

## Teaching Plato's *Euthyphro* Dialogically

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### *Teaching Plato in the Dialogical Mode*

I trust it is no longer necessary to make a case for the so-called “dialogical” or “dramatic” mode of reading Plato’s dialogues. Hard battles have been won recently for an approach to Plato which takes the texts’ dialogical form and dramatic elements as seriously as their argumentative content.<sup>1</sup> However, the debates over how we should read Plato have been thus far confined to questions of Plato scholarship. Yet the victories of the proponents of the dialogical mode are, in my view, not only victories for Plato scholars, but also for teachers of Plato and their students.

To see that this is so, consider how Plato is typically taught in Introduction to Philosophy courses. Introductory courses often begin with Plato’s *Apology* and the other dialogues associated with Socrates’ trial and execution. The questioning gadfly of the *Apology* is quickly replaced by the browbeater of the *Crito* and dogmatist of the *Phaedo*. The transformation typically leaves students confused and frustrated: the intriguing examiner of lives turns out to be just another slick salesman pushing an implausible fairy-tale of immortality and perfection.

As philosophy teachers, we, too, undergo an analogous shift of attitude toward Socrates. While teaching the *Apology*, we emphasize to our students the need to question authority, to examine ourselves and others, and to pursue truth even if at the cost of cherished traditions and comforting pieties. Yet these lessons give way to the subsequent need to present the standard “philosophical problems” raised in the dialogues and the solutions to them offered by “Platonism.” In this way Plato’s dialogues become just another philosophy textbook, an unquestioned authority from which to learn stock arguments and stale theories. We then provide equally worn refutations of and challenges to the Platonism we have mined from the dialogues, only rarely

remembering to mention that most of our most trenchant criticisms, notably the Third Man Argument, also have their source in Plato's dialogues.

The dialogical approach overturns these tendencies. The principal contention of the dialogical mode is that the philosophical significance of the dialogues is not exhausted by the characters' arguments. Consequently, the dialogical mode opens and leaves open questions concerning the *status* of the philosophical positions advanced in the dialogues.<sup>2</sup> For example, that Socrates defends the thesis that the soul is immortal in the *Phaedo* is clear; however, the dialogists contend that it is *unclear* that the *purpose* of the *Phaedo* is to *convince* the reader that the soul is immortal. That is, the dialogical mode leaves open the question of whether the dialogues are essentially *doctrinal* documents; for the dialogist, it is not clear that the purpose of the dialogues is to *promote* a particular set of philosophical propositions. Rather than beginning from the traditional understanding of what Platonism is and extracting Platonist claims from the texts, the dialogist begins from the *dialogical nature of the text* and asks, Why did Plato write in this way? What is the philosophical significance of the fact that Plato wrote dialogues rather than treatises? What philosophical advantages lie in the dialogical form such that Plato would choose it? Again, the dialogical mode insists that such questions are *philosophical* questions and, as such, questions that must ultimately be kept open.

Of course, keeping such matters open does not entail the abandoning of all attempts to *respond* to them. We adopt as working hypotheses certain kinds of answers to the metaphilosophical and hermeneutical issues, striving to capture as complete a picture of Plato's dialogues as possible. This approach forces us to turn away from the typical doctrinal expectations and textbook assumptions and toward the texts themselves. When we teach Plato in the dialogical mode, we invite our students to examine along with us, to interrogate Plato's texts. Such interrogation is, like Socratic dialectic, necessarily an open-ended and critical adventure into the unknown. We relinquish the idea that the students' encounter with the texts must lead toward the Theory of Forms; we let the dialogues stimulate the students' philosophical imaginations. Consequently, our relationship to the text mirrors the relationship between Socrates and his interlocutors, we give up our pretensions to authority and expertise and follow where the dialogical encounter with the text leads. Such an encounter is like Socrates' conversations: necessarily open-ended and aporetic.<sup>3</sup>

This is not to say that the dialogists refuse to attend to the arguments presented in the dialogues and the philosophical claims they support. To ignore the arguments would be to commit the same error as the traditional readings which ignore the drama. The dialogical

mode seeks an *integration* between the dramatic and argumentative elements of Plato's dialogues. Hence the real test of the dialogical approach can be assessed only in terms of its success in achieving this integration. In the present essay, I propose a dialogical reading of Plato's *Euthyphro* that is the fruit of years of teaching that text dialogically. I leave it to my reader to assess the pedagogical value of this reading with his or her own students.

