The unexamined life is not worth living.
—Socrates, fifth century BCE

Know thyself!
—Oracle at Delphi (Socrates motto)

Philosophy concerns our beliefs and attitudes about ourselves and the world. Doing philosophy, therefore, begins with the activity of stating, as clearly and as convincingly as possible, what we believe and what we believe in. This does not mean, however, that announcing one's allegiance to some grand-sounding ideas or, perhaps, some impressive word or "ism" is all that there is to philosophy. Philosophy is the development or revision of these ideas, the attempt to work them out with all their implications and complications. It is the attempt to see their connections and compare them with other people's views—including the classic statements of the great philosophers of the past. It is the effort to appreciate the differences between one's own views and others' views, to be able to argue with someone who disagrees, and to resolve the difficulties that others may throw in your path. One of our students once suggested that she found it easy to list her main ideas on a single sheet of paper; what she found difficult was showing how they related to one another and how she might defend them against someone who disagreed with her. In effect, what she was saying was something like this: she would really enjoy playing quarterback with the football team, as long as she didn't have to cooperate with the other players—and then only until the other team came onto the field. But playing football is cooperating with your team and running against the team that is out to stop you; philosophy is the attempt to coordinate a number of different ideas into a coherent viewpoint and defending what you believe against those who are out to refute you. Indeed, a belief that can't be tied in with a great many other beliefs and that can't withstand criticism may not be worth believing at all.

MEET THE PHILOSOPHER: Socrates (469 or 470–399 BCE)

Socrates was one of the greatest philosophers of all times, though he never recorded his philosophy in writing. (All that we know of him comes down to us from his student Plato and other philosophers.) Socrates was born in approximately 469 or 470 BCE and lived his whole long life in Athens. He had a spectacular gift for rhetoric and debating. He had a much-gossiped-about marriage, had several children, and lived in poverty most of his life. He based his philosophy on the need to "know yourself" and on living the "examined life," even though the height of wisdom, according to Socrates, was to know how thoroughly ignorant we are. Much of his work was dedicated to defining and living the ideals of wisdom, justice, and the good life. In 399 BCE he was placed on trial by the Athenians for "corrupting

the youth" with his ideas. He was condemned to death, refused all opportunities to escape or have his sentence repealed, and accepted the cruel and unfair verdict with complete dignity and several brilliant speeches, dying as well as living for the ideas he defended.

Beyond Buzzwords

To defend your ideas is quite different from insisting, no matter how self-righteously, on your commitment to a mere word. To say that you believe in freedom, for instance, may make you feel proud and righteous, but this has nothing to do with philosophy or, for that matter, with freedom, unless you are willing to spell out exactly what it is you stand for, what it is that you believe, and why this *freedom*, as you call it, is so desirable. But most students, as well as many professional philosophers, get caught up in such attractive, admirable words, which we can call "buzzwords." These sound as if they refer to something quite specific and concrete (like the word *dog*), but in fact they are among the most difficult words to understand, and they provide us with the hardest problems in philosophy. *Freedom* sounds as if it means breaking out of prison or being able to speak one's mind against a bad government policy; but when we try to say what it is that ties these two examples together, and many more besides, it soon becomes clear that we don't know exactly what we're talking about. Indeed, virtually everyone believes in freedom, but the question is *what* each person actually believes in. Similarly, many people use such words as *truth, reality, morality, love,* and even *God* as buzzwords, words that make us feel good just because we say them. But to express the beliefs these words supposedly represent is to do something more than merely say the words; it is also to say what the words mean and what it is in the world (or out of it) to which we are referring. Buzzwords are like badges; we use them to identify ourselves. But it is equally important to know what the badges stand for.

The words *science* and *art* are examples of buzzwords that seem to be ways of identifying ourselves. How many dubious suggestions and simple-minded advertisements cash in on the respectability of the word *scientific*? What outrageous behavior is sometimes condoned on the grounds that it is *artistic*? And in politics, what actions have not been justified in the name of *national security* or *self-determination*? Such buzzwords not only block our understanding of the true nature of our behavior, but they also can be an obstacle—rather than an aid—in philosophy. Philosophers are always making up new words, often by way of making critical distinctions. For example, the words *subjective* and *objective,* once useful philosophical terms, now have so many meanings and are so commonly abused that the words by themselves hardly mean anything at all. Would-be philosophers, including some of the more verbally fluent philosophy students, may think that they are doing philosophy when they merely string together long noodle chains of such impressive terms. But philosophical terms are useful only insofar as they stay tied down to the problems they are introduced to solve and

retain the carefully defined meanings they carry. Buzzwords become not aids for thinking but rather *substitutes* for thinking, and long noodle chains of such terms, despite their complexity, are intellectually without nutritional value.

