball State University Philosophy Club for the invaluable feedback that only they could provide, especially Ryan Gessler. Improvements also came from responding to the kind critiques of Stephen Schulman, Paul Ranieri, and the editors of *Teaching Philosophy*.

1. Among the useful resources, however, are John Arthur, *Studying Philosophy: A Guide for the Perplexed* (2nd Ed.) (Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Pearson/Prentice Hall, 2004); Gary Kessler, *Reading, Thinking, And Writing Philosophically* (2nd ed.) (Belmont, Calif.: Wadsworth, 2001); and Mark B. Woodhouse, *Reading and Writing About Philosophy* (Belmont, Calif.: Wadsworth, 1989).

2. I borrow here from Melinda Messineo, Robin Rufatto, Tom Talbert, and Dave Concepcíón, "Guide For New Faculty," Ball State University, Office of Teaching and Learning Advancement, Spring 2003.

3. John T. Bruer, *Schools for Thought: A Science for Learning in the Classroom* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1994), especially chapter 3, "Intelligent Novices: Knowing How To Learn," and chapter 6, "Reading: Seeing the Big Picture."

4. E. D. Hirsch, *Cultural Literacy* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1987), 60.

5. Ibid., 13.

6. Ibid.

7. Bruer, *Schools for Thought*, 180–81.

8. Bruer makes a similar point. Bruer, *Schools for Thought*, 190, 194.

9. Similar methods are recommended by Kathryn Russell and Lyn Robertson, "Teaching Analytic Reading and Writing: A Feminist Approach," *Teaching Philosophy* 9:3 (September 1986): 207–17; Kessler, "Reading, Thinking, and Writing Philosophically," *op. cit.*; James Pryor, "How To Read A Philosophy Paper," www.princeton.edu/~jimpryor/general/reading.html; Jeff McLaughlin, "How to Read a Philosophy Paper (including

this one)," www.cariboo.bc.ca/ae/php/phil/mclaughl/courses/howread.htm; and Letitia Meynell, "Reading Philosophy Actively," http://myweb.dal.ca/lt531391/readphil.pdf.

10. If time for grading is scarce, an instructor need only read a small number of the comparative self-assessments in detail and "grade" on a pass or fail basis. There are two reasons why it is important to initially give students credit for this work. First, the abruptness of the change in teaching and learning styles from high school to higher education is reduced. This reduction in abruptness eases student anxiety and builds student confidence. Second, giving credit for this work takes advantage of the assumption made by some students that uncredited work is unimportant. To transfer responsibility for success firmly to the student, credit should not be given for such assignments as the semester progresses. For more on strategies for easing the transition from high school to higher education, see Ruth Beard and James Hartley, *Teaching and Learning in Higher Education* (4th ed.) (London: Harper and Row, 1984), chap. 5: "Adjusting To Higher Education."

11. Bruer, *Schools for Thought*, 67.

12. Ibid., 77–78.

13. Ibid., 59ff.

14. Ibid., 72.

15. John D. Bransford, Ann L. Brown, and Rodney R. Cocking, eds., *How People Learn: Brain, Mind, Experience, and School* (expanded ed.) (Washington: National Academy Press, 2000); A. L. Brown "Domain-Specific Principles Affect Learning and Transfer in Children," *Cognitive Science* 14 (1990): 107–33; J. H. Flavell and H. M. Wellman, "Metamemory," in *Perspectives on the Development of Memory and Cognition*, ed. R.V. Kail, Jr., and J. W. Hagen (Hillside, N.J.: Erlbaum, 1977); J. H. Flavell, "Metacognition and Cognitive Monitoring: A New Area of Cognitive-Developmental Inquiry," *American Psychologist* 34:1 (1979): 906–11; A. L. Brown and J. S. DeLoache, "Skills, Plans, And Self-Regulation," in *Children's Thinking: What Develops?* ed. R. S. Siegler (Hillside, N.J.: Erlbaum, 1978); J. D. Bransford, R. Sherwood, N. Vye, and J. Rieser, "Teaching Thinking and Problem Solving," *American Psychologist* 41:10 (1986), 1078–89; J. D. Bransford, B. S. Stein, N. J. Vye, J. J. Franks, P. M. Auble, K. J. Mezynski, and G. A. Perfetto, "Differences in Approaches to Learning: An Overview," *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General* 111 (1982): 390–98; A. L. Brown, J. D. Bransford, R. A. Ferrara, and J. C. Camione, " Learning, Remembering, and Understanding," in *Handbook of Child Psychology, Vol. 2: Cognitive Development*, ed. P. H. Mussen (New York: Wiley, 1983); E. M. Markman, "Comprehension Monitoring: Developmental and Educational Issues," in *Thinking and Learning Skills, Vol. 2: Research and Open Questions*, ed. S. F. Chipman, J. W. Segal, and R. Glaser (Hillside, N.J.: Erlbaum, 1985).

16. I have borrowed from Jennifer McCrickerd in developing this material. Jennifer McCrickerd, "Reading Philosophy," www.drake.edu/artsei/philrel/fachomepages/jenhomepage/ReadingPhilosophy.html (site no longer active).

17. I have borrowed some flagging notation from Meynell, "Reading Philosophy Actively," *op. cit.*

18. I am grateful to Paul Ranieri for insisting that I put this idea this way.

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