**CORE106 Fall 2015**

**September 2, 2015**

**Notes on Euthyphro**

Key Ideas:

* Is Socrates making a clear inference that the gods are not infallible?
* Why do we imagine that the Athenians are so touchy about piety and the supremacy of the gods?

The Central Question: The link between the ideas of God-loved vs. Piety. There are many ways to imagine this relationship  
  
Euthyphro: Arguably thinks they are synonymous. He seems unconcerned about the circularity that Socrates is suggesting, and maybe he is right to feel that way (at least a case could be made).

Socrates is big on the idea that action precedes being. Someone isn’t “carrying” a bag because the bag is “being carried.” Someone isn’t “loving you” because you are “being loved.” But yet…we seem to have no problem with the idea that something is “pious” because it is “being loved by the gods.” So this is one challenge. Socrates seems to like the “pious, therefore gods love it” definition.

**Read Page 12 (or page 10 in the original form).**

Let’s sketch this out:  
  
1. God loved = Piety; synonymous and perfectly overlapping.

2. If Gods love it, then it is pious. BUT…something could be pious and not god loved. Piety is a superset of “God loved”. Everything God Loved is pious.

3. If it is pious, then it is God loved. BUT…something could be god loved and not pious. God loved is a superset of pious. Everything pious is god loved.

The disputes among gods is one suggestion of infalliability. Eurthyphro and Socrates have to agree to those things which are unanimous. But how can we assume that if god loved then pious if not all the gods are on board?

Another Socrates complaint: Euthyphro has given us attributes, but not an essential definition of piety. What is the feature of piety that makes it perfectly recognizable by gods as worthy of their love? What do they imbue into it, if they cause it?

**The big risk: there is a universe of pious stuff that isn’t in the “care” of the gods. Who gets to decide what this stuff is? Socrates?**

**Consider this example:**

**Possibility 1: The Motion Picture Academy (the gods) pick the best picture of the year (piety).**

**Possibility 2: The best picture of the year (piety) will be picked by the Motion Picture Academy (the gods).**

**Two ways to think about this:**

1. **The motion picture academy has perfect powers of observation. They know the best picture when they see it.**
2. **“Best Picture of the Year” is a construction of the Academy Awards process. No one really believes that this award reveals the honest-to-goodness best picture. It’s meaning is something we call a social construction.**

**A hidden anxiety: Socrates is diminishing the mystique of piety or disparaging the power of the gods.**

Can gods change their minds? If so, that seals the deal. Why? Because if proves that Gods determine piety, for “god knows what” reason.

Other points:

What about competition among pious acts? How do we arbitrate among conflicts? Euthyphro seems to emphasize consistency (obviously).

And he could say: Gods cause piety, and they can recognize piety. That might solve the dilemma.

**Reading References:**

“Socrates search for universal definitions of ethical terms.”  Nothing satisfies him.

Is it impious of Euthyphro to prosecute his father?

Euthyphro has tremendous confidence in his mastery of the rules of piety.

“Is the pious not the same an alike in every action” (6)

Euthyphro claims mastery again…most people do not know what he knows about piety. (7)

Socrates:  “There are many other pious actions” that stand alongside the act of prosecuting one’s father. (7)

Socrates introduces the notion of “form”.  The first form, for Euthyphro:  Is it dear to the Gods?

Socrates talks about measurement as a way to reconcile differences.  The fact that we can’t do this with piety suggests that maybe the gods don’t know everything we think they know.

He notes that the prosecuted deny doing wrong.  Not that wrong doers shouldn’t be punished (they should, but they dispute the premise).

“Show me proof that all gods believe your father should be punished."

**Can some gods love something impious?**

Being loved is preceded by the act of loving.  The act of loving is NOT preceded by something being loved.

Socrates is finding circularity in the reasoning that something is pious because it is loved by the gods.

Gods love X, therefore X is pious.

X is pious, therefore the Gods love X.  This is what Euthyphro is claiming.  (13)

“It is loved because it is pious, but it is NOT pious because it is being loved.” “Apparently."

“It is NOT pious because it is being loved.”  Repeated.

Therefore, “pious” and “god-loved” are not the same things.

Socrates is describing gods the way we describe humans:  he is implying the possibility of a logical fallibility.

Now consider the link between piety and justice.  There can be justice without piety, but not vice versa (Piety is a part of justice).

Pious is “care of the Gods”; the remaining part is “care of men."

Socrates leads us from “care of the Gods” to “service to the Gods” to “loved by the Gods"

**Soc. Remember that I did not ask you to give me two or three examples of piety, but to explain the general idea which makes all pious things to be pious.** **Do you not recollect that there was one idea which made the impious impious, and the pious pious?**

Euth. I remember.

Soc. Tell me what is the nature of this idea, and then I shall have a standard to which I may look, and by which I may measure actions, whether yours or those of any one else, and then I shall be able to say that such and such an action is pious, such another impious.

Euth. Piety, then, is that which is dear to the gods, and impiety is that which is not dear to them

Soc. Come, then, and let us examine what we are saying. That thing or person which is dear to the gods is pious, and that thing or person which is hateful to the gods is impious, these two being the extreme opposites of one another. Was not that said?

**Soc. But what differences are there which cannot be thus decided, and which therefore make us angry and set us at enmity with one another? I dare say the answer does not occur to you at the moment, and therefore I will suggest that these enmities arise when the matters of difference are the just and unjust, good and evil, honourable and dishonourable. Are not these the points about which men differ, and about which when we are unable satisfactorily to decide our differences, you and I and all of us quarrel, when we do quarrel?**

**Soc. Then, my friend, I remark with surprise that you have not answered the question which I asked. For I certainly did not ask you to tell me what action is both pious and impious: but now it would seem that what is loved by the gods is also hated by them. And therefore, Euthyphro, in thus chastising your father you may very likely be doing what is agreeable to Zeus but disagreeable to Cronos or Uranus, and what is acceptable to Hephaestus but unacceptable to Here, and there may be other gods who have similar differences of opinion.**

Soc. Then they do not argue that the evil-doer should not be punished, but they argue about the fact of who the evil-doer is, and what he did and when?

They condition this on “all” gods find impious...

Euth. Yes, I should say that what all the gods love is pious and holy, and the opposite which they all hate, impious.

So this is the same as:  If god loved, then pious.

Soc. points out that the state of being loved follows the act of being loved.

NOT THIS:  The act of being loved DOES NOT FOLLOW the state of being loved.