Can religion provide a foundation for morality? The arguments concerning the nature of piety in Plato's *Euthyphro* provide one major obstacle for those who believe it can. What moral authorities, divine or not, bid us do provides no grounds for claiming that what they bid is morally right or good. The gods, or God, may, however, always bid us do the morally correct thing—the remark of Nietzsche's aside. What the gods bid us do may serve as a normative ethic. But it cannot provide a meta-ethical theory of what moral terms such as 'piety' mean nor of the rationality of doing what the gods bid. Plato's argument to this effect from 9C to 11A is not easy to understand and has excited much critical comment. Here is one further attempt to provide a valid interpretation of his argument.

The *Euthyphro* also suggests that a version of ethical relativism is not compatible with the search for a definition of piety. This is not pursued in the dialogue. However it is worth following the argument to see how the incompatibility arises. This will be discussed first.

I.

The substantive topic of the *Euthyphro* is an attempt to answer a question in religion: what is piety? But the dialogue also moves at a purely philosophical level as well. In dismissing five definitions of 'piety' it also discusses a number of different conceptions of definition; it is, in effect, one of our earliest treatises on definition. Euthyphro's first attempt to define 'piety' is to list a number of examples of pious actions. But definition by example is not the kind of definition Socrates wants. At 5D and 6D-E Socrates sets out his requirements for an adequate definition. For the case of 'piety' these are:

D1 All pious acts are pious in virtue of a common characteristic X that they all share and that is the same for all.

D2 Piety and impiety are 'opposites', i.e. they are contradictories. That is, no act can be both pious and impious.

D3 All impious acts are impious in virtue of a common characteristic that they all share and that is the same for all. By D2 this common
characteristic must be not-X. Note that many acts are neither pious nor impious, e.g. Socrates’ walking down the street. We could call these non-pious acts. Impious acts are then not non-pious acts.

D4 The common characteristic X must serve as a pattern (the Greek is ‘paradeigma’) whereby we can tell whether an act is pious or impious. Thus the definition must not only give us the meaning of ‘piety’, but must also provide a means of testing for piety and impiety.

These are Socrates’ requirements on an adequate definition—a fifth will be added later.

Euthyphro offers a candidate for ‘X’ in a definition of the required form. If we are to define the property term ‘being pious’ then the definitions he gives us are:

- being pious = being loved by the gods
- being impious = being hated by the gods.

The definitions are of the correct form. But are they true? Such definitions are not viewed by Socrates as stipulations laid down by us but discoveries to be made by us. A proposed definition may be either true or false.

The mythological point that the Greek gods argued and fought amongst themselves leads to a logical point about the relativity of our moral concepts such as piety. There is an ambiguity in Euthyphro’s definition. Does he mean ‘loved by some of the gods’ or ‘loved by all the gods’. The definition with ‘all’ written explicitly into it will be discussed subsequently. Let us follow Socrates’ objection when we have ‘some’ in the definition; his argument can be found from 7E to 8B. Consider some action, call it ‘a’, such as Euthyphro’s prosecuting his father for manslaughter. Some gods, such as Zeus, may love this action—call this group of gods ‘G1’. Other gods, such as Cronos, may hate this action—call this group of gods ‘G2’. Then we have:

(1) a is loved by the gods G1 and a is hated by the gods G2.

From Euthyphro’s definition we can substitute ‘pious’ for ‘loved by the gods G1’ and ‘impious’ for ‘hated by the gods G2’. This yields:

(2) a is pious and a is impious.

This is a self-contradiction; the same act is pious and impious. This is in violation of requirement D2 on adequate definitions, and so Euthyphro’s definition of ‘being pious’, with its explicit reading of ‘some’, fails to satisfy Socrates.

That Socrates’ argument is unsatisfactory has been noted by many (e.g. Zeigler pp. 294-5). The argument is not challenged in the dialogue. Instead we are led into a discussion of the claim that no god or person would ever dispute that if any person has killed unjustly then the person ought to be punished. However there may be raging disputes over the antecedent, i.e. whether the person has killed justly or unjustly. Thus some moral claims are
not open to dispute but others are. Claims about piety and impiety seem open to dispute like the judgement about the justice, or otherwise, of some killing. Why there may be dispute over some moral judgements such as these is not further pursued in the dialogue.