### *A Dialogical Reading of Euthyphro*

I want to suggest new ways in which we might present the *Euthyphro* to our students. The discussion to follow draws principally upon discussions with Introduction to Philosophy students and is intended more to open up new possibilities than to be a comprehensive commentary on the dialogue. Hence the discussion proceeds in a dialectical way in which questions are raised and provisional answers are offered. Accordingly, I do not pretend to here be giving the last word on the *Euthyphro*; there is still much more to be said. To presume otherwise would be to violate the dialogical approach.

The typical routine when teaching the *Euthyphro* is well entrenched. We use the dialogue as, in part, a logic primer: Socrates introduces his hapless interlocutor to the distinction between a definition and an example, the relation of parts to wholes, and the requirements of formal consistency. These fundamentals are then employed in analyzing the famed dilemma introduced at 10a which Euthyphro never quite grasps. Our hope is that by witnessing Socrates' exchange with Euthyphro, our students will make the kind of progress that Euthyphro seems to fail to make. I, of course, do not deny the importance of the logical lessons Socrates offers his interlocutor, yet this standard way of presenting the dialogue leaves many aspects of the dialogue unaccounted for; it says, at least by implication, that the dramatic elements are at best amusing, but not philosophically substantive. I hope to demonstrate that this is a mistake.

In what follows, I focus primarily on the *character* Euthyphro, a man about whom Plato has a great deal to tell. I shall be particularly concerned to promote a certain view regarding Euthyphro's *motivation* in attempting to bring his father to trial for murder. Ultimately I want to suggest that the *Euthyphro* dramatizes the confrontation between two concepts of expertise, namely, the *sophistical* and the *philosophical*. This confrontation is manifest in the conflict between Euthyphro's youthful ambition for influence, and Socrates' quest for wisdom. I shall argue that the dramatic dimension complements the argumentative content of the dialogue, which features a similar contest between two concepts of *moral* expertise: one founded on power, the other on *λογος*.

It is not uncommon for Plato to play on the names of the characters of a given dialogue. An obvious example of Plato's literary sport occurs in the *Gorgias* where Socrates pokes fun at Polus by exclaiming "This colt here is youthful and impulsive" (463e).<sup>4</sup> Of course, *πολος* means "colt," and the character Polus behaves in the manner of his namesake, bucking through Socrates' repeated attempts to subdue his style of speech. Another oft-cited instance occurs in the *Apology* where Socrates begins his examination of his main accuser, Meletus, with the following charge:

[Meletus] says I am a wrongdoer because I corrupt the youth. But I, men of Athens, say Meletus is a wrongdoer, because he jokes in earnest, lightly involving people in a lawsuit, pretending to be zealous and concerned about things for which he has never at all cared. (24c–d)

This remark takes on an additional sting when one realizes that the name Meletus is etymologically connected to *μελειν*, "to care for." Throughout Socrates' cross of Meletus he charges him with "carelessness" (*αμελειαν*), that is, as we might say, with being something other than he says he is, something other than he appears.

The *Euthyphro* features a healthy dose of Plato's standard devices. The most obvious of these is contained in Euthyphro's name, which is a compound of *Ευθους*, "straight," "right," "true" or perhaps "honest," and *Φρεν*, "mind," or "heart." We may render "Euthyphro" "right-minded," or better yet, "straight-thinker." The name is ironic on multiple levels. Euthyphro, a self-proclaimed expert regarding the divine (3c–e), seems utterly "right-minded" in the sense that his ultimate concern lies within the dynamics of moral correctness, of "rightness." It is his absolute duty, he claims, to "persecute the wrongdoer" (5e), "even if he share one's hearth and eat at one's table" (4c). One may even say that Euthyphro's "heart" is in the "right" place; he certainly wants to act piously in that he is concerned with ridding himself of "pollution" (*μιασμα*).

