

EUTHYPHRO (lecture)

Background: Socrates, in his famous ironic conversations portrays himself to be ignorant of all ideas and thoughts of philosophic inquiry. He often implores the 'experts' in their particular field to educate him through a dialectic conversation. These conversations don't usually go very well for the expert, as Socrates always shows the expert to be the ignorant one...while himself remaining ignorant as well.

"The only thing I know is that I know nothing" – Socrates

In Euthyphro, the master here is Euthyphro (a religious expert) who is condemning his father who apparently murdered a servant who viciously slain another servant in a drunken rage. Murder for the Greeks was considered a 'religious' crime, and was judged by the experts in religious ethics of that time. Euthyphro, was one of these experts.

**QUESTION: Does this conversation between Euthyphro and Socrates have any conclusiveness?
NO. Why Not?**

**QUESTION: Does Plato suggest that there is NO definition of what is 'good' or 'pious' or 'holy'?
Why Not?**

This is not Plato's aim here in the writing of this dialogue. His object is to teach us that the only way to come to some sort of knowledge on any subject matter is the have JUSTIFIED, TRUE BELIEFS?

What is JUSTIFIED, TRUE, BELIEF? This is an epistemological question.

S believes p . (Euthyphro believes that his father should be punished for murder)

S believes p . (Michael believes that there is no god)

S believes p . (John believes that the spaghetti monster created the universe)

S knows that p if and only if p is true and S is justified in believing that p

Can I believe something that is NOT true?

What can cause these beliefs? (I believe that my girlfriend loves me when she really wants to kill me)

This is the dilemma in Euthyphro. Euthyphro has a particular belief about what is 'holy' or 'right' that Socrates does not agree with.

The Divine Command Theory.

Goodness that which is loved by the god, evil is that which is hated by the gods? (Euthyphro)

QUESTION: Which is it?

Goodness is that which is approved by the gods?

Or

It is approved by the gods because it is good?

QUESTION: What problems arise from these two premises?

There is some suggestion that Euthyphro is not thinking along the right lines at all.

The definition that Euthyphro holds equates what is holy with what is approved of by the gods. Socrates' skillful argument shows that this definition is insufficient: though what is holy may be approved of by the gods, the two cannot be the same thing.

If the gods approve of something because it is holy, then their approval cannot be what makes it holy.

Alternatively, if it is holy because the gods approve of it, then we still don't know for what reason the gods approve of it.

It seems that any attempt to ground our definition of holiness in the will or approval of the gods is bound to fail. We might normally associate holiness with some sort of divine will, but Plato seems to be suggesting that we should think along another line altogether...

QUESTION: If goodness has nothing to do with divine order or commandments- what does this mean?

Euthyphro's Dilemma (Lecture 2)

Let's review...

Euthyphro essentially gives us three definitions in his discussion with Socrates as to what piety is. We sort of got ahead of ourselves on Friday. And this may help to clarify before we move on.

SOCRATES' QUESTION: WHAT IS PIETY? (or goodness, or holy)

First Definition of Piety

Euthyphro answers that **piety is doing what I'm doing here today, namely, prosecuting my father for murder** and seeing that justice is done. Socrates does not challenge the *truth* of the statement, "What I'm doing today to my father is pious," but he does claim that that statement is not a *definition* of piety. The statement in question merely provides an *example* of piety, much like the statement that "What is in my garage is a car" might be true, but it can hardly be said to define the word 'car.' So, the first definition fails.

Second Definition of Piety

Euthyphro realizes his mistake, and tries again to define piety. His second try is, **Pious acts are loved by the gods**. Socrates thinks that this statement is not a good definition, because if you tried to apply it to a particular case, it is likely to lead to a contradiction. For instance, suppose I want to know whether my writing this summary is pious or not. So, I apply Euthyphro's definition, What is pious is what is loved by the gods. I have to find out what the gods love. This is a practical problem, because it might be difficult to find out what the gods love, but in principle it can be done. In Socrates' day, he would have gone to Delphi where the priestess can talk to the god Apollo. In a Christian culture, one might ask a priest or a minister, or pray to God for guidance, or read the divinely-inspired scriptures. However I manage to do it, suppose I find out what the gods think about my writing this summary. The problem that concerned Socrates was, What do I do if the gods don't agree among themselves - some of them approve of what I'm doing and some disapprove? In such a case, Euthyphro's second definition gives the *result* that what I am doing is pious (because it is loved by gods) and it is also impious (because it is not loved by gods.) Any definition that gives such results when applied in a

concrete case must be regarded as a poor definition. Some gods find it pious others don't. Take for example the act of drinking alcohol – some churches say a definite 'no' while others say 'in moderation'. ??????

