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SOCRATIC DEFINITION IN PLATO'S DIALOGUES:  
CONDITIONS ON AN ADEQUATE ANSWER TO "WHAT IS F-NESS?"

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degree of

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By

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SOCRATIC DEFINITION IN PLATO’S DIALOGUES:  
CONDITIONS ON AN ADEQUATE ANSWER TO “WHAT IS F-NESS?”

A DISSERTATION APPROVED FOR THE  
DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY

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## ABSTRACT

It is well-known feature of a number of Plato's dialogues that when Socrates asks his infamous, "what is F-ness?" question, where "F-ness" stands for "virtue" or "piety" or "courage" or "beauty" or "temperance," no one gives him the answer he wants. This may lead one to believe even that Socrates has no adequate answer in mind. Nevertheless, by examining Socrates' arguments, his explanations of what he wants, and his model answers, one can specify the conditions an adequate answer to "what is F-ness?" must meet.

Socrates recognizes a distinction between formal and material definitional conditions. In this dissertation, I concentrate on the material conditions rather than the formal ones for two reasons: Socrates allows a great deal of syntactic flexibility, and many answers he regards as formally adequate resist classification by contemporary standards. I argue that Socrates is committed to four material adequacy conditions in answers to "what is F-ness?" He is committed to the extensional equivalence condition, that the *definiens* picks out all and only instances of the *definiendum*, the property sameness condition, that the *definiens* is a property identical to the *definiendum*, the explanation condition, that the *definiens* explains instances of the *definiendum*, and the semantic completeness condition, that statements about F-nesses involving evaluative predicates do not change their truth-value, regardless of context.

## Chapter I

### Introduction

Even a first-time reader of Plato's shorter dialogues will notice that when the character Socrates asks about the nature of courage in Plato's *Laches*, or of temperance in *Charmides*, or of piety in *Euthyphro*, or of virtue in *Meno* and *Protagoras*, or of beauty in the *Hippias Major* or of justice in *Republic* Book I, no one gives him the answer he wants.<sup>1</sup> These dialogues, which seem to end without reaching any solid conclusions, are called "aporetic" because *ἀπορία* is the word for "perplexity" in Greek. Generating perplexity has an important methodological purpose, too: Socrates believes it is necessary for stimulating the desire to find out what one doesn't know. It drives him to ask his questions in the first place.<sup>2</sup>

The characters in these dialogues of search end their conversations befuddled about how to answer the question that dominates most of the dialogue. One wonders what sort of answer would satisfy Socrates. After all, he is to blame—at least in part—for an answer's failure; he sets up the conditions the answer has to meet; his interlocutors just don't meet them.<sup>3</sup>

The aim of this dissertation is to provide an account of the conditions Socrates expects to be met in the answers to his questions. Socrates establishes these adequacy

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<sup>1</sup> I distinguish *Republic* Book I because it belongs to a group of "Socratic" dialogues, according to a widely-embraced tradition. This is point I will take up in greater detail later.

<sup>2</sup> See Socrates' recognition of his own ignorance at *Apology* 21B-22B.

<sup>3</sup> "Interlocutor" is the standard term for anyone caught up in conversation with Socrates in Plato's dialogues. The Greek equivalent of this word, *προσδιαλεγόμενος*, occurs infrequently in Plato (Beversluis 2000: 18).

conditions for his questions in two ways: by explaining what he wants-often through model answers-and by offering objections to the answers that his interlocutors give. In these ways, Socrates supplies the guidelines to answering his questions. So, the Socrates of these dialogues is not necessarily the destructive critic he is sometimes made out to be.<sup>4</sup> If he is not the destructive critic he is sometimes made out to be, then we can assume reasonably that a generalized account of what he expects can be gleaned from a subset of Plato's dialogues.

Yet, to talk of Socrates rather than Plato might seem odd, if by "Socrates" I meant the historical figure. Socrates appears also in the writings of the 5<sup>th</sup> century comic playwright, Aristophanes, and in the writings of a 5<sup>th</sup> century general, Xenophon. As contemporaries of the historical Socrates, all of these authors, Plato, Aristophanes, and Xenophon, would have had privileged access to Socrates, the man. But their views of him are so widely divergent, all cannot be right. And, it may be the case that they have all gotten him wrong. This complexity has come to be known in the literature as the "Problem of the Historical Socrates."<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> For the "Socrates as destructive critic" view, see Grote 1875. The argument in favor of viewing Socrates as merely destructive critic is that if Plato had more positive views in these dialogues, he would have written in a straightforward, expository style. Rudebusch argues that this premise is false: the dialogue form is more effective pedagogy (Rudebusch 1999: 11-17).

<sup>5</sup> Aristophanes presents an unflattering portrait of Socrates quite opposed to the description contained in Plato's dialogues. In *The Clouds*, Aristophanes presents the character Socrates as the embodiment of two schools of thought: the natural philosophers, whose primary investigations concerned the movements of the heavens and the material composition of the earth, and the sophists, whose activity mainly consisted in teaching young, wealthy Athenians how to speak persuasively in the assembly.

Plato's Socrates is famous for his disavowal of knowledge. This removes him from the company of Sophists who claim to be able to teach virtue. Xenophon's portrait of Socrates is in sharp contrast, with Socrates asserting with confidence a great many moral doctrines, instead of disavowing knowledge of such things.

One obvious way to side-step this problem is to limit my discussion to Plato's Socrates. In so doing, however, I do not obviate all difficulties associated with the problem of historical Socrates. Socrates-the historical figure-wrote nothing himself, and Plato is the author of the dialogues.<sup>6</sup> And if Plato is the author of the dialogues, would it not follow that Plato's views are expressed by the character Socrates? Not necessarily: As the author, Plato puts himself in the background, and distances himself from the main action of the conversation in all the dialogues. Plato never has a speaking part himself and he is mentioned only three times in the dialogues.<sup>7</sup> It can be questioned whether the character Socrates represents Plato's views at all. Even so, I can still refer to the views associated with the character Socrates in Plato's dialogues. A character in a dialogue needn't correspond to an actual historical figure in order to be philosophically interesting. It has been argued at length, however, that Plato offers us two different Socrateses in his dialogues, and the one appearing in the shorter, aporetic dialogues represents the historical figure of Socrates.<sup>8</sup>

The subset of Plato's dialogues that provide the impetus and textual background for this project are the following: *Charmides*, *Laches*, *Euthyphro*, *Republic* Book I, *Meno*, *Hippias Major*, *Protagoras*, and *Gorgias*. These dialogues share a number of features that constitute them as a group and make them suited to the scope of my project. First, Socrates is the main speaker and philosophical hero of these dialogues. Second,

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<sup>6</sup> Some dialogues attributed to Plato are generally considered spurious: *Second Alcibiades*, *Hipparchus*, *Rival Lovers*, *Theages*, *Minos*, *Epinomis*, *Definitions*, *On Justice*, *On Virtue*, *Demodocus*, *Sisyphus*, *Halcyon*, *Eryxias*, *Axiochus* (Cooper, ed. 1997). Other dialogues are controversial, i.e. it is not agreed whether Plato is the author: *Alcibiades*, *Hippias Major*, *Clitophon*, *Letters*, and *Epigrams* (Ibid).

<sup>7</sup> See *Ap.* 34A, *Ap.* 38B and *Phd.* 59B.

<sup>8</sup> See Vlastos 1991.

they are aporetic: they end without seeming to have answered the question that occupies most of the dialogue. Third, they tend to focus on attempting to provide a definition of a particular virtue in a dialectical discussion. In so doing, they provide the most useful texts for recovering Socrates' definitional commitments, which occur in these dialogues. Finally, this group of dialogues also corresponds to a smaller set of Plato's early or transitional dialogues, i.e. those dialogues that better express the views of historical Socrates rather than Plato's own mature thought. Plato's other dialogues tend to lack these features. They are not aporetic, not explicitly definitional in that the dialogues is mainly concerned with testing definitions, and more expositional, which makes them less suited to the purpose of this dissertation.

This introduction is structured in way to mirror the title of the dissertation: The first part of this introduction is a short justification for the division between Socratic and Platonic dialogues, and locating the dialogues that are the textual background to this project within the former group;<sup>9</sup> the second part of this introduction is a clarification of Socratic definition, as opposed to other kinds of definition; the third part of this introduction introduces two objections to the interpretive approach I advocate. Finally, the fourth part of the introduction describes the general structure of the rest of the dissertation.

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<sup>9</sup> This section doesn't constitute a complete argument for adopting this division; it serves to clarify that I am working within a tradition, which entitles this project to be called "Socratic" rather than "Platonic" despite the fact that Plato, and not Socrates, is the author of the dialogues recognized as genuine.

## A. Socratic

In the last fifty years of scholarship on Plato, the dominant interpretation, especially in the Anglophone world, groups a subset of Plato's dialogues together, supposing that they were written early in Plato's career and represent, more or less, the views of historical Socrates shared by the young Plato.<sup>10</sup> Later on, the figure of Socrates presents Plato's more developed views, markedly different in some ways from those of Socrates. Plato's abundant writing is likely to have taken place over the course of many years. It is also likely that, like most philosophers working over a great span of time, Plato changed his mind along the way;<sup>11</sup> thus, Plato's dialogues are sometimes classified chronologically, according to early, transitional, middle and late periods.<sup>12</sup> Some recent work in Platonic scholarship attempts to undermine this dominant, "developmental" perspective of Plato's dialogues, however.<sup>13</sup>

The rise of this developmental perspective comes in part from a principle of charity. Some of the views expressed within the corpus as a whole are so widely divergent, Vlastos once quipped, as able to be contained simultaneously only in the mind of a schizophrenic.<sup>14</sup> Such harsh rebuke aside, supposing a moderate developmental

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<sup>10</sup> Vlastos points out that if you maintain that through a "Socrates" in Plato, we come to know the Socrates of history, you must argue for it, which is what he does (Vlastos 1991: 44-80). One may still be agnostic about the historical accuracy of the character Socrates in the aporetic dialogues. See Benson 2000 and Santas 1979. In line with this approach, there's no difference between "Socrates" and "early Plato."

<sup>11</sup> Contrast this "developmentalist" position with a "unitarian" one, whose claim is that Plato composed the dialogues with complete views in mind, hiding them under the dialectical exchange. Each dialogue reveals some aspect of these views, and textual inconsistencies are explained by Plato's varying motives. See Kahn 1996; Annas 1999.

<sup>12</sup> See Vlastos 1991, Penner 1992, and Benson 2000.

<sup>13</sup> See Annas (1999: 31-51).