What defence could be offered on behalf of Euthyphro against Socrates’ argument? He could have said: ‘My definition is slightly defective but, Socrates, with a small change I can repair it. I want to say that if act a is loved by the group of gods G₁ then a is not pious \textit{simpliciter} but \textit{pious for that group} G₁. Similarly if act a is hated by the group of gods G₂ then a is not impious \textit{simpliciter} but \textit{impious for that group} G₂. That is, we must make the relativization to individual gods, or groups of gods, quite explicit in our definition of “being pious”, and “being impious”. Now your conclusion does not follow. In (1) we must substitute for “loved by the gods G₁” the expression “pious for G₁” (and not simply “pious”), and substitute for “hated by the gods G₂” the expression “impious for G₂” (and not simply “impious’). Then we get:

(3) a is pious for G₁ and a is impious for G₂.

This is not a self-contradiction; it is perfectly consistent. Act a is pious for some and impious for others. So much for your objection, Socrates.’

The above response argues for the relativization of the concepts of piety and impiety to individual gods, or groups of gods. The Euthyphro of the dialogue was, like Socrates, not a relativist. But is this response of an imaginary Euthyphro a plausible way out of Socrates’ objection? Not really, because, in rescuing himself from infringing requirement D₂, our imaginary Euthyphro falls foul of requirements D₁ and D₃ on an adequate definition. How this happens will now be illustrated.

What does ‘pious for G₁’ mean? It could mean that the G₁ gods believe that a is pious, leaving it open that what they believe could be true or false; they, however, believe it to be true. The relativist position is much stronger than this. The relativist claims that there is no fact of the matter whether a is pious or not. It is not that the two groups, G₁ and G₂, have opposing views as to whether a is pious or not, with only one group being correct. Both groups can be correct about their claim because both make distinct claims which look superficially to be opposing. One group claims not that a is pious, but rather a is pious-for-G₁, the hyphenation indicating that a new predicate ‘pious-for-G₁’ has been introduced which is not the same as ‘pious’ \textit{simpliciter}. The other group claims not that a is impious but, rather, a is impious-for-G₂, the hyphenation indicating that a new predicate ‘impious-for-G₂’ has been introduced which is not the same as ‘impious’ \textit{simpliciter}. The two new relativized predicates stand in no logical relation to one another; they are quite distinct predicates independent of one another. This is the full force of the relativization move.
Our original project was to define 'pious' and 'impious'. Instead we have defined a new pair of predicates: 'pious-for-G_1' and 'impious-for-G_2'. Presumably the definition of this pair (respectively 'loved by G_1' and 'hated by G_2') fulfills requirements D1, D2, and D3 for an adequate definition. The absolute, (i.e. non-relativized) concepts of piety and impiety have not been defined—nor will they be, because such unrelativized concepts are not even countenanced by the relativist. However this is not yet a full account of the relativist's position. The relativist must go further than this and introduce a host of relativized predicates and not just the two mentioned.

Consider another act b, say, the act for which Socrates was charged with impiety, viz., inventing new gods and not worshipping the old ones. Suppose all the gods fall into completely new factional groups according to whether they love or hate Socrates' action. Suppose the lesser gods form a group G_3 who love Socrates' action and the greater gods such as Zeus and Cronos join together in group G_4 because they hate it. Then we have:

\[(4) \text{ b is loved by the gods G}_3 \text{ and b is hated by the gods G}_4.\]

We now have to invent new notions of relativized piety: 'pious-for-G_3' to be defined by 'loved by the gods G_3', and 'impious-for-G_4' to be defined by 'hated by the gods G_4'. Our former relativized notions of piety will not serve us at all in this case. We can substitute in (4) and get:

\[(5) \text{ b is pious-for-G}_3 \text{ and b is impious-for-G}_4.\]

This, too, is free from Socrates' objection of self-contradiction.

But what have we done? We have been forced to invent new notions of relativized piety and impiety to take into account the possible re-alignment of gods according to whether they love or hate act b. We could go on and consider other acts and further possible alignments of gods according to whether they hate or love that act. Thus we end up with an indefinite number of relativized notions of piety and impiety; viz., 'pious-for-G_1', 'pious-for-G_3', 'pious-for-G_5', . . . and 'impious-for-G_2', 'impious-for-G_4', 'impious-for-G_6', . . . . The absolute notions of piety and impiety are not defined—in fact they are not even countenanced by the relativist as legitimate concepts.