The abuse of buzzwords explains the importance of that overused introductory philosophical demand, "Define your terms." In fact, it is very difficult to define your terms, and most of the time, the definition emerges at the *end* of a thought process rather than at the beginning. You think you know quite well what you mean. But when certain philosophical terms enter our discussion, it is clear why this incessant demand has always been so important; many students seem to think that they have learned some philosophy just because they have learned a new and impressive word or two. But that's like believing that you have learned how to ski just because you have tried on the boots. The truth, however, is to be found in what you go on to do with them.

Articulation and Argument: Two Crucial Features of Philosophy

Philosophy is, first of all, **reflection**. It is stepping back, listening to yourself and other people (including the great philosophers), and trying to understand and evaluate what you hear and what you believe. To formulate your own philosophy is to say what you believe as clearly and as thoroughly as possible. Often we believe that we believe something, but as soon as we try to write it down or explain it to a friend we find that what seemed so clear a moment ago has disappeared, as if it evaporated just as we were about to express it. Sometimes, too, we think we don't have any particular views on a subject, but once we begin to discuss the topic with a friend it turns out that we have very definite views as soon as they are articulated. **Articulation**—spelling out ideas in words and sentences—is the primary process of philosophy. Sitting down to write out your ideas is an excellent way to articulate them, but most people find that an even better way, and sometimes far more relaxed and enjoyable, is simply to discuss these ideas with other people—classmates, good friends, family—or even, on occasion, a stranger with whom you happen to strike up a conversation. Indeed, talking with another person not only forces you to be clear and concrete in your articulation of your beliefs; it also allows you—or forces you—to engage in a second essential feature of doing philosophy: arguing for your views. Articulating your opinions still leaves open the question whether they are worth believing, whether they are well thought out, and whether they can stand up to criticism from someone who disagrees. **Arguments** serve the purpose of testing our views; they are to philosophy what practice games are to sports—ways of seeing just how well you are prepared and how skilled you are. In philosophy, they are also ways of seeing just how convincing your views really are.

MASTER THE CONCEPTS: Primary Features of Philosophy

Articulation: Putting your ideas in clear, concise, readily understandable language.

Argument: Supporting your ideas with reasons that draw on other ideas, principles, and observations to establish your conclusions and overcome objections.

Analysis: Understanding an idea by distinguishing and clarifying its various components. For example, the idea of "murder" involves three component ideas: killing, wrongfulness, and intention.

Synthesis: Gathering together different ideas into a single, unified vision. For example, the ancient philosopher Pythagoras's idea of the "harmony of the spheres" (the idea that the relationships among the movements of the heavenly bodies resulted in a type of music) synthesizes ideas from mathematics, music, physics, and astronomy.

Articulating and arguing your opinions has another familiar benefit: stating and defending a view is a way of making it your own. Too many students, in reading and studying philosophy, look at the various statements and arguments of the great philosophers as if they were merely displays in some intellectual museum, curiously contradicting each other, but, in any case, having no real relevance to us. But once you have adopted a viewpoint, which most likely was defended at some time by one or more of the philosophical geniuses of history, it becomes very much your own as well. Indeed, doing philosophy almost always includes appealing to other philosophers in support of your own views, borrowing their arguments and examples as well as quoting them when they have striking things to say (with proper credit in a footnote, of course). It is by *doing* philosophy, articulating and arguing your views, instead of just reading about other people's philosophy books, that you make your own views genuinely your own, that is, by working with them, stating them publicly, defending them, and committing yourself to them. That is how the philosophies of the past become important to us and how our own half-baked, inarticulate, often borrowed, and typically undigested ideas start to become something more. Philosophy, through reflection and by means of articulation and argument, allows us to conduct an **analysis**—break something apart—and then critically examine our ideas and synthesize our vision of ourselves and the world, to put the pieces together in a single, unified, defensible vision. Such a **synthesis** is the ultimate aim of philosophical reflection, and scattered ideas and arguments are no more "a philosophy" than a handful of unconnected words is a poem.

