

# Think Piece Peer Review

*due Friday, March 13*

The ability to charitably and constructively respond to others' ideas is a key philosophical skill. It is a skill we need whenever we are reading a text or reconstructing an argument, but we need it especially when we are participating in any sort of philosophical community (like a class, or a conference, or even a one-on-one conversation). This peer review assignment is intended to help you work on this skill; in addition, it will give you a sense of the ways in which you may think to develop your own think piece, looking ahead to your term paper.

## *Guidelines*

Your peer review should be **approximately 750 words in length** (i.e., 3 double-spaced pages). It should provide constructive, formative feedback on the think piece you have received,<sup>1</sup> presenting two developed responses to the think piece's thesis. **You are *not* to “grade” or merely present your opinion on the think piece.** Specifically, your peer review should consist of the following three sections:

1. Introduction (100 to 200 words)
2. First developed response to the think piece's thesis (250 to 300 words)
3. Second developed response to the think piece's thesis (250 to 300 words)

Your introduction should summarize what you take to be the think piece's thesis, and indicate what your two responses will be. Your developed responses should each build on the think piece's thesis in a different, concrete way. This may be done in various ways; for example, you may...

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<sup>1</sup>That is, the think piece you have received from me, via email, on or around March 2.

- **strengthen:** present an additional piece of evidence (not discussed in the think piece) which supports the think piece’s thesis, and explain why
- **weaken:** present an additional piece of evidence (not discussed in the think piece) which contradicts (or at least seems to contradict) the think piece’s thesis, and explain why [N.B.: make sure this evidence is relevant!]
- **expand:** discuss what you think is the natural “next step” for the think piece to take, and explain how this would go
- **focus:** identify a point of detail which you feel the think piece passes over too quickly, and explain why more time should be spent discussing this point
- **clarify:** highlight a particular claim from the think piece which you believe is ambiguous (i.e., admits of two or more readings), and explain why those readings need to be distinguished
- **objection:** present an objection (or potential objection) to the think piece’s reasoning, and explain why this objection needs to be addressed

Your responses need not fit neatly into any of these categories; the above list is intended merely to give you an idea of what I am expecting. Your responses may both be of the same form, but they must present independent points.

**Tone is crucial!** Remember, your purpose is to provide *constructive, formative* feedback. You will be docked points if your tone strikes me as mean, uncharitable, or arrogant. This does *not* mean that you cannot criticize or object to the think piece; but it *does* mean that you cannot be a jerk about it. Your peer review should sound like you are helping someone out (because that’s what you should be doing!).

Finally, do not refer to the author of the think piece as “you” (this is too personal and direct); just use “the author” (or their student number, if you want your peer review to sound all futuristic and robot-y). You may refer to the think piece simply as “the think piece”.

### *Formatting*

**Please prepare your peer review for blind grading:** the only piece of identifying information should be your student number; please do not include your name. Other than that, you may format your think piece however you wish, but please keep in mind that it is going to be read by another human. A legible font, ample margins, and appropriate line spacing will all be appreciated.

Textual citations of Plato or Aristotle should indicate the work title (in italics) and line number, as in “(*Phaedo* 100c)” or “(*Nicomachean Ethics* 1098b14)”. Citations of secondary literature should follow some standard citation style of your choosing.

### *Turning it in*

Please email your peer review in PDF format to [willie.costello@mail.utoronto.ca](mailto:willie.costello@mail.utoronto.ca) by 11:59 P.M. on Friday, March 13.

Late papers will be docked 10% if handed in within the first 24 hours after the due date, and 5% for each subsequent 24 hour period after that (unless accompanied by valid documentation, found here: [www.illnessverification.utoronto.ca](http://www.illnessverification.utoronto.ca)). Late papers may be submitted up to 7 days after the due date; any papers not received by this time will automatically receive a 0.

### *Grading*

Your peer review will be graded on the quality of your two responses, the overall tone of your comments, and the overall clarity of your writing. The grading rubric I will be using will be made available on the course website.