

Exercises for Better Philosophical Writing: Paragraph Editing

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Edit the following paragraphs. Ask yourself: In what ways could the paragraph be improved? What should be added? (What does it still need?) What can be deleted? (Which words or sentences are unnecessary?) What, if anything, is it doing right?

A horribly horrible way to begin an essay

What is love? Throughout history mankind has struggled with this question. It is even still a question people wonder about today, and we may never reach a final answer. Plato was also interested in the question what is love. In the *Lysis*, Plato investigates the question what is love through a fictional dialogue between Socrates and Lysis. Socrates, a famous classical Greek (Athenian) philosopher, asks the boy Lysis, What is love? Socrates and Lysis consider many definitions of love, and Socrates shows that all of them have problems. For example, does love like like or do “opposites attract”? Through the dialogue it is shown that love is difficult to define, it is extremely subjective...

A perfectly acceptable way to begin an essay

At *Meno* 77c–78a, Socrates presents an argument for the conclusion that no one desires bad things. In this paper, I explain in detail how Socrates reaches this conclusion, and show that this conclusion, although counterintuitive, is actually immune to two of its most obvious counterexamples.

To begin, let us review the argument Socrates uses to reach the conclusion that no one desires bad things. Socrates’ first claim is that some people desire...

A totally mediocre way to write a paragraph

Euthyphro's second definition of piety is that "what is loved by the gods is pious." The problem is that the gods are always fighting. They fight about "the just and the unjust, the beautiful and the ugly, the good and the bad." So different gods love different things. So the pious is both pious and impious. But the pious cannot be impious. The pious is always only pious, eternal, unchanging, transcendent. It is the Form of Piety. Socrates is looking for the Form of the Pious and Euthyphro gave him something that is not the Form: "what is loved by the gods."