Third Definition of Piety

All Euthyphro need do is replace the word 'the' in the second definition by the word 'all' in order to eliminate the problem that arose in trying to apply the second definition. The result is the third definition: **Pious acts are loved by all the gods.** It is still possible that the gods might not agree among themselves about particular cases, but if so, then the act in question would not be pious. So, this third definition does not yield contradictory results when applied to concrete cases, and hence, it solves the difficulty posed by the second definition. Euthyphro tells Socrates that he is confident that all the gods surely love the fact that he is prosecuting his father. Hence, the third definition yields the result that Euthyphro's prosecuting his father for murder is a pious act. Socrates, no doubt, does not think that what Euthyphro is doing with his father is morally correct or pious, but he does not say this to Euthyphro because his disagreement with Euthyphro on that score is not strictly relevant to his concern with the definition of the word piety. Socrates' main concern is not with the particulars of Euthyphro's action; his main concern is to discover what the word piety means. So, for this reason, he doesn't announce his disagreement with Euthyphro's belief that all the gods love what he's doing to his father. In fact, *for the sake of the argument*, Socrates even indicates that he agrees with Euthyphro that all the gods love the fact that he's prosecuting his father. (sarcasm)

At this point in the dialogue, we come to the heart of the philosophical dimension of the story. Plato asks Euthyphro the following question:

Euthyphro's Dilemma

Is what you're doing pious because it is loved by the gods, or do the gods love what you're doing because what you're doing is pious?

QUESTION: IS THERE AN OBJECTIVE MORALITY?

If not, why?

If so, what?

- i. **ETHICAL RELATIVISM**- theory that holds that there are NO universally accepted ethical standards.
 - a. INDIVIDUAL Ethical Relativism—ethical beliefs are the expressions of the individual person.
 - i. I have my beliefs, you have yours...etc.
 - b. SOCIAL Ethical Relativism-- values vary from society to society and the basis for moral judgments lies in these social or cultural views.
 - i. To know what is right or wrong we must look to the norms of that society.

BASIS FOR THIS VIEW.

1. Diversity of Moral Views (throughout the world different people disagree)
2. Moral Uncertainty (we distrust our own judgments)
3. Situational Difference (a hungry man steals bread)

QUESTION: ARE THE REASONS ALL THAT CONVINCING?

<u>BASIC MORAL AGREEMENT</u>	<u>FACTUAL DISAGREEMENT</u>	<u>DIFFERENT MORAL CONCLUSION</u>
We ought not to harm the environment	CO2 emissions harm the environment	We ought to reduce emissions
We ought not to harm the environment	CO2 emissions do not harm	We need not reduce emissions

Proponents of an objective morality would cite that while the conclusions may differ the basic agreement will be consistent across the board, as in the graph I drew.

DO YOU AGREE?

M – A – C

M-Motive (deontological)- duty

A-Action (deontological)- duty

C-Consequence (teleological) – end/goal

Take the issue of abortion.

Is it an issue of 'personhood' of the fetus? (pro-life)

Is it an issue of 'rights' for the woman? (pro-choice)

Is it something else altogether? Legislative issue rather than a moral issue whereas, the facts have been blurred by both ends- thus, allowing the real issue to be undetected.

Plato- The Republic | Book 1

Lecture

Introduction | Socrates & his friend Glaucon are on their way home from a festival of worship when they are approached by a group of friends (Adeimantus & Polemarcus) inviting them to stay longer at this festival. They return to the home of Polemarcus' aging father- Cephalus.

Cephalus, who is an old, rich businessman begins to speak about the merits of getting old.

The discussion quickly turns into a dialogue about the idea of 'justice'.

QUESTION: WHAT IS JUSTICE? (as we think of it here in the US)

We see three different interlocutors in this part of the dialogue- each giving their definition (somewhat) of the concept of justice...

1. **CEPHALUS**- The rich, old, respected elder of the city represents the ancient Greek tradition giving the basic Hesiodic conception of justice.

Cephalus' definition- 'Justice is living up to your legal obligations, and being honest'

Socrates' response- 'is it right to give back what you have borrowed?' (YES) 'what if you borrowed a weapon of destruction from a friend, who then goes mad? Is it right to give that weapon back to the madman knowing that he will do harm with it?'