MASTER THE CONCEPTS: The Fields of Philosophy

For convenience and to break the subject up into course-size sections, philosophy is usually divided into a number of fields. Ultimately, these are all interwoven, and it is difficult to pursue a question in any one field without soon finding yourself in the others, too. Yet philosophers, like most other scholars, tend to specialize, and you, too, may find your main interests focused in one of the following areas:

Metaphysics: The theory of reality and the ultimate nature of all things. The aim of metaphysics is a comprehensive view of the universe, an overall worldview. One part of metaphysics is a field sometimes called **ontology**, the study of "being," an attempt to list in order of priority the various sorts of entities that make up the universe.

Ethics: The study of good and bad, right and wrong, the search for the *good life*, and the defense of the principles and rules of morality. It is therefore sometimes called **moral philosophy**, although this is but a single part of the broad field of ethics.

Epistemology: The study of knowledge, including such questions as "What can we know?" and "How do we know anything?" and "What is truth?"

Logic (or philosophical logic): The study of the formal structures of *sound* thinking and good argumentation.

Philosophy of religion (or philosophical theology): The philosophical study of religion, the nature of religion, the nature of the divine, and the various reasons for believing (or not believing) in God's existence.

Political (or sociopolitical) philosophy: The study of the foundations and the nature of society and the state; an attempt to formulate a vision of the ideal society and determine what ideas and reforms would need to be implemented in our own society to better achieve this.

Aesthetics (a subset of which is the **philosophy of art**): The study of the nature of art and the experiences we have when we enjoy the arts or similarly take pleasure in nature or everyday phenomena, including an understanding of such concepts as "beauty" and "expression."

Concepts and Conceptual Frameworks

The basic units of our philosophical projects and viewpoints are called concepts. Concepts give form to experience; they make articulation possible. But even before we try to articulate our views, concepts make it possible for

us to recognize things in the world, to see and hear particular objects and particular people instead of one big blur of a world, like looking through a movie camera that is seriously out of focus. But in addition to defining the forms of our experience, concepts also tie our experience together. Concepts rarely occur in isolation; they virtually always tie together into a conceptual framework.

An example of a concept would be this: As children, we learn to identify certain creatures as dogs. We acquire the concept "dog." At first, we apply our new concept clumsily, perhaps calling a "dog" anything that has four legs, including cats, cows, and horses. Our parents correct us, however, and we learn to be more precise, distinguishing dogs first from cats, cows, and horses and then later from wolves, coyotes, and jackals. We then have the concept "dog"; we can recognize dogs; we can talk about dogs. We can think about and imagine dogs even when one is not actually around at the time, and we can say what we think about dogs in general. We can refine our concept, too, by learning to recognize the various breeds of dogs and learning to distinguish between dangerous dogs and friendly dogs. On certain occasions, therefore, the concept takes on an undeniably practical importance, for it is the concept that tells us how to act, when to run, and when to be friendly in turn. But the concept "dog" also becomes a part of our vision of the world—a world in which dogs are of some significance, a world divided into dogs and nondogs, a world in which we can contemplate, for example, the difference between a dog's life and our own. (One of the great movements in ancient philosophy was called **Cynicism** after the Greek word for "dog." The cynics acquired their name by living a life of austerity and poverty that, to their contemporaries, seemed little better than a "dog's life.")

Some concepts have very specific objects, like "dog." These specific concepts, derived from experience, are often called empirical concepts. We have already seen this word *empirical* referring to experience (for example, knowing the various breeds and behaviors of dogs). We will see it again and again; the root *empiri-* means having to do with experience. Through empirical concepts we make sense of the world, dividing it into recognizable pieces, learning how to deal with it, and developing our ability to talk about it, to understand and explain it, and to learn more and talk more about it. In addition to such specific concepts, we make use of a set of much more abstract concepts, whose objects are not so tangible or empirical and which cannot be so easily defined. These are *a priori* (Latin, "from the earlier") concepts, because they are conceptually *prior to* what we learn from experience. One example is the concept of "number." However important numbers might be in our talk about our experience, the concepts of arithmetic are not empirical concepts. Mathematicians talk about the concept of an "irrational number," but there is nothing in our everyday experience that they can point to as an example of one. To understand this concept requires a good deal of knowledge about mathematics because this concept, like most concepts, can be defined only within a system of other abstract concepts.

MASTER THE CONCEPTS: Types of Knowledge

Empirical knowledge: Knowledge based on experience (whether your own experience or the observations and experiments of others), for example, "The temperature in Chicago today is 17°F."