It seems then that the relativist can not define 'piety' or 'impiety'; he defines instead a host of pious-for-x and impious-for-y notions, where 'x' and 'y' mark the place for all the possible factional groupings of gods. Can we even say that the host of concepts, pious-for-x, share anything in common? Are they about the same thing, piety? That each concept, pious-for-x, is about piety is an illusion. That the word 'pious' occurs in 'pious-for-x' and that the latter therefore has something to do with piety is as illusory as the claim that because 'cat' occurs in 'catastrophe' then the latter expression must have something to do with a cat. We can not claim that each group of gods is making a judgement about the very same thing, viz., piety. If we
were to admit that there is something common to each relativized concept, pious-for-x, then Socrates’ original search for a definition of ‘piety’ would have to be put back on the agenda. We would have to ask: in virtue of what are all these cases of piety regardless of which group of gods is making the judgement? The relativist must reject this as meaningless since he countenances only relativized notions of piety. The non-relativist finds this a significant question and seeks an answer to it. The Socratic viewpoint is that there is something common in all judgements involving piety regardless of who makes the judgement.

In sum, relativizing piety (and other moral concepts) has the following consequences. (i) We can never define ‘piety’; rather we define a host of other concepts, viz., pious-for-x. (ii) We can not say that each of these concepts has a common element, that each involves a judgement that some x makes about piety. If we do, we introduce a non-relative concept of piety that enters into each relativized concept, pious-for-x. The search for the common characteristic that all pious acts share must begin again. Thus the force of requirements D1 and D3 on any definition are fully felt. Our imaginary Euthyphro’s relativizing move falls foul of Socrates’ requirements on an adequate definition, if he is to be deemed to have provided a definition for ‘piety’ and has not abandoned the project entirely in favour of defining some other terms.

II.

The next definition arises from the previous one by writing ‘all’ explicitly into it. Thus:

being pious = being loved by all the gods
being impious = being hated by all the gods.

Where some gods love and others hate the same act it is left undecided whether the act is pious or impious. The expression ‘god-loved’ is an especially concocted contraction of ‘loved by all the gods’ that enables us to express the above definitions as: being pious = being god-loved; being impious = being god-hated. These definitions are of a property expression. If we were to define the abstract noun ‘piety’ then we would have: piety = the god-loved. The expression ‘what the gods love’ (an interrogative nominalisation of ‘what do the gods love?’) is also an abstract noun which can serve as definiens: piety = what the gods love. Similarly: impiety = the god-hated, or = what the gods hate. Again these definitions are of the required form. But are they true? Socrates wishes to argue that they are not. His argument is to be found in 9C to 11B; its difficulty has excited much critical comment.

At 10A Socrates asks Euthyphro an important question; is what is pious
loved by the gods because it is pious, or is what is pious pious because it is loved by the gods? The expression 'what is pious' at the beginning will be treated as meaning 'whatever is pious' and thus the whole question is universally quantified, the domain of quantification being pious acts. Let us select an arbitrary pious act, a, from this domain. Then the above can be expressed more perspicuously as:

I. a is loved by the gods because a is pious
II. a is pious because a is loved by the gods.

Both Socrates and Euthyphro accept I and reject II. Let us agree with this for the time being; we will return to it at the end of the paper since it raises a question about why the gods love what they do. Another important question is the sense of 'because' in I and II; this will be discussed shortly. Note, however, that the acceptance of I and the rejection of II does not depend on a difference in sense of 'because'; it is the same in both. The acceptance and rejection depends on grounds other than ambiguity in the use of 'because'.

Euthyphro at first fails to understand the question at the beginning of the previous paragraph so Socrates digresses to explain an aspect of it. First he seeks Euthyphro's agreement that passive states of a thing such as being carried, being led, and being seen are distinct from the respective activities of carrying, leading, and seeing. To this is also added being loved and loving. Granted this distinction between passivity and activity, which of each respective pair arises because of which? Thus Socrates asks: is a thing being carried because someone carries it, or does someone carry the thing because the thing is being carried? The former question is given a positive answer, the latter a negative answer. Let us express these two 'because' claims as follows, where O is some object:

A (for 'accept'): O is carried (led, seen) because someone carries (leads, sees) O.
R (for 'reject'): Someone carries (leads, sees) O because O is carried (led, seen).