Q: WHERE HAVE WE SEEN THIS BEFORE?

2. **POLEMARCUS**- This is Cephalus' son who has inherited the argument at this point from his dad who has excused himself to oversee a sacrifice to the Greek goddess.

Polemarcus' definition- 'justice means that you owe your friends help, and your enemies harm.'

*While this definition may seem altogether different, it is really almost the same as his father's concept: ***'rendering to each what is due to them, and giving to each what is appropriate'***.

*Like his father's view, Polemarchus's take on justice represents a popular strand of thought—the attitude of the ambitious young politician—whereas Cephalus's definition represented the attitude of the established, old businessman.

Socrates' response- Socrates points out, rightly, that our conception of friends & enemies is liable to be erroneous. And sometimes because of our fallible ways this will lead to the harm of the good, and the benefit of the wicked. We aren't always friends with the most virtuous people in society, nor are we always enemies with the most evil.

For Socrates there is nonsense to the idea of harming people in the name of justice.

Q: (CAPITAL PUNISHMENT)???

3. **THRASYMACHUS**- The Sophist. Sophists were hired teachers in ancient Greece who were notorious for being ill-willed towards true rational thought. They were skilled at rhetoric, and many other general fields of learning- but were often specious (lacking merit in their argument).

Thrasymachus' definition- Thrasymachus presents a very nefarious definition of justice; almost sinister. He states that justice is 'the advantage of the stronger'. This is consistent with the Sophists ideology of doing away with the concept of justice.

He states that while this is not meant to be a definition of justice, as it is to be a delegitimization of justice. His attitude is as follows- 'it does not pay to be just'. Just behavior benefits other people- not the person acting justly. As such, the act of doing justice is an 'unnatural act' whereby we restrain our own desires to have more...and this is not necessarily a good thing.

In other words, justice is a contention that is forced upon us- and it does not benefit us to adhere to its premise and so the just thing to do is to avoid doing just acts.

Q: Do you agree with this idea of Thrasymachus?

The entire argument has shifted from defining justice- to now defining or proving whether or not justice is a worthwhile concept all together.

Q: HOW DOES SOCRATES RESPOND TO THRASYMACHUS?

Socrates offers three rebuttals:

1. Socrates then launches into a long and complex chain of reasoning which leads him to conclude that injustice cannot be a virtue because it is contrary to wisdom, which is a virtue. Injustice is contrary to wisdom because the wise man, the man who is skilled in some art, never seeks to beat out those who possess the same art. The mathematician, for instance, is not in competition with other mathematicians.
2. Socrates then moves on to a new argument. Understanding justice now as the adherence to certain rules which enable a group to act in common, Socrates points out that in order to reach any of the goals Thrasymachus earlier praised as desirable one needs to be at least moderately just in the sense of adhering to this set of rules.

3. Finally, he argues that since it was agreed that justice is a virtue of the soul, and virtue of the soul means health of the soul, justice is desirable because it means health of the soul.

Socrates believes he has adequately responded to Thrasymachus and is through with the discussion of justice, but the others are not satisfied with the conclusion they have reached. Glaucon, one of Socrates's young companions, explains what they would like him to do. Glaucon states that all goods can be divided into three classes:

1. things that we desire only for their consequences, such as physical training and medical treatment
2. things that we desire only for their own sake, such as joy
3. (the highest class) things we desire both for their own sake and for what we get from them, such as knowledge, sight, and health.

What Glaucon and the rest would like Socrates to prove is that justice is not only desirable, but that it belongs to the highest class of desirable things: those desired both for their own sake and their consequences.

Glaucon points out that most people class justice among the first group (teleological). They view justice as a necessary evil, which we allow ourselves to suffer in order to avoid the greater evil that would befall us if we did away with it. Justice stems from human weakness and vulnerability. Since we can all suffer from each other's injustices, we make a social contract agreeing to be just to one another. We only suffer under the burden of justice because we know we would suffer worse without it. Justice is not something practiced for its own sake but something one engages in out of fear and weakness.

THE RING OF GYGES

To emphasize his point, Glaucon appeals to a thought experiment. Invoking the legend of the Ring of Gyges, he asks us to imagine that a just man is given a ring which makes him invisible. Once in possession of this ring, the man can act unjustly with no fear of reprisal. No one can deny, Glaucon claims that even the most just man would behave unjustly if he had this ring. He would indulge all of his materialistic, power-hungry, and erotically lustful urges. This tale proves that people are only just because they are afraid of punishment for injustice. No one is just because justice is desirable in itself.