A priori knowledge: Knowledge that is independent of ("before") any particular experience, for example, "2 + 3 = 5" or "$A + B = B + A$."

The a priori concept of "number" raises problems far more difficult than the empirical concept of "dog," and it is with the most difficult concepts that philosophy is generally concerned. Because philosophical concepts are abstract, there may be far more room for disagreement about what they mean than about empirical concepts. For example, the concepts of a "good person" and the "good life" seem to mean very different things to different people and in different societies. So, too, the concept of "God" creates enormous difficulties, in fact so many difficulties that some religions refuse to define God at all, or even give him (and not always "him") a name. Within the Judeo-Christian and Islamic traditions, there are very different conceptions of God; conceptions vary even within the Bible. When we begin to consider some of the other conceptions of God—for example, the Greek conception of Zeus and Apollo; the Hindu ideas of Vishnu and Shiva; or some modern conceptions of God as identical to the universe as a whole, or as a vital force, or as whatever a person takes to be his or her "ultimate concern in life"—you can see that simply agreeing on the word still leaves open the hardest questions: What is God like? What can we expect of God? What is involved in believing "in" God? What is our concept of God?

FROM THE SOURCE: Oxen Gods?

Xenophanes (ca. 570–ca. 475 BCE, Greek, Asia Minor)

Ethiopians say their gods are flat-nosed and black,
And Thracians that theirs have blue eyes and red hair.

If cows and horses or lions had hands,
Or could draw with their hands and make things as men can,
Horses would have drawn horse-like gods, cows cow-like gods,
And each species would have made the gods' bodies just like their own.[1]

The concept of "freedom" is also difficult. Some people think that freedom is being able to do whatever you want to do; others think that freedom makes sense

only within the rules of your society. But it is not as if the word *freedom* already means one or the other; the word and its meaning are open to interpretation, and interpretation is the business of philosophy. However, what we might disagree about is not simply the meaning of a word. What we disagree about is the *concept*, the basic idea, and the concept in turn determines the way we see the world.

The concept of "self" is like this, too. In a purely grammatical sense, the word *self* just points to a person—for example, to *myself* when I say, "I presented myself to the dean." But what is this self? Again, it is not defined by the word, which only points. Is my self just the *I*, the *voice* that is now speaking, or does it refer to a whole human being? Does it include every trivial and insignificant fact about me (for example, the fact that I forgot to comb my hair this morning)? Or does it refer just to certain *essential* facts—for instance, the fact that I am a conscious being? Is my self a *soul*? Or is my self perhaps a social construction, which must be defined not by referring to one person alone but by considering society and my particular role in it?

The concept of "truth" is an important concept in philosophy. Is the truth simply the "way things really are"? Or does it depend on the nature of what and how we believe as well? Could it be that we are all caught up in our limited view of the world, unable to see beyond the concepts of our own language and our own restricted range of experiences?

The most abstract and controversial concepts of all are not those through which we divide up the world into understandable bits and pieces but rather those grand concepts through which we try to put it all together. Religion is the traditional vehicle for this total understanding, but in our culture religion has been challenged by science, by art, by the law, and by politics for this ultimate role, as well as by philosophy.

Such all-embracing pictures and perspectives are our ultimate **conceptual frameworks**—that is, the most abstract concepts through which we "frame" and organize all of our more specific concepts. The term *conceptual framework* stresses the importance of concepts and is therefore central to the articulation of concepts that make up most of philosophy. But what we are calling a "conceptual framework" can also be viewed, from a more practical perspective, as a set of values and a way of looking at life, expressed as a way of living, or, in our contemporary vocabulary, as a **lifestyle**. If the emphasis is shifted to politics and society, the framework can be called an **ideology**—that is, a set of ideas about the nature of society and our political roles within it, which themselves are reflected in one's lifestyle. If we shift to a more historical viewpoint, we find that historians sometimes refer to the same thing as a **climate of opinion**, drawing attention to the way such frameworks change. If we shift the emphasis away from the concepts through which we give form to our world and emphasize instead the view of the world that results, we can use a popular philosophical term, **worldview** (which is often left in German, *Weltanschauung* because a number of German philosophers used this term quite often in the last century or so). But whether we use one term or the other, with one emphasis or another, the important point is that we in some sense already have such viewpoints, through which we give shape to

our world and define our lives within it. When we articulate them in philosophy, we are not just creating an arbitrary structure of ideas; we are making explicit and clarifying what we already believe—to be more aware of our ideas, to be able to defend them, to determine how or whether they work together, and, sometimes, to change them.