Socrates tries to express the general principle which lies behind the carrying, leading, and seeing examples. Very roughly, we could say that certain passive states can be ascribed to a thing because of the activity performed on the thing, but not conversely. What is important here is the claim, surely correct, about the asymmetry of the because relation in such cases—what kind of because relation will be discussed shortly. For convenience let us call this the active-passive principle.

The next step is to show that being loved and loving are an instance of this principle just like the three pairs already discussed. Thus we are to accept that O is loved because someone loves O; we are to reject that someone loves O because O is loved. There is an ambiguity in the latter which must be set aside. A person, perhaps unsure of what he should love, may love O
because O is loved by others. But this is not what is intended by the rejected claim understood as an instance of the active-passive principle.

Finally now consider the case where O is the pious act a, and ‘someone’ is taken to be all the gods. We are to accept that a is loved by all the gods because all the gods love a; we are to reject that all the gods love a because a is loved by all the gods. Introducing ‘god-loved’ for ‘loved by all the gods’ we may express the above as:

A1: a is god-loved because all the gods love a
R1: all the gods love a because a is god-loved.

The accepted and rejected claims enter importantly into Socrates’ criticism of Euthyphro’s proposed definition. Also the precise import of ‘because’ in both will be discussed shortly. However note that the sense of ‘because’ is the same for A1 as for R1. The acceptance of A1 and rejection of R1 depends on the asymmetry implicit in the active-passive principle and not because of an ambiguity in ‘because’.

Now an argument, very like the one advanced by Socrates, can be given against the definition. Take (I), which Socrates and Euthyphro accept, and substitute ‘god-loved’ for ‘pious’ according to the definition. Then we get: a is loved by the gods (i.e. all the gods love a) because a is god-loved. This is the rejected R1. How can we go from something agreed to be true to something agreed to be false by substitution of alleged definitional equivalents? Only if the definition is false. Again consider (II) which Socrates and Euthyphro reject and make the same substitution. Then we get: a is god-loved because a is loved by the gods (i.e. all the gods love a). This is the acceptable A1. How can we go from something agreed to be false to something agreed to be true by substitution of alleged definitional equivalents? Only if the definition is false. So on two counts Euthyphro’s definition must be rejected because it fails the test of substitution salva veritate.

There are modern qualms about this argument. The word ‘because’ occurs in (I), (II), A1, and R1. This word can mean explanation or reason in which case it gives rise to an intensional relation. As is well known the principle of substitution of equivalents salva veritate does not hold in intensional contexts. In particular, if (I) and (II) are taken to provide explanations or reasons then the substitutions made are not legitimate. So the above arguments are invalid. Socrates and Plato would not be aware of this modern formal restriction on substitution. But it does not follow that they would not recognise as invalid a particular instance of this Fregean principle of substitution just as it would not follow that they would not recognise as invalid (or valid) particular instances of some syllogism before Aristotle gave a formal theory of the syllogism. So, without making Socrates and Plato prescient with respect to modern principles of logic, we should inter-
pret them as reasoning, or attempting to reason, in accordance with the principles of logic.

We need an interpretation of I and II which will permit the required substitution, and which will leave us with plausible readings of A1 and R1. Note that the sense of the word 'because' must be the same in the argument from the true premise I to the false conclusion R1 and in the argument from the false premise II to the true conclusion A1. Also the sense of 'because' in which we accept I and reject II must be the same for both. There is no hint in Socrates that the grounds for accepting I and rejecting II depend on different senses of 'because', and this is correct. The same applies for A1 and R1. Thus 'because' must have the same sense in I, II, A1, and R1.

Note also that the principle of substitution employed is not that for merely extensionally equivalent terms but definitionally equivalent terms. This means that in some intensional contexts, such as modal contexts, definitionally equivalent expressions may be substituted salva veritate but not merely extensionally equivalent expressions. So an important question is: what kind of context does 'because' represent so that substitution of definitional equivalents is permitted thereby making Socrates' argument valid?

