

Morality and Justice

Lecture 2.1

Plato's Euthyphro

Socrates (469–399 BCE)

- lived in Athens
- teacher of Plato
- death penalty for “corrupting the youth”

Piety is a virtue that has to do with honoring the gods and honoring one's family

- clear cases: sacrifices, burial rites
- borderline case: Euthyphro is prosecuting his father for killing a slave

Priority of Definition

- if you know what x is, then you will be able to state the definition of x
- a definition of x specifies the necessary and sufficient conditions for being an x

“x is necessary for y” means

- you cannot have y without x
- if not x, then not y
- e.g., having gas in the tank is necessary for the car to start

“x is **not** necessary for y” means

- you can have y without x
- e.g., rain is not necessary for making the ground wet

“x is sufficient for y” means

- having x is enough to guarantee that y
- if x, then y
- e.g., rain is sufficient for making the ground wet

“x is **not** sufficient for y” means

- having x is **not** enough to guarantee that y
- you can have x and **not** have y
- e.g., having gas in the car is not sufficient for starting the car

Is being an enclosed shape with three straight lines a **necessary** or **sufficient** condition for being a triangle?

- a. necessary condition
- b. sufficient condition
- c. necessary AND sufficient
- d. none of the above

Is being an enclosed shape with three straight lines a **necessary** or **sufficient** condition for being a triangle?

a. necessary condition

b. sufficient condition

c. necessary AND sufficient

d. none of the above

Both men and women are persons. So being a man is _____ for being a person.

a. not necessary

b. not sufficient

c. not necessary AND not sufficient

d. none of the above

Both men and women are persons. So being a man is _____ for being a person.

a. not necessary

b. not sufficient

c. not necessary AND not sufficient

d. none of the above

Definition #1 of Piety

- piety is to prosecute the wrongdoer
(regardless of who committed the crime)

Socrates: “You agree...that there are many
other pious actions?”

Euthyphro: “There are.”

Definition #1 of Piety

- piety is to prosecute the wrongdoer
(regardless of who committed the crime)

There are many ways to be pious, so prosecuting a wrongdoer is _____ for being pious.

- a. not necessary
- b. not sufficient
- c. not necessary AND not sufficient
- d. none of the above

Definition #1 of Piety

- piety is to prosecute the wrongdoer
(regardless of who committed the crime)

There are many ways to be pious, so prosecuting a wrongdoer is _____ for being pious.

a. not necessary

b. not sufficient

c. not necessary AND not sufficient

d. none of the above

Definition #2 of Piety

- What is loved by the gods is pious, and what is not loved by the gods is not pious.

Necessary and sufficient conditions

- sufficient: if the gods do love x, then x is pious
- necessary: if the gods do not love x, then x is not pious

Definition #2 of Piety

- What is loved by the gods is pious, and what is not loved by the gods is not pious.

Socrates: “But you say that the same things are considered just by some gods and unjust by others... Is that not so?”

Euthyphro: “It is.”

Socrates: “The same things, then, are loved by [some of] the gods and hated by [others of] the gods...?”

Euthyphro: “It seems likely.”

Definition #2 of Piety

- What is loved by the gods is pious, and what is not loved by the gods is not pious.

Suppose that **some** of the gods love x, but **others** of the gods do **not** love x. According to Definition #2, would x be pious or impious?

- a. x would be pious
- b. x would be not be pious
- c. all of the above
- d. none of the above

Definition #2 of Piety

- What is loved by the gods is pious, and what is not loved by the gods is not pious.

Suppose that **some** of the gods love x, but **others** of the gods do **not** love x. According to Definition #2, would x be pious or impious?

- a. x would be pious
- b. x would be not be pious
- c. all of the above**
- d. none of the above

Definition #3 of Piety

- What **all** the gods love is pious, and what is not loved by **all** the gods is not pious.

Necessary and sufficient conditions

- sufficient: if all the gods do love x, then x is pious
- necessary: if all the gods do not love x, then x is not pious

The Euthyphro Question

“Is the pious being loved by the gods **because** it is pious, or is it pious **because** the god’s love it?”

Socrates: “Is it being loved [by the gods] because it is pious, or for some other reason?”

Euthyphro: “For no other reason.”

Socrates: “It is being loved, then, because it is pious, but it is not pious, because it is being loved?”

Euthyphro: “Apparently.”

If the gods love x because x is pious, then...

- x is pious before the gods loved it
- so being loved by the gods is **not necessary** for being pious

The Euthyphro Question

“Is the pious being loved by the gods **because** it is pious, or is it pious **because** the god’s love it?”

Euthyphro’s (and Socrates’) answer:

- x is pious because the gods love it
- so being loved by all the gods is **not necessary** for being pious

Priority of Definition

- if you know what x is, then you will be able to state the definition of x
- a definition of x specifies the necessary and sufficient conditions for being an x

But Euthyphro failed to provide an adequate definition of piety.

According to Socrates, is Euthyphro doing the pious thing by prosecuting his father?

a. yes

b. no

c. Socrates does not know

d. Socrates knows but does not tell Euthyphro

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So we still don't know what piety is!