FROM THE SOURCE: The Cosmic Religious Feeling

Albert Einstein, from "Religion and Science," 1930

It is easy to see why the churches have always fought science and persecuted its devotees. On the other hand, I maintain that the cosmic religious feeling is the strongest and noblest motive for scientific research. Only those who realize the immense efforts and, above all, the devotion without which pioneer work in theoretical science cannot be achieved are able to grasp the strength of the emotion out of which alone such work, remote as it is from the immediate realities of life, can issue. What a deep conviction of the rationality of the universe and what a yearning to understand, were it but a feeble reflection of the mind revealed in this world, Kepler and Newton must have had to enable them to spend years of solitary labor in disentangling the principles of celestial mechanics! Those whose acquaintance with scientific research is derived chiefly from its practical results easily develop a completely false notion of the mentality of the men who, surrounded by a skeptical world, have shown the way to kindred spirits scattered wide through the world and the centuries. Only one who had devoted his life to similar ends can have a vivid realization of what has inspired these men and given them the strength to remain true to their purpose in spite of countless failures. It is cosmic religious feeling that gives a man such strength. A contemporary has said, not unjustly, that in this materialistic age of ours the serious scientific workers are the only profoundly religious people.[2]

Our conceptual framework, our lifestyle, our ideology, our climate of opinion, or our worldview is usually taken for granted as the intellectual ground that we walk on. But sometimes it is necessary to examine that ground, to look carefully at what we usually take for granted. If we are planning to construct a house, it is a good idea to investigate the ground we will build on, especially when something seems wrong—the soil is too soft, or it is on a fault and susceptible to earthquakes. This is often the case, too, with our conceptual frameworks; as soon as we look at them, they may seem to be soft, ill formed, perhaps in danger of imminent collapse, or liable to disruption by a well-placed question or confrontation with someone who disagrees with us. This is a common experience among first-year college students, for example; they come to school with certain religious, moral, political, and personal views that they have always taken for granted, which they have never questioned or been forced to defend. Then they meet someone—a roommate, a teacher, a friend in a course—and these long-held views are thrown

into chaos. Students who are not prepared for intellectual confrontation may find that they are no longer so sure; then they get defensive, even offended and belligerent. But with time and some philosophical thinking, the same students again become clear about what they believe and why. Before the ground was examined, it might have been soft or near collapse, but once they see where they stand, they can fill in the holes, make it solid, protect themselves against unexpected "idea-quakes," and renew or revise their beliefs, which they now hold with a confidence much greater than before.

It is possible, of course, that you will find yourself using two or even more conceptual frameworks—for example, a scientific framework in school, a pleasure-seeking (or **hedonistic**) framework for Saturday night, and a religious framework on Sunday morning. The question then becomes, how do these different frameworks tie together? Which is most important? Are they actually inconsistent with one another? If our lives are to be coherent, don't we have to unify our various beliefs so that they all hang together? Ultimately, what makes an understanding of concepts and conceptual frameworks so important and rewarding is the fact that in understanding them, we are also in the process of *building* them, and in so doing enriching them, developing them, solidifying them, and giving new understanding and clarity to our everyday lives.

MEET THE PHILOSOPHERS: Three Important Names to Know

Plato (427–347 BCE) was a student of Socrates and the leading spokesman for Socrates's ideas. He was shocked by Socrates's execution and dedicated his life to developing and spreading Socrates's philosophy. In 385 BCE he set up the Academy to educate the future leaders of Athens in morality and philosophy in general.

Aristotle (384–322 BCE), a student of Plato, strongly disagreed with many of his teacher's theories. Aristotle was an accomplished scientist as well as a philosopher, and his ideas ruled most of the sciences—especially biology—until modern times. He was the tutor of Alexander (who became "the Great") and later founded his own school (the Lyceum) in Athens. When Alexander died, Aristotle was forced to flee, commenting that he would not let Athens "sin against philosophy a second time."

Immanuel Kant (1724–1804) was, in the opinion of many philosophers, the greatest philosopher of modern times. He spent his entire life in a small eastern Prussian town (Königsberg). He was famous for his simple, regular life. (He never married, and his neighbors were said to set their clocks by his punctual afternoon walks.) And yet this apparently uninteresting professor was also an enthusiast of the French Revolution—and a revolutionary in his own way, too. His ideas turned many of the traditional views of knowledge, religion, and morality upside down.