<sup>14</sup> See Vlastos (1991: 46).

approach in the composition of Plato's dialogues allows us to make sense of some of the philosophical conflicts within the dialogues.<sup>15</sup>

According to this chronology, then, the dialogues that are the textual background to this project that belong in the early category are: *Charmides*, *Laches*, *Euthyphro*, *Republic* Book I, *Protagoras* and *Gorgias*. Those dialogues belonging to the transitional group are: *Meno*, and *Hippias Major*. Thus, arguments based on these texts may well be entitled to being called, "Socratic." One objection to this concerns the transitional dialogues. Transitional dialogues are distinguished by their combination of Socratic and Platonic elements. But one can only identify these dialogues as transitional by presupposing that they contain both Socratic and Platonic elements. So, how do I know that these are transitional? They contain both Socratic and Platonic elements. And how is it that they contain both Socratic and Platonic elements? They are transitional dialogues. This appears to have created a circle. This is why, perhaps, some commentators have preferred to emphasize the argumentative rather than the chronological aspect of the dialogues. But even according to the argumentative criteria, the texts for *this* project wind up being in the Socratic category.

A recent account distinguishes the Socratic dialogues from the other dialogues on philosophical grounds. Dancy distinguishes Socratic from doctrinal dialogues and then

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<sup>15</sup> One of the main conflicts arises from two incompatible views of the soul. At *Apology* 25B5-26A8 the character Socrates argues that no one harms intentionally and at *Meno* 77B6-78B8, he argues that everyone desires what is genuinely good. Thus, desire is rational. At *Republic* Book IV, however, the character Socrates argues that there is an appetitive part of the soul. So, desire is irrational. One way to resolve this conflict is to suppose that Plato changed his mind about the nature of the soul. During the composition of the early dialogues, he thought the soul was unitary. In later writings, he thought it composed of parts.

subdivides the Socratic dialogues into definitional and non-definitional dialogues.<sup>16</sup> The character Socrates produces negative arguments without committing himself to the metaphysical view of the Theory of Forms.<sup>17</sup> The dialogues in which Plato introduces The Theory of Forms are therefore called, “doctrinal” because the character Socrates provides arguments for the Theory of Forms. The definitional dialogues are identified by the following criteria: (1) Socrates is the main speaker; (2) the main task is defining something with the aim of resolving some practical, ethical issue; (3) the task is left undone at the end of the dialogue.<sup>18</sup> These Socratic, definitional dialogues are: *Charmides*, *Euthyphro*, *Hippias Major*, *Laches*, *Lysis*, and *Republic I*. The Socratic non-definitional dialogues according to this schema are: *Apology*, *Crito*, *Euthydemus*, *Hippias Minor*, *Ion*, *Menexenus*, *Protagoras* and *Gorgias*. The doctrinal dialogues are: *Meno*, *Phaedo* and *Symposium*. According to this schematic, too, the background dialogues for this project are included under the heading of Socratic dialogues. So, they are also entitled to being called, “Socratic.” The exception to this schema is *Meno*, which is designated as a transitional dialogue according to Vlastos’s chronological scheme, but doctrinal, according to Dancy’s argument scheme. This conflict is easily obviated once we realize that the first third of the *Meno* –up until Meno introduces the paradox of inquiry at 80D5-8–develops exactly like a Socratic, definitional, or early dialogue. In fact, this portion of the *Meno* provides the most sophisticated and detailed discussion of

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<sup>16</sup> See Dancy 2004.

<sup>17</sup> See Dancy (2004: 4-6).

<sup>18</sup> He also advances the claim that Socrates has no positive view except for the Socratic paradoxes. By “Socratic paradoxes,” Dancy means the claims that (a) no one does wrong voluntarily, that (b) virtue is really one, and that (c) virtue is knowledge.

Socrates' presuppositions about definitions.<sup>19</sup> Thus, it is not only permitted in a discussion of Socratic definition, it is required.

One dialogue among the group cited as textual background for this dissertation brings up the issue of authenticity. Though *Hippias Major* exemplifies Socrates' interest in definitions, commentators have doubted that it was written by Plato at all.<sup>20</sup> The issue of authenticity can be a tricky one, especially because it is not immune to the subjective interpretations of the commentators. But in fact, the evidence we have for doubting the authenticity of *Hippias Major* is not conclusive. The historical presumption is in favor of regarding *Hippias Major* as authentic. Woodruff says that *Hippias Major* has "as good a claim to Platonic authorship as do the *Ion* and *Euthyphro*." <sup>21</sup> And I certainly don't doubt the *Euthyphro*'s authenticity. It is helpful to know that this issue of authenticity arises only in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when Schleiermacher doubted the authenticity of *Hippias Major* because of the uncharacteristic rudeness with which Socrates engages Hippias. This is just an example of how commentators can be motivated by their subjective impressions.

Thus far, I have justified calling this project "Socratic" by appealing to two prominent interpreters of Plato: to one who distinguishes the dialogues chronologically and to another who distinguishes them philosophically. In both cases, the dialogues cited for this discussion fall into the "early Plato" or "Socratic" group. Lest this preliminary discussion be an appeal to authority, I offer some more grounds on which we can distinguish the Socratic from the Platonic dialogues: Stylometric analysis and Aristotle's

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<sup>19</sup> See Dancy 2004 and Nakhnikian 1971.

<sup>20</sup> See Woodruff (1982: 93-103).

<sup>21</sup> Ibid, 94

testimony about Socrates. The development of stylometric analysis came about for the most part to offset the subjective interpretations of the interpreters in establishing a rough chronological development among Plato's dialogues. Aristotle's testimony provides a more independent portrait of Socrates.

#### A.1. Stylometry

Stylometric analysis focuses on certain features of an author's writing style.<sup>22</sup> Tracking these features of an author's style helps-it is supposed-to establish a rough chronology. This chronology is supported in concert with, ideally, the inter-textual references between dialogues, and doctrinal differences contained therein. With this technique, some commentators organize Plato's dialogues into a fine-grained analysis of the position of each of the dialogues in their order of writing. Some of this is aided by a few inter-textual references which entail that the *Republic* was written before *Timaeus*, or that *Meno* was written before *Phaedo*. In any case, stylometry charts a number of unconscious features of Plato's writing, e.g. responses from the interlocutors, e.g. Greek equivalents for "truly" or "indeed," to organize Plato's dialogues into their order of composition. Stylometry provides a way to organize the dialogues along chronological lines even when they do not share structural features.

Before the advent of stylometric analysis, it might have been tempting to group Plato's dialogues according to their content. Following this suggestion, we'd divide the dialogues differently. For example, *Euthyphro*, *Apology*, *Crito*, and *Phaedo* compose a

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<sup>22</sup> Work on chronology tracks stylistic features of Plato's work such as reply formulae and the appearance of hiatus (a word ending with a vowel is elided because it precedes a word beginning with a vowel) has a long and detailed history. See Brandwood 1992.

dramatic unit. In *Euthyphro*, Socrates is at the footsteps of the courthouse, answering his indictment. In *Apology*, he defends himself against charges brought against him. In *Crito*, he is in jail, discussing whether he ought to escape. In *Phaedo*, the eponymous interlocutor relates Socrates last day in prison when he is sentenced to death by drinking hemlock. This grouping according to dramatic development, however, is in conflict with stylometric analysis. According to chronology, *Phaedo* is a middle Plato dialogue, and according to argument, a doctrinal dialogue.

## A.2. Aristotle's Testimony

As a student of Plato, Aristotle would have privileged access to Socratic views. His testimony about Socrates suggests a portrait of Socrates found in some dialogues, but not found in others. Thus, we take his testimony about Socrates as additional support for this division between Socratic dialogues and the rest.

Aristotle says that Socrates only asked questions because he said that he didn't know.<sup>23</sup> So, according to Aristotle, Socrates was a question-asker.

This question-asker portrait is certainly the portrait we get in a number of Plato's dialogues. In *Laches*, *Charmides*, *Euthyphro* and the first third of *Meno*, we find Socrates doing what Aristotle tells us he does. Interlocutors struggle to articulate accounts of the nature of courage, temperance, piety and virtue that would satisfy him. But all of them

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<sup>23</sup> See *SE* 183B6-8. The nature of Socrates' disavowals of knowledge is a hotly debated topic. Some recommend that a number of these disavowals are taken ironically, and that their purpose is to disarm the interlocutor. We see this in Thrasymachus' response to Socrates in *Republic* Book I: he says that Socrates is being coy. Whether Socrates' disavowals are meant to be taken ironically, or whether some are meant to be taken ironically, but not others doesn't make a difference for my point here. Aristotle doesn't comment on the nature of Socratic disavowals of knowledge; he only says that this is what Socrates does. So, it is likely that those dialogues wherein Socrates' disavowal of knowledge appears are Socratic and not Platonic dialogues.

fail. Typically an interlocutor offers a definition, and Socrates spends the rest of the dialogue criticizing it. In the end, the interlocutor is more confused than when he began his discussion, so we are led to believe.

If we turn to *Republic* Book IV we find that the definition of justice which Socrates offers himself is not scrutinized the way the definition of piety is in Plato's *Euthyphro*. The suggestion, in accordance with Aristotle's testimony, is to view Socrates of the middle and later period dialogues representing Plato's mature view: he has turned away from the quest for definitions.<sup>24</sup>

If we consider Books II-IX of the *Republic* as Platonic dialogues, then we can explain this lack of scrutiny over the definition of justice: Plato's interest moves beyond the scrutinizing of definitions customarily associated with Socrates, who didn't know the answer to "what is Justice?" The Platonic Socrates then supplies an answer himself to the question, "what is Justice?" Socrates reveals that justice is a harmonious arrangement of parts of the soul.<sup>25</sup> This definition of justice is not then taken up to be criticized, but forms an essential part of the argument that it is important to maintain the justice of one's soul.

Those dialogues that embody the question and answer style traditionally associated with Socrates together with Socrates' disavowals of knowledge are likely to express Socratic rather than Platonic views, according to Aristotle.

So, based on the appeal to both the chronological and philosophical division of the dialogues, stylometric analysis, and Aristotle's testimony, I have justified why this

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<sup>24</sup> Plato may not have abandoned the criteria for good definitions, however (Nakhnikian 1971: 138).

<sup>25</sup> See *R.* 444C-445C.

project is entitled to being called, “Socratic” rather than “Platonic.” The dialogues cited in this dissertation, *Charmides*, *Laches*, *Euthyphro*, *Republic* Book I, *Meno*, *Hippias Major*, *Protagoras*, and *Gorgias*, make up a smaller subset of dialogues traditionally thought of as exemplifying the views of historical Socrates.