However, taking the latter rendering, his encounter with Socrates reveals that he is anything but a straight-thinker. Euthyphro plods through his exchange with Socrates, offering several clumsy, insufficient definitions of piety and confessing on several occasions "I do not know what you mean, Socrates" (10a, 10e, 12a). Further, Euthyphro's thinking proves *circular* rather than straight upon the dialogue's close when Euthyphro returns to the definition of piety with which he began his exchange with Socrates. According to Euthyphro at 15b, piety is "most certainly" what the gods love, a definition proposed by him earlier at 7a and refuted by Socrates at 8a–b.

Perhaps Euthyphro's name is representative of more than simple sarcasm. Maybe Plato is offering, by means of irony, some insight into the character of Euthyphro. Let us examine what Plato tells us

(or has Euthyphro tell us) about Euthyphro. First we recall the particulars of Euthyphro's legal suit. We are told that Euthyphro's father owns and operates a farm on the island of Naxos. According to Euthyphro, a "house servant" (*πελατης*), while in a drunken rage, murdered one of the estate's slaves (*οικειν*). His father, unsure of what ought to be done, bound the killer's hands and feet and cast him into a deep ditch. Next, he sent a messenger to Athens to inquire of the religious advisor as to the customary proceedings in such a matter. While the messenger was in transit, the father ignored his captive, who consequently died of exposure prior to the messenger's return.

Now, at the opening of the dialogue, Euthyphro reveals that he is bringing a case against "One whom I am thought crazy to prosecute," "My father," and that the charge is "Murder, Socrates" (4a). Note Socrates' immediate reaction to the very notion of Euthyphro legally pursuing his own father:

Good heavens! Certainly, Euthyphro, most men would not know how they could do this and be right. It is not the part of anyone to do this, but of one who is far advanced in wisdom. (4b)

His remarks when he discovers that Euthyphro is proceeding in the name of the servant are also suggestive,

Whereas, by Zeus, Euthyphro, you think that your knowledge of the divine, of piety and impiety, is so accurate that, when those things happened as you say, you have no fear of having acted impiously in bringing your father to trial? (4e)

Socrates finds Euthyphro's project strange. Maybe Socrates' bewilderment is justified, for nowhere in his account does Euthyphro indicate that the father *intended* the servant's death. In fact, Euthyphro's own account suggests that the father did not have such intentions—why would he have sent a messenger to far away Athens if he planned simply to kill the servant? Furthermore, Euthyphro's testimony is conveniently vague concerning the servant; by referring to him as a *πελατης*, the question of the man's civic status is undetermined.

If the *πελατης* was not a free man, Euthyphro has no case. According to R. K. Sinclair,

a slave in Athens was almost completely dependent on the good will of his master. For the owner could treat slaves like any other item of property. . . . [A] master who killed a slave seems to have been required no more than a ritual act of purification. (28)

The fact that Euthyphro's father did not know what actions were appropriate perhaps suggests that the servant was not a slave. Even if this were the case, Euthyphro might still be in trouble. D. M. MacDowell, who directly addresses Euthyphro's case, maintains

[t]here was, we can assume, no law saying whether leaving someone bound in a ditch did or did not count as homicide, so the jury would have to decide [Euthyphro's case] by "the justest opinion." (60)

That is, the jury would have to listen to speeches by both Euthyphro and Euthyphro's father and then decide who, in the absence of any explicit law, is right. As we may expect, the outcome of cases such as Euthyphro's depended as much upon the jury's sentiments toward the parties involved as it did on the facts of the dispute in question. Euthyphro, as he is looked upon by the general populace as a crackpot (3c), is therefore bound to fail. Even Socrates, bastion of the Just, thinks Euthyphro's project absurd (4b, 4e). Nevertheless, Euthyphro is confident that he is in the right; "you [Socrates] will bring your case to a satisfactory ending as I think I shall mine" (3e).

Is Euthyphro simply ignorant of the law? This seems improbable because he exhibits a fair degree of acquaintance with the political affairs of Athens and even claims to have on several occasions spoken before the assembly (3e). Euthyphro is certainly a public man, what is the motivation behind his unlikely action? I think Plato has left us several clues on this score. Let us now examine what we know about Euthyphro the man.

