

Midterm Précis Assignment

Due date: March 31th, 17:15.

Please write a précis of the *Theaetetus*, 206c6 to the end of the text, to be submitted on Brightspace.

A précis is an exposition of the argument or arguments of a philosophical text.¹ A good précis is clearly written and makes obvious the underlying logical structure of the text under consideration. A good précis should not include an evaluative material or material outside of the text under consideration, but it should include the language of argumentative signposting. Thus, it should be apparent from the précis what the structure of the argument is (reductio ad absurdum, argument by cases, infinite regress) and how each element of the argument functions. Aim for concision in your précis: economy of expression is a virtue. Every sentence you write should have a clearly discernible function. Think of your précis as an x-ray of the text, where the argument(s) of the text are its bones. A good précis, like a clear x-ray, reveals the basic structure of the object.

You may use numbered premise-conclusion argument reconstructions within your précis, but the basic form of the précis is connected sentences. You may think of your précis as what would go into the exposition section of a paper.

Remember to include parenthetical references to the stephanus pagination in your exposition (the line references in the side margins, not the page numbers at the bottom of the text).

The maximum word length is **1,000 words**. Please do not exceed this by more than 5% or your mark will be penalized.

If you are unable to meet the deadline due to a legitimate reason, please email your instructor as soon as possible. Unexcused late submissions will be penalized.

¹The term 'précis' is used in several different ways. Please do not Google for examples of successful précis, because you will get some very disparate and misleading answers. Instead, follow the instructions here, and feel free to ask your instructor questions. Use the feedback on the Argument Reconstruction exercise and the models of successful argument reconstructions as guidelines, and then expand to summarize the entire argument of the passage.

Criteria of evaluation:

1. **Accuracy of exposition:** do you correctly state the claims of the text and the relationships among these claims?
 2. **Precision of exposition:** does your writing avoid ambiguity, practice economy of expression? Is it accurate and straightforward?
 3. **Structure of exposition:** have you presented the argument in a maximally charitable way? Do you signpost adequately and provide all the required elements?
 4. **Contextualization of exposition:** did you situate the passages you are discussing in relation to the overall structure of the Theaetetus?
 5. **Mechanical elements:** Do you use correct grammar and punctuation; do you avoid run-on sentences or sentence fragments?
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