The argument of this dissertation is intended to cover all and only those dialogues I enumerate above, as such I need a way to refer to Socrates’ question more generally, abstracted from particular contexts where the topic is either courage, or justice, or virtue. I can do this by saying that Socrates’ adequacy conditions are constraints on answers to “what is F-ness?” Here, “F-ness” stands for virtues like courage, which is the main topic of inquiry in *Laches*, or piety, which is the main topic of inquiry in *Euthyphro*, or for non-virtues like quickness, Socrates’ model for courage in *Laches*, or shape, his model for virtue in *Meno*. The use of the term “F-ness” is just a way to generalize Socrates’ question across dialogues.<sup>26</sup> So, an account of adequacy conditions on F-ness will apply no less to courage, beauty or piety than it does to temperance, justice or shape. In other words, “F-ness” stands for F-nesses that are virtues and F-nesses that aren’t.

“Socratic definition” has become shorthand for referring to Socrates’ expectations in answers to “what is F-ness?” Some commentators note that calling an answer to “what is F-ness?” a Socratic definition doesn’t say much.<sup>27</sup> An additional caution against running together answers to “what is F-ness?” with definitions is that we might foist upon Socrates anachronistic features of definitions in general. Nevertheless, there is a long

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<sup>26</sup> Other commentators refer to Socrates’ main question as the “what is the F?” question (Vlastos 1976; Dancy 2004), or as the “what is X?” question (Robinson 1958; Penner 1992; Silverman 2003). For a defense of “F-ness” over “the F,” see Benson 1992.

<sup>27</sup> See Benson (2000: 100).

history of referring to an adequate answer to “what is F-ness?” as a Socratic definition.<sup>28</sup>

I simply follow in this tradition, but I detail some of the reasons to think that what Socrates expects is indeed some kind of definition.

## B. Definition<sup>29</sup>

An oft-quoted passage from Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* tells us that Socrates was the first to have an interest in general definition.<sup>30</sup> No doubt Aristotle’s testimony is responsible for helping to characterize Socrates’ inquiries as the pursuit of definitions. If Aristotle sees in Socrates the genesis of an interest in definition, and since he himself gives an explicit discussion of definition, then we ought to look to Aristotle for a clue into what kind of definition Socrates was after.

The classic view of definition, first explicitly stated by Aristotle, identifies the purpose of giving a definition is to give an account of what it is to be something.<sup>31</sup> Later, Aristotle’s expressions for what it is to be something came to be translated as

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<sup>28</sup> See Woodruff 1982, Sharvy 1972, Nakhnikian 1971, Santas 1979, Nehamas 1975, Beversluis 1974, and Allen 1970.

<sup>29</sup> The word for “definition” in Aristotle, ὁρος, appears only rarely in Plato (*Grg.* 488D1, *Hi. Ma.* 283B2, *Lys.* 209C7, *R.* 331D2). Derived from ὀρίζεσθαι, the word is used by farmers and surveyors to mark off parcels of land. Hence, any contest in which one “distinguishes” or “separates” could appropriate this word (Wolfsdorf 2004). In the same vein, Socrates asks his interlocutor to uniquely identify the F-ness in question. Thus, although the language of definition is slim, we need not deny our use of “Socratic Definition” as what Socrates is after.

<sup>30</sup> “Socrates, however, busied himself with ethical matters and neglected the world of nature as a whole. Rather he sought the universal in these ethical matters, and fixed thought for the first time on definitions” (*Meta.* 987B1-4). See Guthrie (1971: 105), White (1976: 13), Santas (1979: 79), and Dancy (2004: 23-26).

<sup>31</sup> See Smith (1995: 51).

“essence.”<sup>32</sup> Additionally, Socrates’ request in *Euthyphro* that Euthyphro provide him with the οὐσία –a word often translated as “essence”- of piety show Socrates’ activity in harmony with Aristotle’s assessment of him.

As a response to Aristotle, John Locke first formulated the distinction between real and nominal essences in order to maintain that the real essence is not knowable. Only nominal essences are. Clearly Aristotle thought that real essences were knowable and *ex hypothesi*, so did Socrates.

In more contemporary circles, the account that expresses the nominal essence became the nominal definition and the account that expresses the real essence became the real definition. Nominal definitions tend to give the linguistic meaning or use of a noun or expression. Typically, this sort of definition is given in terms of obvious sensible properties. The nominal definition of “water” for example might be “odorless, colorless liquid used for drinking, cooking and bathing.” This sort of definition stops at the level of words. What we are defining are words, not things.

Real definition is a different matter. A real definition specifies the metaphysically necessary and sufficient conditions for something to be of its kind.<sup>33</sup> Typically, such a definition is given in terms of its inner constitution or atomic components. The real definition of “water” is “H<sub>2</sub>O,” for example. This contrasts with nominal definition in that we’re talking about the natural kind here, and not how we use the word. What we should keep in mind is that though we use words in expressing a definition, we do so in

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<sup>32</sup> Aristotle’s discussion of definition occurs in *Top.* I 4-6, VI, VII: 3, *A.Po.* I: 2, 10, II: 3-13, and *Metaph.* Z 4-6, 10, 12, 15 and in H 3, 6. The locution in Greek is “ὁ λόγος τοῦ τί ἦν εἶναι.” The word Roman translators called οὐσία, “*essentia*.”

<sup>33</sup> See the *Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*.

order to explain how something is a member of a certain type. So, in this respect, all definitions are nominal. But if our definitions mean to express the nature of the kind of thing denoted by them, then we are producing real definitions. So, where do we place Socrates in this division? Some commentators, whose views I discuss in chapter six, believe Socratic definitions have important connections with meaning, but most agree that Socrates is after a real definition.<sup>34</sup> The situation is much more complex than this, however. Some have thought of Socrates as performing conceptual analysis, using the ordinary beliefs and linguistic practices of his interlocutors as the data for accounts of F-ness. This cannot be the whole story, especially since Socrates is often at odds with traditional beliefs about the virtues, which he points out to his interlocutors (*La.* 197A1-C4). Moreover, in a number of places, he emphasizes that he doesn't want an account of what people believe: he wants to know what F-ness is.<sup>35</sup>

What can we say about the classification of Socratic definitions? One study in particular has collected all the definitions in the early dialogues that Socrates must regard as formally adequate.<sup>36</sup> Among these definitions, there is a wide syntactic variety of the sorts of things Socrates regards as acceptable. He allows conjunctive definitions, disjunctive definitions, definitions by genus and differentia, and definitions by synonym. But still the vast majority of definitions resist classification. This suggests both that there is an unlimited freedom of expression when it comes to syntactically adequate

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<sup>34</sup> See Penner 1973, Fine 1992, and Irwin 1995.

<sup>35</sup> At *Hi. Ma.* 299B1-3, he says that he isn't after what ordinary people think is fine, but what is genuinely fine.

<sup>36</sup> See Santas (1979: 98-100).

definitions, and that there isn't an understanding of formal adequacy tied to the syntax of the expression. So, in what does formal adequacy consist for Socrates? Socrates' conditions on formal adequacy are seen in the way he responds to some of his interlocutors' answers.<sup>37</sup> In these cases, Socrates often blames himself for not explaining clearly what it is he wants. He interprets his interlocutor, also, as not having understood the question. A discussion of the difference between formal and material adequacy is necessary in order to illustrate that the conditions I argue for in this definition are material. I have eliminated as data for this argument the definitions that Socrates regards as formally inadequate.

#### B.1. Formal and Material Conditions

A number of passages in Plato's dialogues show Socrates displeased with his interlocutors' answers but not because they are false; they do not answer the question he asks.<sup>38</sup> These passages provoke an on-going scholarly debate aimed at explaining why, exactly, Socrates objects to these definitions in the way he does. A brief discussion of the difference between formal and material conditions in answers to "what is F-ness?" will show that the conditions I attribute to Socrates are material and not formal conditions.

A long-held view was that these interlocutors confused universals with particulars. The intuitive distinction between universals and particulars is that something

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<sup>37</sup> See Nehamas 1975.

<sup>38</sup> Laches first response to "what is courage?" is that standing in line and not fleeing is courageous. Socrates blames himself for not speaking clearly because Laches did not answer the question he asked (*La.* 190E7-9). Corroborating passages can be found at *Euthyphr.* 7A2-4 where Socrates explicitly approves of the way in which Euthyphro answers then says that they will find out whether what Euthyphro says is true or not. See also *Men.* 73C9-D2 and *Hi. Ma.* 287D2-4.

is a universal just in case it may apply to a number of things; it is a particular just in case it does not.<sup>39</sup> Nehamas, however, pointed out that these interlocutors did, in fact, propose universals; but these proposals lacked the required generality of picking out all and only F's. This is not the same as proposing that they are particulars.

Building on Nehamas' work and supplementing it with Belnap and Steele's work on the logic of questions, Benson gives an account of formal adequacy to explain Socrates' responses to his interlocutors' missteps. I oversimplify many of the details of Benson's account, but I think that I capture the main idea adequately for the purpose of this discussion.

Socrates' "what is F-ness?" question can be likened to the question, "What are the prime numbers between 1 and 10?" in order to illustrate formal adequacy. One way to answer this question is to say, "1 and 2 and 3 and there are others." Another way to answer the question is to say, "1 and 2 and 3 and there are no others," or "1 and 2 and 8 and 9." In the first case, I've given a formally inadequate answer because it is not complete. In the second case, I've given a formally adequate answer, but it is materially inadequate because I've mistakenly supposed that my answer picks out all and only those prime numbers between 1 and 10.<sup>40</sup>

This account of formal adequacy explains the difference between the right kind of answer and shows that the right kind of answer still may be false. This account, of course, depends on whether Socrates-in the particular context of the passage-takes his

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<sup>39</sup> See Benson (1990: 126).