First let us consider one non-intensional context. Let us interpret 'because' as the thoroughly extensional relation of cause. Then we could revise our understanding of I and II as follows:

I' a's being pious causes the gods' loving a
II' the gods' loving a causes a's being pious.

Here we hold the view that the gods are causally affected by the piety of an act so that they love it. And we could agree that the causality is asymmetrical thereby accepting I' but rejecting II'. This seems a not implausible view of the gods; they are such that they are causally affected by the piety of any act to love it, or by its impiety to hate it. Under such an interpretation the gods do not love a for the reason that a is pious. If 'because' were interpreted as reason then the very feature of intensionality that we are trying to avoid by interpreting it as a material causal connection would be reintroduced.

Now follow through the substitutions due to Euthyphro's definition of 'being pious'. From I' we get a new version of R1, viz. R2:

R2 a's being god-loved causes the gods' loving a.

From II' we get a new version of A1, viz. A2:

A2 the gods' loving a causes a's being god-loved.

Can we sensibly treat the relation between the passive state of being god-loved and the activity of the gods' loving a as a causal relation? Socrates did want us to recognise that being carried (led, seen) is distinct from carrying (leading, seeing); also being loved (or god-loved) is distinct from loving (or
god-loving). They are distinct because the former cases are passive states while the latter cases are activities. But are they so distinct that a causal relation could hold one way between them? If we say ‘Yes’ to this then we can argue from the true I' to the false R2 by definitional substitution, and from the false II' to the true A2 by the same substitution. This by-passes all qualms about substitution into intensional contexts; so Socrates’ argument against Euthyphro succeeds. If we say ‘No’ to this then the argument from the true I’ to the false R2 stands. But now R2 is false for the reason that we do not agree that there can be causal relations either way between a’s being god-loved and the gods’ loving a. Formerly we rejected R2 not because there was no such causal relation but because there was one but in R2 it went the wrong way. Thus Socrates’ argument against R2 is irrelevant when ‘because’ is interpreted as ‘cause’. However does the argument from II to A2 stand? No. A2 is now false because it is denied that any causal relation at all holds between the activity of the gods’ loving a and the passive state of a being god-loved. Thus we argue from the false II by substitution to the false A2 thereby losing one half of Socrates’ argument against Euthyphro’s definition.

Which answer is correct? The ‘No’ answer is more correct because even though being god-loved and god-loving are distinct it does not follow that they are so distinct that a contingent causal connection can hold between them, no matter which way the causal relation goes. Causal claims are synthetic, but A1 and R1 have an air of analyticity about them that can not be dispersed in A2 and R2 when ‘because’ is interpreted as cause. To see this consider A and R from which these are derived. A says: O is carried because someone carries O. This claim is true in virtue of its meaning. The predicate ‘carried’, a passive form of a verb, can be applied to O by virtue of the meaning of ‘someone carries O’, which contains an active verb. The direction of the because relation is also correct; the passive state of being carried arises from the activity of carrying, and not conversely. The converse is given by R: someone carries O because O is carried. Here the direction of the because relation is the wrong way. R expresses not simply the true meaning claim that by virtue of the meaning of the passive sentence ‘O is carried’ the active form ‘someone carries O’ can be derived. R also claims something about the direction of the because relation that is in conflict with the active-passive principle; so R is false.

How else might we interpret ‘because’ in A1 and R1? We can not interpret it as reason. The ‘because’ of I could be interpreted in the sense of the reason an agent gives for something the agent does; the reason the gods give for loving a is that a is pious. However it makes no sense to give this interpretation to II, and it was agreed that the sense of ‘because’ in which we accept I and reject II must be the same. It is also evident that ‘because’ in A
and R can not mean reason in the sense of the reason an agent gives for acting. In A and R we are concerned with the relation between an activity performed on a thing and the passive state which arises in a thing as the result of the activity. Why a person may want to carry object O is a matter that concerns that person's reason for carrying O. The acceptability of A and the unacceptability of R have nothing to do with the person's reasons for acting the way he does. So, even though the reason is a plausible interpretation of 'because' in I, it is quite implausible for II, A, and R; and thereby A1 and R1. Moreover the reason interpretation of 'because' is psychologistic and this gives rise to a highly intensional context thereby precluding the use of the principle of substitution of definitional equivalents salva veritate. What is left for a plausible interpretation of 'because'?

