

## On the mini-essay

I was recently introduced to the mini-essay. This is a particular instrument whose chief aims are the development and practice of writing as a tool for thinking, as well as facilitating the sharing of some thinking. What are the essential characteristics of a mini-essay? First, it is meant to explain, not to persuade. It is a vehicle for distilling some subject only. To that end, sources are generally left out, saved for a future longer discourse. They might serve as building blocks for said discourse. The mini-essay is deliberately kept short, no more than a page, to force a focus on the core of the matter. It is handwritten, even if in my case on a eInk tablet, to force offline thinking. That is, without looking anything up or worrying about spell check, can I come to a reasonable and clear discussion of the topic. Regularly writing this way can help to identify broken thinking, or realizing some idea is untenable; structuring ideas rather than dumping words as a stream of consciousness serves as a sort of forcing function. This type of writing is something I have been wanting to work on; the mini-essay holds promise as a tool for this.