Glaucon ends his speech with an attempt to demonstrate that not only do people prefer to be unjust rather than just, but that it is rational for them to do so. The perfectly unjust life, he argues, is more pleasant than the perfectly just life. In making this claim, he draws two detailed portraits of the just and unjust man. The completely unjust man, who indulges all his urges, is honored and rewarded with wealth. The completely just man, on the other hand, is scorned and wretched.

His brother, Adeimantus, breaks in and bolsters Glaucon's arguments by claiming that no one praises justice for its own sake, but only for the rewards it allows you to reap in both this life and the afterlife. He reiterates Glaucon's request that Socrates show justice to be desirable in the absence of any external rewards: that justice is desirable for its own sake, like joy, health, and knowledge.

Socrates is reluctant to respond to the challenge that justice is desirable in and of itself, but the others compel him. He lays out his plan of attack.

There are two kinds of political justice:

1. the justice belonging to a city or state
2. and justice belonging to the individual—the justice of a particular man.

Since a city is bigger than a man, he will proceed upon the assumption that it is easier to first look for justice at the political level and later inquire as to whether there is any analogous virtue to be found in the individual. To locate political justice, he will build up a perfectly just city from scratch, and see where and when justice enters it. This project will occupy *The Republic* until Book IV.

Socrates introduces the foundational principle of human society: **the principle of specialization**.

The principle of specialization states that each person must perform the role for which he is naturally best suited and that he must not meddle in any other business. The carpenter must only build things, the farmer must only farm. Behind this principle is the notion that human beings have natural inclinations that should be fulfilled. Specialization demands not only the division of labor, but the most appropriate such division. Only in this way, Socrates is convinced, can everything be done at the highest level possible. (Communism)

Having isolated the foundational principle of the city, Socrates is ready to begin building it. The first roles to fill are those that will provide for the necessities of life, such as food, clothing, health, and shelter. The just city is populated by craftsmen, farmers, and doctors who each do their own job and refrain from engaging in any other role. They are all members of what Socrates deems the “producing class,” because their role is to produce objects for use.

Socrates calls this city the “healthy city” because it is governed only by **necessary desires**. In the healthy city, there are only producers, and these producers only produce what is absolutely necessary for life. Glaucon looks less kindly on this city, calling it a “city of pigs.” He points out that such a city is impossible: people have unnecessary desires as well as these necessary ones. They yearn for rich food, luxurious surroundings, and art.

The next stage is to transform this city into the luxurious city, or the “city with a fever.” Once luxuries are in demand, positions like merchant, actor, poet, tutor, and beautician are created. All of this wealth will necessarily lead to wars, and so a class of warriors is needed to keep the peace within the city and to protect it from outside forces. The producers cannot act as our warriors because that would violate our principle of specialization.

Socrates spends the rest of this book, and most of the next, talking about the nature and education of these warriors, whom he calls **guardians**. It is crucial that guardians develop the right balance between gentleness and toughness. They must not be thugs, nor can they be wimpy and ineffective. Members of this class must be carefully selected (Sparta)—people with the correct nature or innate psychology. In particular, guardians should be spirited, or honor-loving, philosophical, or knowledge-loving, and physically strong and fast.

Nature is not sufficient to produce guardians. Nature must be protected and augmented with education. The education of guardians will involve physical training for the body, and music and poetry for the soul. Education of guardians is the most important aspect of the city. It is the process of purification through which the unhealthy, luxurious city can be purged and purified. Because the education of the guardians is so important, Socrates walks us through it in painstaking detail.

He begins by describing what sort of stories will be permitted in the city. The stories told to the young guardians-in-training, he warns, must be closely supervised, because it is chiefly stories that shape a child’s soul, just as the way parents handle an infant shapes his body. The remainder of Book II, therefore, is a discussion of permissible tales to tell about the gods. Socrates comes up with two laws to govern the telling of such stories. First, the gods must always be represented as wholly good and as responsible only for what is good in the world. If the gods are presented otherwise (as the warring, conniving, murderous characters that the traditional poetry depicts them to be), children will inevitably grow up believing that such behavior is permissible, even admirable. Second, the gods cannot be represented as sorcerers who change themselves into different forms or as liars. Otherwise, children will grow up without a proper reverence for truth and honesty.