<sup>40</sup> Benson's view is criticized by Wolfsdorf (2003). Wolfsdorf thinks that Benson draws the formal/material distinction in an arbitrary way, and he diagnoses Socrates' criticism thus: interlocutors don't recognize the ontological distinction between F-ness and F things.

interlocutor as giving him the right kind of answer. It depends, in part, on how much intellectual credit Socrates gives his interlocutor.<sup>41</sup>

The main point of articulating this account of formal adequacy is two-fold: to show that the adequacy conditions I attribute to Socrates are material, and to show that formal adequacy isn't necessarily tied to any syntactic or grammatical restriction. Though it is a matter of controversy, it is clear that Socrates recognizes some kind of formal criteria in adequate answers from his interlocutors. In several passages, he questions the formal adequacy of his interlocutors' answers. So, given that he has such criticism available, we should assume that when he doesn't offer such criticism, he regards the definitions offered as formally adequate. We are left, then, with a broad understanding of formal adequacy that isn't tied to definitions of a particular syntactic or grammatical variety.<sup>42</sup>

This argument, of course, is vulnerable to at least one objection: just because Socrates raises a particular objection to an interlocutor's definition for F-ness, it doesn't follow that this is the *only* problem Socrates would see with such a definition. This may be one reason some commentators prefer to take Plato's dialogues one-by-one, and are

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<sup>41</sup> The most important textual objection, on which Benson himself comments, comes in Plato's *Meno*. Meno gives a formally correct answer to "what is virtue?" He says that it is "to be suited to ruling over others" (ἄρχειν οἷον τ' εἶναι τῶν ἀνθρώπων) and adds "if you want something that runs through them all" (εἴπερ ἔν γέ τι ζητεῖς κατὰ πάντων). So, it appears that Meno has gotten the importance of Socrates' earlier objection to his answer. Earlier, he had given a different answer to "what is virtue?" He explained that for a man, it was one thing, for a woman, another, and so on. He didn't think that there was something in common with them all. So, if Meno understands what Socrates is asking, why does he give a formally incorrect answer later in the dialogue? Socrates corrects Meno again when Meno says that justice is virtue. Socrates asks whether justice is virtue, or a virtue, suggesting that there are other virtues. The difficulty here for Benson's account is that Socrates should take Meno as giving a formally correct answer. But he doesn't. This seems to undermine the way in which Benson draws the formal/material distinction as the background to why Socrates objects.

<sup>42</sup> For a list of definitions Socrates regards as formally adequate, see Santas (1979: 98-100).

reluctant to extend claims across dialogues. If Socrates' objections are tailored to the tendencies of particular interlocutors, then we might expect that Socrates could see many inadequacies in particular definitions, but chooses to focus on the one he thinks will be most effective to showing the interlocutor that he doesn't know what he claims to know. I can only say that any approach that embraces multiple dialogues is vulnerable to this criticism.

Finally, in the service of contrast, I reiterate an important feature of my approach, which is to include both the definitions Socrates regards as adequate kinds of answers as well as his own model answers. In his seminal work on Socratic definition, Nakhnikian maintains that Socratic definition, properly understood, applies to all and only those definitions that emerge from critical scrutiny, not those that are offered by Socrates himself.<sup>43</sup>

On this approach, testing the definitions proposed by Socrates or by his interlocutors legitimizes them as Socratic definitions. Without some kind of scrutiny, they fall outside of the class of elenctic<sup>44</sup> definitions, which is what Nakhnikian means by "Socratic definition." Nakhnikian's particular strategy is to see how definitions fail, and from their failure, determines what Socrates expects. Or by passing the test of critical scrutiny, the definitions illustrate Socrates' requirements more clearly.<sup>45</sup> This strategy

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<sup>43</sup> See Nakhnikian (1971: 125-126).

<sup>44</sup> "The Socratic Elenchus" is a topic of much debate. Derived from the Greek word for examination, ἐλέγχειν, its cognates appear infrequently in Plato (Brandwood 1992). Some commentators think the elenchus is a method (Vlastos 1991 and Benson 2000), others call it more of a strategy (Brickhouse and Smith 1994). Still others think it just refers in general to Socrates' customary discourse (Peters 1967), or whatever method Socrates happens to endorse in a particular dialogue.

<sup>45</sup> The definition of courage at *Protagoras* 360D, that courage is a wisdom about what is and is not to be feared, is an example that emerges from the test of critical scrutiny, i.e. the Socratic elenchus.

neglects, however, Socrates' own model answers for F-nesses, and these models, I assume, are an additional source of information about Socrates' requirements.

In some cases, Socrates' definitions don't seem to satisfy all of Socrates' own conditions, but they can still provide some information. So they are valuable in some respect. In Plato's *Meno*, for example, Socrates offers a definition of shape as "the only thing that always accompanies color"

(ἔστω γὰρ δὴ ἡμῖν τοῦτο σχῆμα, ὃ μόνον τῶν ὄντων τυγνάνει χρώματι ἀεὶ ἐπόμενον).<sup>46</sup> This definition specifies the strict bi-conditional relationship

between things that are shaped and things that are colored. This definition satisfies Socrates' commitment to extensional equivalence, that a definition of F-ness pick out all and only F things, but it doesn't meet Socrates' own explanatory condition, which is that the *definiens* explains instances of the *definiendum*. In Plato's *Meno*, this definition for shape doesn't say what shape is, only that it always accompanies color. So, why would Socrates offer a definition that fails to meet his own requirement? Either such a definition is not meant to be taken seriously, or that Socrates prefers the other definition of shape that he offers.<sup>47</sup> Socrates has a reason for bringing up such a definition at this particular point in the dialogue. I argue in chapter four that Socrates offers this definition of shape as a correlate to color because he wants to give Meno an example of a definition that meets the extensional equivalence condition, something that Meno has been unable to do in his answers to "what is virtue?" up to that point in the dialogue.

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<sup>46</sup> See *Men.* 75B10-11.

<sup>47</sup> See Kahn 1998 and Santas 1979.

Socrates' model answers, in addition to those failed definitions, provide important evidence for an account of Socratic definition. Socrates' models answers have some relevance to the expectations he has for his interlocutors' answers, even if sometimes they don't embody all the conditions Socrates has in mind for an adequate answer. This is just the sort of work any interpretation will do.

I conclude this section with a brief summary: Socrates expects a real definition in answers to "what is F-ness?" because that is the only kind of definition that could satisfy the purpose of his activities. The adequacy conditions I attribute to Socratic definitions are material and not formal conditions. In the next section, I explain the peculiarity of attributing any adequacy conditions to a Socratic definition if Socrates is merely a destructive critic. I also entertain two objections to attributing to Socrates any view across several dialogues.

### C. In Plato's Dialogues

In Plato's *Apology*, Socrates compares himself to a gadfly, stirring the large horse of the Athenian citizenry from sluggishness.<sup>48</sup> This comparison suggests, judging from the context of the passage, that Socrates questions his fellow citizens about the nature of virtue in order to provoke them. He hopes that by provoking them, they will be more reflective. Add the aporetic nature of the Socratic dialogues to this and it leads some to think that there are no right answers to Socrates' questions; Socrates' main aim is to put his interlocutors into confusion; once they recognize their ignorance, they will become

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<sup>48</sup> See *Ap.* 30E5.

more reflective about the nature of virtue, and this will encourage them to seek out what they do not know.

If this is the case, then an attempt to recover Socrates' adequacy conditions seems misguided. There seem to be, at first glance, no conditions to recover because Socrates' objections and his model answers are not informed by a coherent view of answers to "what is F-ness?" His objections and model answers are tailored to the interests and beliefs of his interlocutors.

### C.1. The Textual Objection

In Plato's *Apology*, Socrates recognizes several aims in asking the questions he does.<sup>49</sup> But when the oracle told his friend Chaerephon that no one was wiser, he should have realized that one of his aims-to acquire the knowledge he lacks-would be impossible. For if no one is wiser than Socrates, and he is wise only to the extent that he recognizes his ignorance, then it would be impossible for him ever to find someone else who knows the answer to his questions about virtue. This is what should lead us to suspect that the aim of Socratic questioning is in the questions themselves, not in the answers. For if it is impossible that anyone should turn up who knows the answer, and Socrates recognizes this, then he must think that there is some benefit to questioning aside from acquiring the knowledge he lacks. The oracle put that knowledge out of his reach with her pronouncement. It is illegitimate for her to lie, as he says.<sup>50</sup> If no one is wiser than Socrates, then no one will be able to provide the knowledge he desires.

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<sup>49</sup> See Benson 2000: 17 for a list of the eight distinct aims Socrates details in Plato's *Apology*.

<sup>50</sup> See *Ap.* 21 B6.

Plato's *Apology* leaves an insuperable obstacle, or so it would seem: if the aim and benefit of Socratic questioning does not come through giving the right answers, then an account of the adequacy conditions for those answers might seem misguided. After all, if no right answer is available, then putting an account together seems futile.

I think that we can side-step this issue by distinguishing between what Socrates should believe and to what he is committed. Despite the problem that the *Apology* presents, we can still, as interpreters, read off how Socrates objects to his interlocutors, and how he explains what he wants. Even if he thinks that no one will satisfy him, and resigns himself to provoking people, his objections reveal principles on which his arguments depend. If the adequacy conditions cannot all be satisfied by anyone's answer to "what is F-ness?" because he can't, and no one is wiser than he, then perhaps he just has other reasons for questioning his interlocutors. Nevertheless, the project I advocate here can still describe what he is committed to, even if it's impossible that anyone should give him the right answer.

If the adequacy conditions to his answers are inconsistent, then this may be a reason to rail against interpreting the dialogues in light of one another, and to just take them one-by-one. There is some concern whether Socrates' property sameness condition and explanatory condition can both be satisfied. I address this in chapters four and five.

## C.2. The Cross-Dialogue Objection

As an account of Socratic definition that reaches across a number of Plato's dialogues, we need a way to generalize across them. I suggested that a Socratic definition

is an answer to a “what is F-ness?” question where “F-ness” refers to the subject of Socrates’ investigations and his own model answers.

Some commentators, however, think that Plato doesn’t mean to generalize across dialogues. Each dialogue has its own specific literary and dramatic settings that affect the arguments. While I believe that literary and dramatic features may sometimes have philosophical import, they don’t require us to abandon our attempts at answering the “what is F-ness?” question by restricting it to individual dialogues. I maintain that it is reasonable to think that a unified account of F-ness can be recovered when we take into consideration a number of dialogues and compare the passages.

I address three objections to this sort of “generalized” approach: the two objections are that (1) Socrates never uses a general locution as a stand-in for virtue, piety or beauty; (2) Socrates asks lots of different questions so that it is difficult to say what the primary form is, and (3) Socrates has a particular purpose in each dialogue, and we should not make claims that cut across the dialogues, ignoring their dramatic and literary peculiarities.

#### C.2.a. F-ness

Robinson argues that there is no textual evidence for the abstractive approach I recommend. As he says, “Socrates does not use the letter ‘X’; he never gives the function but always one of its arguments.”<sup>51</sup> So, his claim might be that there is no textual evidence for a general account of F-ness because all we have are individual dialogues devoted to particular topics, like virtue in *Meno*, courage in *Laches*, and so on. Thus, we

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<sup>51</sup> See Robinson (1953: 52).

should limit our account, as I read his implication, to those dialogues in which such topics are explicitly discussed.