First and foremost, we know that Euthyphro considers himself an expert on matters of religion and religious obligation (*οσιον*). At 4a, Socrates remarks of Euthyphro's proposed action, "Not everyone can rightly do what you are doing, but only one far advanced in wisdom." Euthyphro, not detecting Socrates' sarcasm, zealously reports, "Very far, indeed, Socrates, by Zeus." In fact, Euthyphro believes that his expertise in divine matters makes him "superior to the majority of men" (5a).

Euthyphro also professes to be a soothsayer who has "foretold nothing that is not now true" (3c).<sup>5</sup> He is eager to share his expertise with Socrates; he boasts, "[I know] wonderful things . . . Socrates, which most men do not know" (6b). Euthyphro continues, "I will, if you like, tell you many other things about the gods which I am sure will amaze you" (6c).

We know, in addition, that Euthyphro believes that his expertise entitles him to a certain degree of civic stature. He often speaks to the assembly on divine matters and regularly offers prophecies to the city (3c). Yet, in spite of his extraordinary abilities, Euthyphro is considered by his peers eccentric and foolish. He confesses, "Why, they even laugh at me and say I am crazy when I say anything in the assembly and foretell the future to them" (3c). And he rationalizes, "they are jealous of all such men as you and I are" (3c).<sup>6</sup>

Consider this. Euthyphro takes himself to be an *expert* on the most important matters, yet he lacks the one thing that is essential to being an expert, namely *recognition*. Despite his extraordinary knowledge of divine things, nobody pays any attention to him (5c). His expertise

is *impotent*, and Euthyphro is *powerless*. I submit that Euthyphro is bringing this case before the court in order to gain recognition, for if there is one thing an aspiring expert needs, it is acknowledgment. But if this were the sole motive for his proceeding, wouldn't it be better for him to bring a less risky indictment to court? The prosecution of one's own father necessarily seems rather curious and suspect; couldn't Euthyphro find someone else to accuse? Surely for an expert in holiness there must be wrongdoers everywhere! Euthyphro even admits that his action is unpopular; at 4a he says, "they think I am insane because I am pursuing him" (4a). Nevertheless, he likens himself to Zeus:

Men believe that Zeus is the best and most just of the gods, and they acknowledge that he put his father in bonds because he wickedly devoured his children, and he in turn had mutilated his father for similar reasons; but they are incensed against me because I proceed against my father when he has done wrong, and so they are inconsistent in what they say about the gods and about me. (6a)

Perhaps Euthyphro's indictment is motivated by his having an ax to grind against his father rather than any moral imperative to "persecute the wrongdoer." Euthyphro believes himself to be an expert in religious matters, especially piety (*οσιον*); yet when the situation at Naxos arose that required expert religious counsel, Euthyphro's father did not consult his expert son, who was with him on the island, but instead sent a messenger all the way to Athens to inquire of the religious authorities there as to what ought to be done. Why didn't Euthyphro's father simply ask his own son what holiness required in the situation? Surely an expert like Euthyphro would know the appropriate proceedings; he could have provided expert religious counsel, thereby making the messenger's voyage unnecessary and avoiding the mess resulting from his father's uncertainty. Could it be that, like others in the city, Euthyphro's father regards his son as a fraud and therefore does not acknowledge his expertise? At 5c Socrates digs,

I wish to become your pupil; for I realize that neither this fellow Meletus, nor anybody else seems to recognize you at all. (my italics)

Judging from Socrates' claim, Euthyphro is simply not getting what he, *qua* expert, desperately needs—recognition. Though obviously eager to share his wisdom, no one is interested to listen. He is laughed at and dismissed by even his own father. This state of affairs, resolves Euthyphro, demands action. What would be better to establish himself as an expert in divine law than to bring a difficult indictment against one's own father and win?

I do not mean to suggest that Euthyphro's accusation is merely a publicity stunt; I am more inclined to believe that Euthyphro is legitimately hurt by his father's indifference. However, I should remark that

Euthyphro does believe that, if he succeeds, great rewards will be bestowed upon him. After all, Zeus rose to become king of the gods through punishing his father; perhaps Euthyphro, a confessed believer in myth (6b), hopes for similar endowments as a result of his action.