There is one further sense of 'because' that can be considered, that of explanation of the non-psychologistic sort that does not involve an agent's reason for acting. When we wish to explain some state of affairs some other state of affairs may be given as the explanans, or part of the explanans. Thus an explanation of, say, the length of shadow cast by a stick will contain in the explanans other states of affairs concerning the length of the stick and the angle of the sun; for a full deductive explanation of the sort required by Hempel's model of explanation laws of geometry and light are required as well, but in incomplete explanations, or explanation sketches, these may be omitted. Such a non-psychologistic explanation can serve as an interpretation of 'because' in I and II:

I" that a is pious explains why all the gods love a
II" that all the gods love a explains why a is pious.

We have yet to give reasons why Socrates and Euthyphro accept I and reject II, and why they would also accept I" and reject II" with 'because' replaced by 'explains why'. At the moment only the appropriateness of the replacement is of concern. 'Explains why' is a quite common sense of 'because'. It also preserves the right kind of priority in the order of explanation because it is an asymmetrical relation. In addition if we found cause a not implausible interpretation of 'because' we should have far fewer qualms about explains why as an interpretation.

Consider now A1 and R1 similarly interpreted. We have:

A3 that all the gods love a explains why a is god-loved
R3 that a is god-loved explains why all the gods love a.

As was argued three paragraphs back A and A1 are analytic. The same point about meaning also holds for A3. More to the point, the direction of the because relation is also preserved with the explains why relation. The passive state of being god-loved is explained by the activity of god-loving. The converse is not true and so R3 is to be rejected while A3 is accepted.

Can we interpret Socrates as arguing from the true I" to the false R3 by
substitution of Euthyphro’s definition, and as arguing from the false II “
to the true A3 by the same substitution? The only obstacle might be the inten-
sionality of the explains why context. The intensionality here is not of such
a high order as found in psychological contexts involving epistemic notions
or claims about an agent’s reason for acting. But intensional it still is.
However remember that Socratic definitions themselves are also intensional
to some degree. They do not express the mere extensional equivalence of the
property to be defined, (e.g. being pious) and the alleged defining property.
They are at least as strong as necessary equivalence. Is the equivalence as
strong as meaning equivalence, or synonymy? Some synonyms are easy to
give and so there should not be the trouble there is in finding an answer to
Socrates’ “What is X?” questions where X stands for such things as piety,
justice, virtue, and so on. Socratic definitions are at least thought to give us
an analysis of a concept by means of other concepts though it is unclear as
to precisely what this means. Let us say that Socratic definitions give us
analytical definitional equivalences of properties such as being pious which
are at least as strong as, if not stronger than, necessary equivalences.

Can substitutions of Socratic definitions be made salva veritate in explana-
tory contexts such as I “ and II “? I think that there can be such substitu-
tions in intensional contexts which are not as strongly intensional as the
definition itself. The substitution of Socratic definitions may be made salva
veritate in modal contexts involving necessity, possibility, etc. The context
of explains why need be no more strong than this. Without considering the
general principles involved here an example may serve to illustrate. Often
Plato cites examples of definitions from mathematics as paradigms of the
kinds of definitions he seeks (see for example Theaetetus 147D-148A). So
let us take one: being spherical is having all the points on a surface equidis-
tant from a given point. Let us now take an explanatory claim such as: that
a solid is spherical explains why it can roll smoothly on flat surfaces. Upon
making the substitution for ‘spherical’ the explanation still holds: that a
solid has all points on its surface equidistant from a given point explains
why it can roll smoothly on flat surfaces. Both explanatory claims are ex-
planation sketches that may need to be filled out differently according as
whether the definiendum (‘spherical’) or its definiens occurs in the ex-
planans. But it is clear that such definitional substitution preserves truth in
this intensional explains why context. Note also that a similar definition of
‘sphere’ can survive substitution into modal contexts. Consider a theorem
of geometry which expresses a necessary truth: it is necessary that one and
only one sphere can circumscribe a tetrahedron. The truth of this claim re-
 mains unchanged upon substitution. Thus substitution of definiens for defi-
niendum of a Socratic analytical definitional equivalence does preserve
truth in modal and explains why contexts. However no similar substitution
can preserve truth in epistemic contexts (try the following: person P believes that spheres bring good luck) or in contexts involving explanation in terms of an agent’s reason (try the following: the reason P crossed the road was that he wanted to buy a sphere).