It is true that Plato has never written a passage where Socrates utters the Greek equivalent for “F-ness,” whatever that might be. But individual claims about justice or virtue can serve a more generalized account, especially when those claims are the same. At a number of passages in different dialogues, Socrates is forced to explain what he wants with similar details and similar requirements, in dialogues occupied with different topics.<sup>52</sup> For example, a quick glance at Plato’s *Euthyphro* reveals that when Euthyphro doesn’t give Socrates the answer he wants, he asks, “Do you remember, Euthyphro, that you would not teach me one or two of the many pious things, but that form itself by which pious things are pious?”<sup>53</sup> He seems to repeat his request by way of explanation at Plato’s *Meno* when he notes, “even if the virtues are many and various, there is some one form which is the same in all of them and through which they are virtues.”<sup>54</sup> Here Socrates suggests that there is something the same in all pious things that makes them pious; he also suggests that there is something the same in all virtues that makes them virtues. The conditions illustrated here are the property sameness condition and the explanation condition, which will be argued for in chapters four and five, respectively. For now, this passage provides some initial motivation for thinking that requirements satisfying an answer to “what is courage?” or “what is piety?” or “what is virtue?” will be

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<sup>52</sup> See *Men.* 72C8-D1, *Euthyphr.* 5C8-D5, *La.* 191C8-E2, and *Hi. Ma.* 288A9-10, 298B.

<sup>53</sup> Μέννησαι οὖν ὅτι οὐ τοῦτο σοι διεκελευόμην, ἔν τι ἢ δύο με διδάξαι τῶν πολλῶν ὁσίων, ἀλλ’ ἐκείνο αὐτὸ τὸ εἶδος ᾧ πάντα τὰ ὅσια ἐστίν; ἐφησθα γάρ ποῦ μὴ ἰδέσθαι τὰ τε ἀνόσια ἀνόσια εἶναι καὶ τὰ ὅσια ὅσια (*Euthyphr.* 6D9-E1).

<sup>54</sup> See *Men.* 72C7-8.

similar. So, it is possible to generalize an account of Socrates' adequacy conditions across dialogues; that's what an account of F-ness is.

#### C.2.b. What is F-ness?

Robinson also offers that Socrates' questions do not always take the form, "what is F-ness?" They also take the form, "Is X Y?" or in the terminology of this dissertation, "Is F-ness G?" This may suggest that "what is F-ness?" question is not always primary. It will suffice, I hope, to show that in a number of passages, even if Socrates begins with a question of the form "Is F-ness G?" he quickly turns it into the "what is X?" or "what is F-ness?" question. This transition, I maintain, suggests that the "what is F-ness?" is indeed primary.

In *Republic* Book I, for example, the question at the beginning of the dialogue is whether injustice is better than justice. At the end of Book I, however, Socrates identifies a question that must be answered in order to answer the question with which they began. Namely, "what is justice?" In this passage of *Republic* Book I, Socrates finds it necessary to discover the answer to "what is justice?" before going on to learn whether justice is better than injustice. Likewise at the opening of *Meno*, Meno asks Socrates whether virtue is teachable. But Socrates responds that not only does he not know what virtue is- to Meno's surprise-he hasn't met anyone who does; after this, he suggests they try to answer "what is virtue?" before moving on to addressing whether virtue is teachable.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> It is argued that these passages-among others-show Socrates' commitment to the priority of definition principle (Benson 2000). The priority of definition has two formulations: (1) If A doesn't know what F-ness then for any x, A doesn't know that x is F; (2) If A doesn't know what F-ness is, then A doesn't know that F-ness is G.

Furthermore, in Plato's *Laches*, Lysimachus and Melissus enlist the help of Socrates to find out whether their sons should learn how to fight in armor. Socrates and Laches point out that courage is the part of virtue most relevant to fighting in armor.<sup>56</sup> If they want to know whether their sons should learn to fight in armor, they should first figure out what they need in order to fight in armor well. They need courage. So, they'd better figure out what courage is first. Thus, the discussion turns to the nature of courage and the question they are attempting to answer is "what is courage?"

Not all the aporetic dialogues display an explicit concern with the "what is F-ness?" question with such clarity, but they are still rich resources for discerning the outlines of a satisfactory answer to "what is F-ness?" Like the *Meno*, *Protagoras* begins with the concern over whether virtue can be taught. But the dialogue does not run so smoothly to the "what is F-ness?" question. Yet the nature of virtue is discussed explicitly: Socrates and his interlocutors wonder whether virtue terms are words for the same thing or whether different virtue terms name different things.<sup>57</sup> So, again, the dialogue develops around discovering the nature of virtue in order to answer the question, "Is virtue teachable?" The initial discussion of the *Gorgias* concerns whether the rhetorician must understand the nature of right and wrong. But this question later becomes, "what is a rhetorician?" These examples should reveal that a high number of texts begin with the question, "Is F-ness G?" only to turn to "what is F-ness?" suggesting that only by answering "what is F-ness?" will the characters be in a position to answer, "Is F-ness G?"

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<sup>56</sup> See *La.* 190D3-6.

<sup>57</sup> See Penner 1992 in *Cambridge Companion to Plato* for a discussion of the controversy.

In sum, most of the aporetic dialogues display an explicit concern for the “what is F-ness?” question. In some cases, the development of the conversation of the interlocutors develops differently, but there is nevertheless enough of a concern for a particular F-ness that drives the bulk of the dialogue. So, Socrates’ “what is F-ness?” question is primary.

### C.2.c. Context

One strategy for determining Socrates’ view is to take everything he says—from different dialogues—on a particular topic, virtue for example, and try to put together a coherent picture. *Meno* and *Protagoras* both concern the nature of virtue and so it would be natural to use both of these dialogues to cobble together an account of Socrates’ presuppositions about answers to “what is virtue?” One notes that this approach is vulnerable to the following criticism: it’s possible that Plato uses the character Socrates for different ends in different dialogues. So, whatever Socrates says is going to be influenced by Plato’s particular aim in composing the dialogue. The suggestion, then, is that perhaps a consistent account that cuts across dialogues is unattainable.<sup>58</sup> My position is vulnerable to this criticism. On my approach, the adequacy conditions for a definition of F-ness cover virtues and non-virtues in a wide variety of dialogues.

It may be true that some attempts to harmonize Socrates’ beliefs across dialogues will be stymied. But as far as Socrates’ constraints on answers to “what is F-ness?” we are well-motivated at least to suppose that these remain constant, regardless of the aporetic dialogue. My position is justified unless the conditions underlying Socrates’

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<sup>58</sup> See Wolfsdorf 2003.

explanations and arguments are so *radically* underdetermined as to resist any reasonable interpretation.

Having completed my preliminary justification of the title of this dissertation and my interpretive approach, I move to describing the general structure of the following chapters.

#### D. Structure of the Dissertation

I argue that the Socrates of *Charmides*, *Laches*, *Euthyphro*, *Hippias Major*, *Meno*, *Protagoras*, *Gorgias*, and *Republic I* is committed to four adequacy conditions in answers to “what is F-ness?” (1) Extensional equivalence: If F-ness=<sub>df</sub>G-ness, then any F is G and any G is F: an adequate *definiens* will pick out all and only instances of the *definiendum*.<sup>59</sup> (2) Property Sameness: If F-ness=<sub>df</sub>G-ness, then F-ness is the same as G-ness: an adequate *definiens* is ultimately a property identical to the *definiendum*. (3) Explanation: If F-ness=<sub>df</sub>G-ness, then for anything that is F, it is F because it is G: the *definiens* explains what makes something an instance of the *definiendum*. (4) Semantic Completeness: Statements, “F-ness is F” or “F-ness is G” where “G” is an evaluative predicate are semantically complete: adequate Socratic definitions are not context-sensitive.

I devote a separate chapter to arguing for each of these conditions. In general, I argue for them in the following way: I first quote the “direct” evidence that Socrates is committed to the conditions I enumerate. These are passages where Socrates makes an effort to explain what it is he wants, sometimes relying on analogies or models to explain

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<sup>59</sup> The expression, “=<sub>df</sub>” should be read, “is defined as.”

his requirements. I then go on to show why these passages show him to be committed to the condition as I describe it. Then, I quote the “indirect” evidence for his commitments: passages where Socrates’ refutes his interlocutor’s answer to “what is F-ness?” by relying on one of his adequacy conditions. In each of these cases, I present an objection-textual or philosophical-and respond to it. In some chapters, there is a dearth of “direct” evidence, but a wealth of “indirect” evidence, as in chapter three, which argues for Socrates’ commitment to extensional equivalence. In other chapters, e.g. chapters four, five and six, there is a nearly equal balance of direct and indirect evidence. With respect to chapter three, although no commentator disputes that Socrates’ refutations of proposed answers entail that he’s committed to extensional equivalence, there is *prima facie* textual evidence against this commitment. So, I show that such evidence is not a counterexample to Socrates’ commitment to extensional equivalence.

Chapter two and chapter seven are exceptions to this general structure of presenting “direct” and “indirect” evidence in service of an argument for a particular adequacy condition. Chapter two is a survey of the literature on Socratic definition, a discussion of the adequacy conditions commentators have attributed to the Socrates of Plato’s early dialogues. There are three sections: in the first, I discuss the conditions to which I think Socrates is committed; I give a brief description of what that condition is; I say who attributes it to Socrates; in some cases, I point out the other names for it; I also point out where I argue for these conditions in the dissertation.

Also in chapter two, I address those conditions to which Socrates is not committed. Again, I explain what the condition is and cite who thinks Socrates is

committed to it; if there are other names for it, I say what they are. Then, I say where I argue against this condition in the dissertation.

In the third section of chapter two, I address those conditions attributed to Socrates that are constraints on some feature of Socratic epistemology, but are not definitional commitments, strictly speaking.<sup>60</sup> I illustrate these commitments; I clear up some of the confusion that comes from calling some of these commitments by different names. But I do not argue for or against these conditions; they are not definitional commitments and so are beyond the scope of this dissertation.

Chapter three constitutes my argument for Socrates' commitment to extensional equivalence. I argue that a number of passages show him to be committed to extensional equivalence. I entertain a textual objection to this commitment.

Chapter four constitutes my argument for Socrates' commitment to property sameness between *definiens* and the *definiendum*. I first explain what, among more direct passages, support attributing this commitment to Socrates. Then, I argue that though it appears that *Meno* 75B is a counterexample to the property sameness condition, it really isn't. Then, I present the argument at *Charmides* 160E-161B as indirect evidence that Socrates is committed to the property sameness condition. The objection I respond to in this chapter is a criticism of another commentator's view that we cannot tell at this passage whether Socrates is committed to the property sameness condition, or whether this passage is better read as a commitment to extensional equivalence.