It would not be improper for one to ask for further textual support for the character analysis I have offered. I believe support for my exegesis can be marshaled from the constant allusions to myth made by Socrates throughout the dialogue. It is unfortunate that the most important of these allusions are typically left out of English translations.

Myth telling in Plato's dialogues strikes one as a curious phenomenon. One would think that for a philosopher such as Socrates, the quest for knowledge in the form of complete definitions would render mere story telling wasteful, yet Socrates refers to or invents a myth in almost all of the dialogues. We have already seen that Euthyphro feels a kinship with Zeus; however, there is another, less explicit, mythological dimension to the *Euthyphro* that I think hints at Euthyphro's motives as I have here described them. Although Daedalus is not directly mentioned until 11b, there are several allusions to his myths very early in the dialogue. Before these are revealed, a general recount of the myths involving Daedalus is in order.

Daedalus was the most skillful artificer and architect in mythological Greece. So lifelike were his statues that they had to be tied down so as to prevent them from walking away under their own volition. He was such a clever architect that he was commissioned by King Minos of Crete to contrive an inescapable labyrinth to confine the Minotaur, a half-bull, half-human monster which was born of the union of Minos's wife with a bull (Daedalus is connected to the generation of the Minotaur as well). As punishment for helping the Athenian hero, Theseus (who defeated the Minotaur), to escape from the labyrinth by instructing him to tie a string at the entrance of the maze, which allowed him to retrace his steps, Daedalus and his son, Icarus, were thrown by Minos into the labyrinth. Knowing that the maze was inescapable without the string, the clever Daedalus construed another means of escape. He collected the feathers of the various creatures that had fallen prey to the Minotaur, and, using some wax he had brought along as glue, constructed two sets of giant wings one for himself and one for Icarus. As Ovid tells the rest,

When Daedalus the craftsman had finished making the wings, he balanced his body between the twin wings and by moving them hung suspended in air. He also gave instructions to his son, saying, "Escape may be checked by water and land, but the air and the sky are free. . . . Icarus, I advise you to take the middle course. If you fly too low, the sea will soak the wings; if you fly too high, the sun's heat will burn them. Fly between the sea and sun! . . . Take the course along which I shall lead you and be safe. (*Meta*.8. 200–215)

Of course, Icarus disregarded his father's counsel and grew overambitious in his flight. The wax that bound the feathers melted, his wings burned, and he plummeted into the sea and drowned.

Now, the only direct references to this myth appear at 11b–11d where the frustrated Euthyphro charges,

I do not know how to say what I mean. For whatever statement we advance, somehow or another it moves about and won't stay where we put it.

Socrates replies,

Your statements, Euthyphro, are like works of my ancestor Daedalus. . . . [They] run away and won't stay where they are put.

Euthyphro, obviously liking the simile remarks,

I am not the one who makes these statements move about and not stay in the same place. . . . [Y]ou are the Daedalus.

This short exchange concerning Daedalus is often overlooked or dismissed as merely an interlude. However, there is reason to suspect that Socrates believes the Daedalus myth particularly important. In the *Meno*, for example, Socrates likens "opinion" (*doxa*) to the statues of Daedalus—they run away and escape if we do not tie them down with *logos*. Indirect allusions to the myth in the *Euthyphro* begin as early as 4a; however, these features are often missed. For example, G. M. A. Grube's translation renders 3e to 4a as follows:

- 3e S: What is your case, Euthyphro? Are you the defendant or the prosecutor?  
 E: The prosecutor.  
 S: Whom do you prosecute?  
 E: One whom I am thought crazy to prosecute.  
 4a S: Are you prosecuting someone who will easily escape you?  
 E: Far from it, for he is quite old.

What is at issue here are the last two lines. Now, in the Greek, Socrates' statement at 4a is:

τι δι; πετομενον τινα διωκει;

Which we may render,

Why? Are you pursuing one who has wings?

Or, following Fowler's Loeb Classical Library translation,

Why? Are you prosecuting one who has wings to fly away with?

Euthyphro's response in Greek is:

πολλου γε δει πετεσθαι, ος γε τυγχανει ων ευ μαλα πρεσβυτη

That is, again following Fowler,

No flying for him at his ripe old age.