Doing Philosophy with Style

The quality of a philosophy depends on the ingenuity with which its ideas are presented, the thoroughness with which they are worked out, the care with which one idea is tied to another, and the vividness with which the entire view comes across to the reader. Many views of the greatest philosophers in history—for example, Plato, Aristotle, and the German philosopher Immanuel Kant—were not so different from those of most of their contemporaries, including other philosophers whom they knew and regularly talked with. But they became the great philosophers of our tradition because they presented their ideas with eloquence, defended them so brilliantly, and put them together in monumental constructions that are wonderful (if also very difficult) to behold. Philosophy is first of all articulation and argument, but it is also articulation and argument *with style*. (For some examples of the distinctive styles of particular philosophers, see Appendix A.) Every philosophy, and every essay or book in philosophy, is essentially *making a case*. That is why philosophical training is so valuable for students going into law, or politics, or business, or—ultimately—almost every career where articulation and argument are important.

Disjointed articulation and argument not aimed at making a case to some particular audience (even if that audience is only your roommate or philosophy instructor) are without a point or purpose. Philosophy should be persuasive. That means that, in addition to showing evidence of hard thinking and displaying wisdom, philosophical writing should be somewhat entertaining, witty, dramatic, and even seductive. It is working out common views in ways that are not at all common. But whether philosophy is the somewhat modest thinking of a first-year philosophy student or the hundreds of pages that make up the classic texts of the great philosophers, the activity is the same—that of trying to articulate, clarify, and present one's own view of the world as coherently and attractively as possible. It is possible to appreciate philosophy only by participating in it, by being a philosopher yourself. And by the time you have completed this course, you too will be a part (if a small part) of that long tradition that has come to define the world of Western philosophy, and perhaps non-Western, too. To be part of the extended conversation that is philosophy, you will need the following:

1. *Your ideas:* Without ideas, articulated clearly, there is nothing to think or write about.
2. *Critical thinking:* Ideas unqualified and uncriticized, undeveloped and unargued, are not yet philosophy. One of the most valuable tools you can carry away from a philosophy class is the ability to read and think critically, to scrutinize ideas as well as gather information.
3. *Argumentation:* Philosophy is not just stating your opinions; it is providing arguments to support your opinions, and arguments against objections

to your views. The best philosophy always includes a kind of point-counterpoint format. Don't just state your views. Argue for them and anticipate the kinds of objections that will probably be raised against you, countering them in advance. ("Now you might object that . . ., but against that I want to point out that . . .")

4. *A problem:* Philosophy does not consist of random speculations and arguments about some topic or other. It is motivated by a problem, a real concern. Death and the meaning of life are philosophical problems because—to put it mildly—we are all concerned with questions about life and death, *our* lives and deaths. Problems about knowledge arise because someone somewhere challenged our ability to know as much as we think we know, and philosophers ever since have been trying to answer that challenge. (For example, how do you know that you are not dreaming right now? Or, how do you know that the world wasn't created five minutes ago, with all of its fossils and supposedly ancient relics, and with us and all of our memories of the alleged past?) Philosophy may begin with wondering about life and the world in general, but it comes into focus through attending to a problem.

5. *Imagination:* A list of your ideas with qualifications and arguments might count as philosophy, but it would be uninspiring and dull. Don't be afraid to use metaphors and analogies. As you will see, some of the greatest philosophers developed their views of the world into visions that are as much poetry as philosophical essays.

6. *Style:* Anything in writing is readable only if it is written in a lively style. The rules of good essay writing apply to philosophy, of course, but so do the rules of entertaining—be exciting, attractive, appealing, persuasive. No matter how exciting an idea or incisive a criticism, it always comes across better when presented with eloquence, with a personal touch and an elegant turn of phrase.

Socrates might have said, "Everyone should think about his or her life because at least sometimes that helps us out of hard situations and makes life more valuable," but probably no one would remember it. Instead, he said, "The unexamined life is not worth living," and a hundred generations have been struck by the boldness and bluntness of his statement, whether or not, on examination, they have agreed with it. Socrates's aphorism is only a summary statement, however. The whole body of Socrates's philosophy includes all of his ideas, images, and arguments. Your philosophy, too, is nothing less than the entirety of your considered beliefs, articulated and argued as convincingly and as elegantly as you are able.

For more on philosophical style—and writing a philosophy essay or exam—see Appendix A.