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<sup>60</sup> As Paul Woodruff notes about the *Hippias Major*, "To say that Socrates wants definitions is misleading in a modern context. What he primarily wants is a certain sort of knowledge, which is to be conveyed by the Socratic definition of the fine" (1982: 151). It is all the more important, then, to distinguish Socrates' definitional commitments from his epistemological commitments, though there clearly is a strong connection between the two.

Chapter five is the argument for Socrates' explanation condition. Many different passages express Socrates' commitment to the explanation condition, though they are expressed using a variety of locutions in Greek. I explain that these passages express Socrates' belief in a causal relationship between F-ness and F things. It is controversial what, exactly, the nature of this causal relationship is. But most commentators take it to be akin to Aristotle's formal cause. I conclude this chapter by noting a tension between the property sameness condition and the explanation condition. I note this tension without resolving it: the relationship suggested by sameness is symmetric, but the relationship suggested by explanation is asymmetric. I summarize one attempt to show that property sameness is compatible with the explanation condition.

Chapter six explains Socrates' commitment to semantic completeness, but only at the level of statements about F-nesses, not statements about F things.

The best way to explain Socrates' semantic commitment comes from what some commentators have called his commitment to strict predication for certain subjects, e.g. virtues, and certain predicates, e.g. terms of approbation. These are the grounds for identifying Socrates' indefeasible semantic intuitions about F-nesses. For example, Socrates thinks that even uncontroversial statements about F's are defeasible, no matter how uncontroversial such statements are. It could turn out that a proper account of F-ness for Socrates does not capture anything that everyone calls F. He is not committed, then, to an account of F-ness that supports all his and his interlocutors' uncontroversial, pre-analytic semantic intuitions about F things. On the other hand, Socrates is committed to any claim of the form, "F-ness is F" or "F-ness is G" being semantically complete where "G" is a term of approbation.

Chapter seven is my argument against attributing to Socrates a paradigm condition: If  $F\text{-ness} =_{df} G\text{-ness}$ , then  $G$  is a paradigm for determining  $F$ 's. A paradigm, strictly speaking, is a way of distinguishing  $F$ 's that is itself  $F$ , like a meter stick. Those who think Socrates is committed to the paradigm condition argue that the work of the paradigm is handled by the self-predication condition: If  $F\text{-ness} =_{df} G\text{-ness}$ , then  $G\text{-ness}$  is under all circumstances  $F$  and under no circumstances not  $F$ . So, Socrates is committed to the paradigm condition because he's committed to self-predication. I don't argue against self-predication specifically, especially because the semantic completeness condition seems related to it. But I do argue against an interpretation of *Euthyphro* 6E10-8A8 as an illustration of Socrates' reliance on self-predication. Moreover, Socrates may indeed be searching for a way to determine genuine cases of the *definiendum*, but this doesn't entail that he requires a paradigm to do so.

Chapter eight summarizes the argument of the dissertation. It reiterates some of the main points from the introduction through chapter seven, as well as supplying some reflections and proposed directions for future research.

## Chapter II

### An Overview of Socratic Definition

It is no surprise that Socrates' pursuit of definitions has produced such a wealth of literature; after all, it is his most distinct activity. But much of the work on Socratic definition has gone on largely independently, with commentators specifying their analyses in idiosyncratic ways. I attempt to clean up this conceptual landscape by specifying the conditions to which Socrates is committed, arguing against some conditions attributed to him by others, and explaining why some conditions are thought of as definitional commitments, though they are really epistemological constraints. In this chapter, I evaluate sixteen commitments that have been attributed to Socrates.

The first section includes the adequacy conditions to which Socrates is committed: unity, extensional equivalence, property sameness, explanation and semantic completeness. In this section, I formulate these commitments, and identify the passages that suggest where he's committed to them. I also discuss the logical relationship between unity, extensional equivalence, and property sameness; I also point out where I argue for these conditions in the dissertation.

The second section takes on the conditions to which Socrates is not committed: the paradigm and value conditions. I formulate these conditions and provide a brief discussion of why Socrates is not committed to them. Chapter seven constitutes my argument against the paradigm condition. I give my argument against the value condition in this section. Part of my argument against the value condition is that one formulation of it doesn't depend on value at all. As such, the notion of value needn't play a role in explaining how Socrates relies on this principle.

Finally, in the third section, I argue that the coherence condition, the non-circularity requirement, the dialectical requirement and the familiarity constraint are not definitional commitments, but epistemological constraints.<sup>1</sup>

#### A. Definitional Conditions to Which Socrates is Committed

Commentators formulate these conditions in various ways. A few of these ways are equivalent. In the interest of consistency and clarity, I formulate them using the term “F-ness” as the *definiendum*, which is a virtue, like courage, or a non-virtue, like shape. I use the term “G-ness” for the *definiens*, which is a property that is the same as the *definiendum*. Typical examples, though materially inadequate, are often formally adequate, like an endurance of the soul for courage, or limit of a solid, for shape. The other conditions I discuss, both those to which Socrates isn’t committed, and those which are not definitional commitments, have not been formalized uniformly. In some cases, I report them as the commentator identifies them. This is in order to make faithful representations of them in this discussion. I sacrifice uniformity for faithful representation.

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<sup>1</sup> Conditions on definitions are ontological. Since Socrates assumes that F-nesses exist, he formulates his requirements on F-nesses as things. But he also has other expectations about the behavior of someone who knows the definition of F-ness. These expectations are epistemological: Someone who knows the definition of F-ness will have coherent beliefs about F-ness. In fact, the epistemological priority of definition, to which Socrates, some argue, is committed, requires this (Benson 2000). Moreover, one who knows what F-ness is will be able to explain to someone what it is in terms with which the one asking is familiar. This is called the “dialectical requirement” the “familiarity” or perhaps the “clarity” restraint. I address these conditions in this chapter.

A.1. The Unity Condition (UC): If F-ness= $_{df}$  G-ness, then anything that is F is also G.

This condition is uncontroversial: it is clear that Socrates is looking for something that is common in all F things. He expresses this in several places where he explains that he wants an answer from his interlocutors which tells him what is the same in all the people or actions, depending on the dialogue in which the explanation arises. Nakhtnikian and Woodruff<sup>2</sup> identify this condition explicitly, though Nakhtnikian says that a Socratic definition should state what is common to instances of the *definiendum*.<sup>3</sup>

A brief perusal of passages where Socrates attempts to explain to his interlocutors what he wants shows him committed at least to the unity condition. In all these passages, Socrates uses the word for same (ταὐτόν) which commentators have taken as evidence of this condition.

- (1) *Men.* 75A5-8: You do not understand that I am seeking that which is the **same** in all these cases? (Οὐ μανθάνεις ὅτι ζητῶ τὸ ἐπὶ πᾶσιν τούτοις ταὐτόν;) <sup>4</sup>
- (2) *Euthyphr.* 5D1-5: Isn't this pious (piety: τὸ ὅσιον) by itself the **same** in any action and the impious also completely its opposite, by itself and has one form, the most impious, according to which everything impious strives to be impious? (ἢ οὐ ταὐτόν ἐστιν ἐν πάσῃ πράξει τὸ ὅσιον αὐτὸ αὐτῷ, καὶ τὸ ἀνόσιον αὖ τοῦ τοῦ μὲν ὁσίου παντὸς ἐναντίον, αὐτὸ δὲ αὐτῷ ὅμοιον καὶ ἔχον μίαν τινὰ ἰδέαν κατὰ τὴν ἀνοσιότητα πᾶν ὅτιπερ ἂν μέλλῃ ἀνόσιον εἶναι;)

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<sup>2</sup> Woodruff thinks that an answer to “what is fineness (τὸ καλὸν)?” will provide the logical cause of beauty: “A logical cause must not only always bring fineness with it, if it is to be *the* fine, but it must also be found wherever there is fineness” (1982:150).

<sup>3</sup> See Nakhtnikian (1971: 127).

<sup>4</sup> All translations are my own unless otherwise noted.

- (3) *La.* 191E10-11: Try again to say first what the courage is that's the **same** in all these cases. (πάλιν οὖν πειρῶ εἰπεῖν ἀνδρείαν πρῶτον τί ὅν ἐν πᾶσι τούτοις ταὐτόν ἐστίν.)

Read straightforwardly, these passages suggest that Socrates wants something that is common in all F's. But it doesn't have to be something unique to F's. This is what prompts Nakhnikian to add that Socrates wants something stronger: something that is common *and* peculiar to F's.<sup>5</sup> But Socrates' language underdetermines that he intends by ταὐτόν "common *and* peculiar." The unity requirement, however, is necessary for what's common and peculiar, but not sufficient for it. I put off more thorough discussion of this until the end of this section, where I discuss the logical relationship between unity, extensional equivalence, sameness and non-difference.

A.2. The Extensional Equivalence Condition (EE): If F-ness=<sub>df</sub> G-ness, then anything that is F is also G and anything that is G is also F.<sup>6</sup>

This condition concerns the nature of the relationship between the *definiens* and the *definiendum*. As Santas explains it, anything that has the *definiens* as an attribute must also have the *definiendum* as an attribute, though the *definiens* and *definiendum* needn't be identical.<sup>7</sup> This condition is clearly explained with the following example: the attribute of being a chordate and the attribute of being a renate are extensionally equivalent, but the attribute of having a heart is not the same as the attribute of having a kidney. In other words, if someone were to ask me to identify what is common to all and only chordates, I

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<sup>5</sup> See Nakhnikian (1971: 127).

<sup>6</sup> Benson says, "x belongs to all and only F things" in order to capture the variety of expressions Socrates uses for this relationship (2000: 108).

<sup>7</sup> See Santas (1979: 109).

could say that they have kidneys. This would meet the extensional equivalence condition. For other reasons, however, such an answer would miss the mark if one wanted a definition of the term “chordate” or if one wanted to identify the property of being a chordate in all and only chordates.