The allusions continue. At 14d, Socrates remarks, "I am eager for your wisdom, and I give my attention to it so that nothing you say shall fall to the ground." And at the dialogue's close, Socrates laments, "Oh, my friend, what are you doing? You go away and leave me cast down from the high hopes I had."

Keeping these allusions in mind, perhaps we are in a better position to understand Euthyphro and his motivation to undertake the indictment of his father. Plato is setting up a parallel between Euthyphro and Icarus. As you remember, Icarus was a spirited and anxious youth who, rather than following the moderate path set for him by his father, appeased his high ambition and overextended his power of flight. Similarly, we can say that Euthyphro is an ambitious youth (12a) who aspires to a godlike reputation as an expert in holiness. To this end he resolves to publicly prove himself through the prosecution and ultimate ruin of his own father. Put another way, Euthyphro, a self-proclaimed expert, is desperately seeking the one thing that could justify his self-image, namely, the recognition of his community.

That Euthyphro's indictment is motivated by his need for recognition is suggested by the utter lack of reflection revealed in his initial response to Socrates' question, "What do you say piety is?" Euthyphro quickly answers, "I say piety is doing what I am doing now" (5d). This reply indicates that Euthyphro considers his action holy simply because it is he, the *expert*, who is acting. We may say, using a familiar form, that the action is holy because the expert is performing it; it is not the case that the expert is performing the act because the act is holy. As the argument shows clearly, Euthyphro has not given much thought to the issues surrounding holiness; he has been content to simply declare himself an "expert," that is, one who knows and so is beyond questions. Euthyphro's burning ambition to achieve the "expert" status he desires has blocked the way of "straight-thinking" and has driven him to make his indictment.

What, then, does straight thinking consist of, and what role ought it play in our judgments regarding the pious? Turning again to the *Meno*,

To acquire an untied work of Daedalus is not worth much . . . for it does not remain, but it is worth much if tied down, for his works are very beautiful. What do I mean when I say this? True opinions [*τας δοξας τας αληθεις*]. For true opinions, as long as they remain, are a fine thing and all that they do is good, but they are not willing to remain long, and they escape from a man's mind so they are not worth much until one ties them down by giving an account [*λογισμω*] of the reason why [*αιτια*]. (97e-98a)

Straight thinking and the true expertise of Philosophy involve giving the reasons why one holds a particular belief or undertakes a specific action. Unlike the "expert" who, like Euthyphro, seeks mere recognition and praise, the Philosopher seeks the ultimate Logos, the perfect

account of his beliefs and doings. Like Theseus, the Philosopher tries to retrace the steps of his reasoning in order to correct his thinking and to escape the potentially inescapable labyrinth of troubles into which poor and hasty judgments can lead. The aspiring "expert" who is convinced that he "is superior to the majority of men" (5a) because he "knows things of which the majority has no knowledge" (6b) misses the mark of straight thinking and of True Philosophy which requires one to humbly admit "I only know that I know nothing."

We ought not feel pity for Euthyphro, he has in an unexpected way succeeded in teaching many things of which most men do not know. His lesson is important. Moreover, he is lucky; rather than flying too close to the sun and perishing, Euthyphro happens to run into the brilliant Socrates and, accordingly, falls flat on his face.

### *Integrating the Dialogical and Argumentative Elements*

We have already hinted in the discussion above at several ways in which the dialogical reading of Euthyphro's character and motivation connects with the argumentative progression of the dialogue. I want now to draw some of these threads together more explicitly. In particular, I aim to connect the dialogical reading with the dilemma at 10a that is often treated as the main lesson of the dialogue.

As it is succinct and deeply shaking, "Euthyphro's Dilemma" is among the gems of any Introduction to Philosophy course. Students often come to college holding views remarkably similar to Euthyphro's; they typically find the view that holiness can be defined in terms of God's wishes intuitively appealing, and are swiftly frustrated by the dilemma Socrates poses. We most often take this as an opportunity to introduce the standard philosophical problems concerning moral realism, emotivism, and prescriptivism.