It is clear, then, that there can be substitution of Socratic analytical definitions in intensional contexts that are not as strongly intensional as the definition itself. Modal and explanatory contexts, but not epistemic or reason-explanation contexts, are examples of such contexts. This can be viewed as an important requirement on Socratic definition. Earlier we noted four conditions for Socratic definition. Now we have a fifth. Not any common property can serve as a definition; only those properties which can survive substitution in explanatory contexts are to be admitted. This is hinted at by Socrates at 11A where he draws a distinction between the ‘ousia’ (essence, nature) of piety as distinct from a ‘pathos’ (affection) of it, the affection of piety being what has happened to it viz., its being loved by the gods. Clearly what happens to piety, its being god-loved, can not be its essence. Socrates does not say what essence is, but the search for essential definitions is the goal of all of Socrates’ ‘What is X?’ questions. Whatever else essential definition is, it must be such as to permit substitution into intensional contexts salva veritate at least as strong as explains why contexts.

Finally it remains to discuss why Socrates and Euthyphro accept I” and reject II”, important premises in the argument against Euthyphro’s definition. There are really four possibilities here each of which needs discussion.

(i) **Accept I” and reject II”**

Both Socrates and Euthyphro want an explanation of why the gods love act a. This is provided by a feature of the act itself, viz. its piety. Moral features of acts and persons can explain why the gods love them. However this is not consistent with Euthyphro’s definition. So with hindsight Euthyphro should not have accepted I”.

(ii) **Reject I” and accept II”**

Socrates and Euthyphro do not say why they do not adopt (ii). In rejecting I” nothing is said about why the gods love what they do. But accepting II” does explain why something is pious; this is because the gods love it. The piety of act a is now not an intrinsic feature of the act which is worthy of someone’s love. Rather piety is now extrinsic to the act and arises simply because of a feeling of love the gods have towards it. Are moral features of persons or acts objective, or do they arise out of attitudes towards them or feelings about them? Socrates and Euthyphro in not adopting (ii) seem to be denying this.
(iii) Accept I" and II"

This is not a real possibility as one state of affairs both explains and is explained by the other. Explanation must, however, be an asymmetrical relation.

(iv) Reject I" and II"

Given his definition Euthyphro should adopt (iv). The definition requires a strong sense of equivalence between piety and whatever defines it. However neither can explain the other if they are definitionally equivalent because explanation requires the distinctness of what is explained and what does the explaining. So Euthyphro should reject both the explanatory claims that Socrates offers him; he has been too hasty in accepting one of them. But this hastiness in adopting (i) is motivated by his belief that the love of the gods can have a moral explanation.

What are the consequences of this double rejection? Whatever explains why the gods love a it can not be because a is pious. And whatever explains why a is pious it can not be because the gods love a. These explanations are not only not available to us on Euthyphro’s definition—they are not available to the gods either. What is pious is just what they love; neither can have any role in explaining the other. A previously hidden aspect of the definition is now clear; neither explanation I" nor II" can be countenanced.

What can explain why the gods love the acts, or persons, they do? Anything but the piety of the person or the act. It could be that the explanation remains unknown to us mortals. It also leaves open the possibility that the gods love what we find outrageously immoral but we would be forced to say that it was pious just because it was god-loved. The gods may even be capricious, constantly changing their minds about what they love thereby temporarily endowing an act or person with piety. Or there could be an explanation of why they love some act or person that we could find intelligible or acceptable. But this can not be due to any intrinsic moral feature of the act or person such as its piety. If the gods love it then that, ipso facto, makes it pious.

Euthyphro can escape Socrates' objection to his definition at the cost of rejecting both I" and II". But in doing so he loses a good moral explanation of why the gods love something. Their loving something becomes arbitrary or inscrutable. Some religious believers may want to accept Euthyphro’s definition and give up the explanatory claim I". They accept that there is no moral explanation of why the gods love an act in terms of a moral feature of the act. It is just a brute fact, perhaps revealed to us, that the gods love what they do love.

But why shouldn’t the gods give explanations for what they love of the
kind that we might give for what we love, viz., that what we love has some worthy feature, e.g. piety?

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