Commentators tend to describe the extensional equivalence condition in a variety of ways.<sup>8</sup> And there is a wealth of evidence for this condition as in passages where Socrates points out to his interlocutor that the *definiens* offered fails to provide a necessary or sufficient condition for F-ness. For example, one of Meno’s answers to “what is virtue?” is *to be suited to ruling over men* (73C9-D1). Since Meno also thinks that slaves, who do not rule over anything, but are themselves ruled by others, can be virtuous, he has failed to show that being able to rule over men is necessary for being virtuous. At *Charmides* 163E10-11, Critias defines temperance as *the doing of good things*. As Socrates points out, however, even an ignorant man could produce good things. This suggests that according to Critias, some temperate people would also be ignorant. And Critias certainly doesn’t want to allow that one can be both temperate *and* ignorant. Socrates points out to Critias that he fails to provide a sufficient condition for

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<sup>8</sup> Kraut says, “A definition must not be too broad or too narrow” (1984: 254). Dancy calls extensional equivalence a “commitment to necessary and sufficient conditions.” But he derives this condition through Socrates’ substitutivity requirement, which is that the *definiens* is substitutable *salva veritate* for its *definiendum* (2004: 80). Santas divides his treatment of Socratic definitions into three aspects: syntactic, semantic and pragmatic; he cashes out extensional equivalence as all things of a class which have the *definiens* as attribute also have *definiendum* as attribute, but they don’t have to be identical. His discussion is unique among commentators in that the relation between *definiens* and *definiendum* is taken up under the semantics of Socratic definition (1979: 209).

Woodruff says that in *Hippias Major*, the *definiens* of the fine must also be found wherever there is fineness (1982: 150). Nakhnikian says that F-ness is common to all and only F things (1971: 127).

temperance. Some intemperate people-some of the ignorant-are picked out by Critias' account as well.<sup>9</sup>

I argue for attributing to Socrates this condition in chapter three. No commentator disputes this commitment; there is, however, a textual objection to attributing this condition to Socrates: Socrates says he would be content if Meno would give him a definition of virtue that would capture all virtuous people. In this formulation of his request it isn't explicit that he wants an account of all and *only* virtuous people. I argue against this textual objection.

A.3. The Property Sameness Condition (PS):<sup>10</sup> If F-ness=<sub>df</sub>G-ness, then F-ness is a property identical to G-ness.<sup>11</sup>

This condition also concerns the relationship between the *definiens* and the *definiendum*: they are ultimately the same property. Santas doubts that Socrates is committed to this condition because the only argument that Nakhnikian offers as evidence is ambiguous (*Chrm.* 160E-161B). Santas compares this argument to another at *La.* 192D where Socrates undermines Laches definition of courage as endurance. Wise

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<sup>9</sup> Other passages cited for Socrates' commitment to extensional equivalence include *Laches* 190E-192B (Dancy 2004: 82-84). It is worth noting, however, that this is a controversial passage since Laches' answer here appears to Socrates as formally inadequate. A number of commentators point out that at *Euthyphro* 5C-6E Socrates notes that Euthyphro doesn't give an answer that is general enough. Thus, it isn't an answer to his question at all. See Benson 2000, Nehamas 1975 and Dancy 2004. *Laches* 190E-192B and *Meno* 71E1-72B7 are also places where Socrates points out the same failure. So, it is unclear why Dancy counts *Euthyphro* 5C-6E as failing one kind of constraint and *Laches* 190E-192B as failing another kind of restraint when Socrates says the same sorts of things in both passages. For a more detailed discussion, see Benson 1990.

<sup>10</sup> Santas brings up the problem of translating ταὐτόν as "identical": discussions of identity often bring up notions of synonymy and substitutivity: (1979:110-111). He offers this as part of an argument against identity between *definiens* and *definiendum*. In addition, White argues that Aristotle's use of **ταὐτόν** cannot uniformly be translated as "identical." He suggests "sameness" (1977). I follow him in this.

<sup>11</sup> This is one formulation of Kraut's value requirement.

endurance is praiseworthy or good. Foolish endurance is bad and harmful. So, courage cannot be endurance since courage is always good and praiseworthy. Here, Santas, points out that it's impossible to tell whether this is a denial of extensional equivalence or a denial of property sameness. And since this passage is just like *Chrm.* 160E-161B, the implication is that *Chrm.* 160E-161B is also ambiguous. I support Nakhnikian's reading of this argument in chapter four by arguing against Santas. In fact, the refutation at *Chrm.* 160E-161B is unambiguous: it must be read as a denial of property sameness. An interpretation of this argument as a denial of extensional equivalence is not available.

Though *Chrm.* 160E-161B by itself is scant evidence for Socrates' commitment to property sameness, there is still more direct evidence for this commitment. I argue that we ought to read those passages where he explains what he wants as suggesting the sameness condition. So, the evidence for the property sameness condition comes from two sources: (1) his argument against Charmides' definition of temperance as modesty at *Chrm.* 160E-161B and (2) passages where Socrates explains what he wants to his interlocutors. Once I explain the relationship between unity, extensional equivalence, property sameness, and non-difference in the final part of this first section, this will be clearer. I also explain more fully my use of "sameness," rather than "identity," which is the word both Nakhnikian and Santas use in their respective discussions.

#### A.4. The Non-Difference Condition (ND): F-ness does not differ with respect to being F.

This condition is just another version of property sameness. For if the *definiens* is the same in all instances of the *definiendum*, those instances will not differ with respect to being instances of the *definiendum*. Likewise, if they do not differ with respect to being

F, then F-ness is the same in all those cases. Nakhnikian identifies this non-difference condition in his discussion of definition in the *Meno*. The passage where he identifies this commitment comes when Socrates compares the nature of bees to the nature of virtue when he asks Meno the following:

- (1) *Men.* 72A9-B6: Well, Meno, ...if I were to ask you about the nature of a bee, what it is (μελίτης περί οὐσίας ὅτι ποτ' ἔστίν) you would say that they are many and various, and what would you tell me if I were to ask you, “Do you say that they are many and various and do not differ from one another with respect to this, in which they are bees? Or do they not differ at all in this respect, but in another, for example in beauty or size or in any other of such ways?” (Ἄρα τούτῳ φῆς πολλάς καὶ παντοδαπὰς ἔλεγεσθαι αὐτὰς εἶναι καὶ διαφερούσας ἀλλήλων, τῷ μελίττας εἶναι; ἢ τούτῳ μὲν οὐ δὲν διαφέρουσιν, ἄλλῳ δὲ τῷ, οἷον ἢ κάλλει ἢ μεγέθει ἢ ἄλλῳ τῷ τῶν τοιούτων;)

It is curious that Socrates expresses his property sameness commitment in terms of non-difference. Why doesn't he, as he does later in *Meno* (75A5-8), articulate the sameness commitment more directly? I expect that this has to do with the sort of answer Meno gave for “what is virtue?” early on; Socrates responds to Meno along the lines of Meno's first answer. Meno says it is not difficult to give an account of virtue because there is a different virtue for everyone, at every age, and in every respect:

- (2) *Men.* 72A1-4: And there are very many other virtues so that one is not at a loss to say what virtue is: a virtue for every action and every age, for every task and for every one of us. (καθ' ἑκάστην γὰρ τῶν πράξεων καὶ τῶν ἡλικῶν πρὸς ἕκαστον ἔργον ἑκάστῳ ἡμῶν ἡ ἀρετὴ ἐστίν.)

Socrates capitalizes on what Meno says in order to tailor his explanation to Meno's understanding. Meno's first answer to “what is virtue?” emphasizes the differences in virtuous people; Socrates observes that with respect to virtue they do not differ; but he

says this in a way that compliments Meno's first answer. Plato's *Meno* is the most sophisticated account of Socratic definition because of how explicit Socrates is about his expectations. He offers no less than five examples to compare to virtue: health, strength, bee-ness, shape and color. All these examples seem to be the inductive argument for thinking that there is something common *and* peculiar to virtuous instances as well. In some ways, Meno is Socrates' greatest challenge since he thinks, at least initially, that virtue is unlike these other cases.

- (3) *Men.* 73A4-5: Somehow it seems to me, Socrates; this [virtue] is not like the other cases. (Ἐμοιγέ πως δοκεῖ, ὦ Σώκρατες, τοῦτο οὐκέτι ὅμοιον εἶναι τοῖς ἄλλοις τούτοις.)

Nevertheless, for Socrates at least, the non-difference condition is just a different way of expressing the sameness condition.

#### A.4.a. The Relationship among UC, EE, and PS

I introduced these first definitional commitments according to their logical hierarchy. Unity is necessary, but not sufficient for extensional equivalence. Extensional equivalence is necessary, but not sufficient for property sameness. Property sameness is sufficient for both extensional equivalence and unity. And extensional equivalence is sufficient for unity. It is important to understand this relationship because I advocate reading those "sameness" passages as a commitment to property sameness rather than merely a commitment to unity. Either we read ταὐτόν, which is the Greek for "same," as a request for unity in F things or as a request for property sameness in F things. If we

read it as a request for sameness, then it will imply unity, but not the other way around. Here are a few examples to illustrate this relationship.

Notice that to satisfy the unity requirement in an answer to “what is human?” one need only define human as animal.<sup>12</sup> In so doing, one identifies a property which unites all humans, but is not specific to them. This doesn’t achieve extensional equivalence because the set of animals is much wider than the set of men. I’ve managed to unite all men under the heading *animal*, but not only men. Let’s say for example that all courageous people are also beautiful. If I were to define courageous as beautiful, then I’d identify something common in all courageous people. So, I’d satisfy the unity requirement. Thus, the unity requirement is distinct from extensional equivalence but necessary for it and implied by it.

To meet extensional equivalence, I’d have to identify something in common with F’s and only F’s, but the *definiens* needn’t be same as the *definiendum*. Euthyphro’s third definition of piety satisfies this condition: piety is what all the gods love (9E1-3). Socrates grants that indeed the set of all pious things is also the set of all things the gods love.<sup>13</sup> Euthyphro succeeds in identifying a property common and peculiar to all of the pious, it’s just not the right property because, as I argue in chapter five, it violates the explanation condition. Like the sets of renates and chordates, Euthyphro has observed that the sets of pious things and god-loved things are coextensive, but piety and the

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<sup>12</sup> See Woodruff (1982: 150).

<sup>13</sup> The suggestion is also that the property of being god-loved (θεοφιλές) is common and peculiar to pious things, but this doesn’t imply that they are the same. Socrates criticism of this is complicated, but it has to do with this account violating the explanation condition. See chapter five.

property of being loved by the gods are different, as Socrates points out (11A4).<sup>14</sup> If the *definiens* were the same thing as the *definiendum*, then we would satisfy property sameness, but that would satisfy extensional equivalence, too.