But we should not be so quick to translate Plato's text into the language of contemporary meta-ethics. There is a more direct way to pose the problem *within* the dialogue, and the dialogical reading I have provided helps us to see this. What the account above suggests is that a principal theme of the *Euthyphro* is the contest between two distinct conceptions of expertise; these two conceptions are replicated in the horns of the dilemma.

To see this, recall that we have suggested that Euthyphro seeks what he takes to be an essential aspect of expertise, namely, *recognition*. I choose to call Euthyphro's conception of expertise the *sophistical* view, because it aims primarily at *power* and *influence*. That this is Euthyphro's principal objective should be clear given the discussion above. Euthyphro wants to punish his father and to gain the reputation for being "superior to the majority of men," he wants to foretell the

future to the assembly without fear of being laughed at. The opposing conception of expertise, which I shall call the *philosophical* view, is represented by the character of Socrates. Socrates is primarily concerned with *wisdom*, not power. He wants, above all else, to *learn* what the pious is, and Euthyphro's reputation for foolishness gives Socrates no reason to forgo discussion with him. The mark of philosophical expertise is not *influence*, but the ability to give a *λογος* of one's subject, to *explain*, to *answer questions*. Failing to display these abilities indicates that one is *not* an expert, regardless of the degree of influence and power one exerts.

We may understand Euthyphro's Dilemma in terms of these different conceptions of expertise. Socrates poses the dilemma at 10a in this way:

Consider this question: Is the pious loved by the gods because it is pious, or is it pious because it is loved by the gods?

We represent the horns of the dilemma as such:

- (a) *The pious is loved because it is pious*
- (b) *The pious is pious because it is loved*

The first horn, (a), represents what I've been calling the *philosophical* conception of expertise; the second horn, (b), reflects the *sophistical* conception. That is, on the second horn, the gods *confer* piety upon an action in taking an approving attitude toward it. Their moral expertise consists simply in this capacity, and their judgments in this regard are beyond question, above *λογος*. On the first horn, by contrast, the gods *discover* that certain acts have the property of being pious and consequently approve of them. Here the gods' moral expertise consists in their ability to detect the property of being pious; their judgments hence *respond* to something outside themselves.

Euthyphro aspires to be a moral expert in the second, *sophistical*, sense: he wants to be *listened to* and ultimately *obeyed*. Socrates aspires to be someone whose moral judgments are *worth* listening to. Yet a judgment is *worth* attending to *only if* it is accompanied by and grounded in a proper account (*λογος*), and a proper account can be devised only by means of properly conducted moral inquiry, where properly conducted moral inquiry is necessarily a dialectical affair in which propositions are advanced and then examined via a critical exchange of reasons. Hence Socrates replies to Euthyphro's third attempt to define piety.

Shall we examine this, Euthyphro, to see if it is right, or shall we let it go and accept our own statement, and those of others, agreeing that it is so if anyone merely says that it is? Or ought we inquire into the correctness of the statement? (9e)

Perhaps recognizing the difficulties inherent in the alternative, Euthyphro replies "We ought to inquire" (9e). In so doing he gives up, at least for a moment, the *sophistical* conception of expertise and

joins Socrates in cooperative pursuit of wisdom. Although they do not discover what piety is, Euthyphro does learn essential lessons about how one properly inquires into piety. In this respect, Socrates is successful. We shall be more successful as teachers if we can affect our students similarly, and I suspect a dialogical and integrated approach of the sort developed here can help us toward that end.

### Notes

1. See, for example, Woodbridge 1929, Randall 1970, Tejera 1984, Peterman 2000, and the essays collected in Press 1993 and Griswold 1988.
2. It also puts up for examination the assumption that Socrates articulates Plato's philosophy. On this, see the articles collected in Press 2001.
3. On this, see Talisse and the essays collected in Scott 2002.
4. Unless otherwise indicated, I use the translations in Cooper's edition.
5. But note his prophecy regarding Socrates' trial at 3e: "you [Socrates] will bring your case to a satisfactory ending." This, of course, is not much of a prophecy since it does not specify *to whose satisfaction* the case will end. It is thus unfalsifiable.
6. Socrates is quick to reject Euthyphro's pairing of himself with Socrates; Socrates refers to "you prophets" at 3e.

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