

Reading Assignment

Introduction

Although this assignment requires you to hand in written work, its main purpose is to help you learn how to read philosophy papers. Philosophy papers can often be very difficult to read: their structure is often very complex, and it is not always clear what is the main aim of the paper, which positions the author is defending and which she or he are merely introducing in order to later reject, which arguments are used to defend or reject which claims, and so forth. The fact that all these things are hard to figure out might sometimes be due to the fact they you have not had enough practice with reading philosophy papers, and other times it may simply be the fault of the author for not making these things clear enough. But either way, it is your task as a *reader* to try and figure out what the author was intending to communicate. (Your job as a *writer* on the other hand, will include communicating your thoughts as clearly as possible, so as to make your readers' task easier. But that's a matter for another time).

Assignment

Write a 1 to 2 page (not longer, please!) report on the paper which includes the following sections:

1. **Title** of the paper, and where it was published.
2. **Author** of the paper
3. **Aim:** in one or two sentences, describe what the *main* aim or point of the paper is. This might be for example to defend a certain position (which one?) or to point out a certain problem that has previously been ignored (which problem?).
4. **Outline of paper:** In a brief and schematic form, draw an outline of the main sub-points and arguments in the paper. Note that you might want your outline to follow the *logical* structure of the arguments rather than the order in which they appear in the paper. Remember to be brief: you don't need to cover every point mentioned in the paper. The whole point of the outline is to ignore the details, and bring out or the main points of the paper and the manner in which they are organised.

Here's a very rough idea of what your outline should look like:

- I. The author defines that two main terms that will figure in the paper X and Y.
- II. The author presents the view that all Xs are F, but rejects it using two main arguments:
 - (a) The claim that all Xs are F entails the absurd conclusion some Zs are F – which is implausible.
 - (b) The claim that all Xs are F only seems true in the first place because it is mistakenly confused with the claim that all Ys are F.
- III. The author defends the view that all Ys are F using the following arguments... (and so forth).

5. Question or objection (bonus): Pick **one** question or objection you have regarding the paper and describe it in not more than 2-3 sentences. This can be something you don't understand in the paper (e.g. 'I don't understand what the author means when she says P' Or 'Does the author in the end defend the claim P or reject it? It is not entirely clear from the paper'). Alternatively, it can be one point which you thought was weak or unconvincing in the paper (e.g. 'The author rejects the claim that all Xs are F on the grounds that it entails that all Zs are F- which according to her is absurd. But I don't find the latter claim to be so absurd – so I found this argument unconvincing').

Good luck ☺!