Socrates gives a nice example of the difference between extensional equivalence and property sameness with two definitions of shape, which he thinks are both true, at *Meno* 75B. For the first definition, he says that shape is *the only thing that always follows color*. So, identify color in something, and you'll find a shape, too. But since being colored and being shaped are two different properties, this definition doesn't satisfy property sameness.<sup>15</sup> The second definition he offers is that shape is *the limit of a solid*. Here, instead of merely meeting extensional equivalence, he's provided an account of what shape is. The property of being shaped just is the property of being the limit of a solid.

So, to summarize the relationship between unity, extensional equivalence and property sameness is this: Property sameness implies extensional equivalence, which implies unity. We are now in a better position to understand why those passages where Socrates requests what is the same (ταὐτόν) should be read as expressing the property sameness condition, rather than merely the unity requirement.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> It is clear, as Cohen points out, that when Socrates says that the pious and the god-loved are different from one another (ἀλλ' ἕτερον τοῦτο τούτου) he cannot mean that they are not co-extensive (1971: 9).

<sup>15</sup> I take up why he offers two definitions of shape in chapters three and four.

<sup>16</sup> See *Men.* 72A9-B6, 73C3-4, 75A5-8, *La.* 191E10-11, and *Euthyphr.* 5D1-5.

#### A.4.b. Reading ταὐτόν

The basic argument for reading ταὐτόν as expressing the sameness condition is that it leaves a way to explain how Socrates will satisfy both the unity and the extensional equivalence conditions since he has to be committed to those if he's committed to property sameness. If property sameness is satisfied, then both unity and extensional equivalence will be satisfied as well. If, on the other hand, we read ταὐτόν as simply a unity claim, then we must explain the way in which we as readers, and Socrates' interlocutors, are supposed to understand that Socrates wants property sameness and extensional equivalence, too. In this light, Socrates apparently gives no clue to his interlocutor that he expects sameness and extensional equivalence, which would be surprising since he elaborates on what he wants in a number of passages.<sup>17</sup> Moreover, if Socrates is committed to property sameness elsewhere,<sup>18</sup> why shouldn't he presuppose that condition in his explanations of what he wants?

This observation, however, provokes another question: why then, distinguish Socrates' extensional equivalence condition from his property sameness condition? If the property sameness condition implies extensional equivalence, then why devote a separate chapter to arguing for extensional equivalence? The answer is that Socrates himself distinguishes between extensional equivalence and property sameness. He accepts a definition in *Gorgias* that meets extensional equivalence, but not property sameness.

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<sup>17</sup> See *La.* 191E10-11, *Men.* 75A5-8, and *Euthyphr.* 5D1-5.

<sup>18</sup> See *Chrm.* 160E-161B.

The discussion between Polus and Socrates below bring out a definition of the admirable is the pleasurable or the good, or both.

- (1) *Grg.* 475A2-3: Your definition of the admirable in terms of the pleasurable and good is well said. (καὶ καλῶς γε νῦν ὀρίζῃ, ὦ Σώκρατες, ἡδονῇ τε καὶ ἀγαθῷ ὀριζόμενος τὸ καλόν.)
- (2) *Grg.* 475A5-7: Whenever one of two admirable things is finer than another, it is so because it surpasses the other either in one of these, pleasure or benefit, or both. (Ὅταν ἄρα δυοῖν καλοῖν θάτερον κάλλιον ᾖ, ἢ τῷ ἑτέρῳ τούτοις ἢ ἀμφοτέροις ὑπερβάλλον κάλλιον ἐστίν, ἥτοι ἡδονῇ ἢ ὠφελίᾳ ἢ ἀμφοτέροις.)

Given Socrates request for that the *definiens* be the same as the *definiendum*, this is a strange exchange. This definition is unique in that it is the only acceptable definition that is disjunctive. Since it is disjunctive, it doesn't have a property shared by all and only admirable things; Socrates of course allows that some things can be both, but doesn't require it.<sup>19</sup> On this account, a definition of the admirable will be extensionally equivalent if and only if anything is pleasant, or good or both. Therefore, if something is *either* good or pleasant, then it is admirable, and if it is admirable, then it is either good or pleasant. Something may be pleasant, but not good. Or something may be good, but not pleasant. If something that is pleasant but not good is admirable and something that is good but not pleasant is also admirable. They will both be admirable but without sharing anything common and specific to them.<sup>20</sup> This definition fails to satisfy property sameness, but does satisfy extensional equivalence.

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<sup>19</sup> Santas suggests that Socrates accepts this definition as formally adequate, though he shouldn't (1979: 105).

<sup>20</sup> Santas says it does no good to say that the disjuncts of the definition could still satisfy Socrates' concern for a single character; this would really stretch what is meant by "common." If we allow the

On account of this peculiar passage at *Gorgias* 475A, I argue for attributing to Socrates the extensional equivalence condition in chapter three separately from attributing to him the property sameness condition, which I do in chapter four. This passage suggests, perhaps, that Socrates himself recognizes the distinction between extensional equivalence and property sameness. But further investigation would require a detailed discussion of this passage.

A.5. The Explanation Condition: If  $F\text{-ness} =_{df} G\text{-ness}$ , then for anything that is F, it is F because it is G.

The basis to this explanation condition is the causal relationship between F-ness and F things: F-ness is whatever makes F things F. Thus, the *definiens* of F-ness reveal why F things are F. No one doubts that Socrates is committed to this condition: numerous passages express causality and an explanatory priority from F-ness to F things (*Euthypr.* 10A-11B). This relationship is what most commentators think is expressed in a wide variety of ways.<sup>21</sup> Sometimes Socrates identifies the F-ness as a “means by which” F things are F, as in the first passage, or “in virtue of which” as in the second passage:

- (1) *Men.* 72C7-8: they [the virtues] all have some one character through which<sup>22</sup> they are virtues. (ἐν γέ τι εἶδος ταῦτόν ἅπασαι δι' ὃ εἰσὶν ἀρεταί.)

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Socratic demand for something common to be met by a complex disjunction, then it can be met trivially. And surely Socrates is not after something trivial (1979: 104-5).

<sup>21</sup> See Kraut: “definition must explain what it is about virtuous acts that makes them virtuous” (1984: 254). Dancy: “the *definiens* explains the application of its *definiendum*” (2004: 81). Woodruff: “Whatever the fine turns out to be, it must be something I shall call the *logical cause* of fineness: it what makes all fine things fine” (1982: 150). Vlastos: “The *definiens* must disclose the reason why anything is an instance of the *definiendum*” (1991: 57). Additionally, the distinction between reasons and causes adds more complexity to this issue.

<sup>22</sup> This locution, δι' ὃ, expressed as “through which” here in *Meno* is can also be translated as “by means of which” or “on account of which.” See Smyth 1685(b) and (e).

- (2) *Euthyphro* 6D10-11: that character itself in virtue of which everything pious is pious. (ἀλλ' ἐκεῖνο αὐτὸ τὸ εἶδος ᾧ πάντα τὰ ὅσια ὅσια ἐστίν.)

In another case, he identifies the F-ness as what *makes* things F, using the verb usually translated as “makes”, ποιεῖ,

- (3) *Hi. Ma.* 290D5-6: What is appropriate for each thing makes each thing beautiful. (ὅτι ὁ ἄν πρέπη ἐκάστω, τοῦτο καλὸν ποιεῖ ἐκάστον.)

It is also the case that in passages 1-3, Socrates seems to identify the property, characteristic or attribute F-ness independently of the things that possess it, as he says the character *itself* (αὐτοῦ), in *Euthyphro*, for example. There are other passages, however, where what makes F things F seems more like a character trait: he explicitly connects F-ness with the behavior of people who possess it, as in these cases:

- (4) *Grg.* 520D1-2: For I don't suppose that it is through slowness that men act unjustly, but by injustice, right? (οὐ γὰρ δὴ τῇ βραδυτῇτι οἶμαι ἀδικοῦσιν οἱ ἄνθρωποι, ἀλλ' ἀδικία. Ἡ γάρ;) <sup>23</sup>
- (5) *Prt.* 332A8-B1: Then is it by temperance that people who act temperately are temperate? (Οὐκοῦν σωφροσύνη σωφρονεῖν;) <sup>23</sup>

So, some passages emphasize F-ness *qua* property and others emphasize F-ness *qua* character trait. This mixture of passages contributes to the controversy over the nature of the cause involved between F-ness and F things. Some commentators, focusing on the word δυναμῖς, in *Laches*, for example, characterize the causality between F-ness and F things as something similar to Aristotle's efficient cause.<sup>23</sup> Others argue that

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<sup>23</sup> See Penner 1973 and 1992. Aristotle calls it the “source of motion” as in the carpenter *qua* possessor of the skill of woodworking is the efficient cause of the chair (Irwin 1999: 62).

Socrates' use of εἶδος, suggests Aristotle's formal cause.<sup>24</sup> Though the majority of passages specify an εἶδος, we cannot rely on Socrates' terminology as a strict guide to what he's after.<sup>25</sup> If we examine the passage where Socrates explicitly invokes the explanation condition (*Euthyphr.* 10A-11B), we'll see how what he says is more sympathetic to a reading of formal cause, rather than efficient cause. But he may just expect that the *definiens* will explain both sorts of causes.

I argue for the explanation condition in chapter five, where I explain Socrates' argument against Euthyphro's third definition of piety as what all the gods love. My main purpose is to demonstrate that this argument commits Socrates to the explanation condition. Others have thought that this argument at *Euthyphro* 10B-11E commits Socrates in addition to some kind of substitution principle. I argue that we can reconstruct Socrates' argument in a way that doesn't depend on a substitution principle of the sort suggested. The substitution between the expressions for "pious" and "god-loved" that Socrates makes at the passage is therefore superfluous to the argument.

A.6. The Semantic Conditions: (1) If F-ness=<sub>df</sub> G-ness, then any G is called F and anything called F is G. (2) Statements, "F-ness is F" or "F-ness is G" where "G" is an evaluative predicate are semantically complete (not context-sensitive).

Discussion of Socrates' semantic commitments is a bit messy because the difference in these views sometimes not easily distinguished. So, a number of

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<sup>24</sup> See Santas (1979: 107) and Vlastos 1981. Aristotle's example is the ratio 2:1 as the formal cause of the octave. See also *Ph.* 194B16-195A8.

<sup>25</sup> In criticizing Penner, Vlastos argues that it doesn't follow from Socrates' use of δύναμις that what he expects is a power, which is one translation of the word (1976).

clarifications is in order: First, condition (1) is the semantic correlate to the extensional equivalence condition. This formulation is way of expressing what some have thought is Socrates' commitment to ordinary linguistic usage. Some have thought that for Socrates, an adequate definition of F-ness must pick out all and only those things generally called F by Socrates' interlocutors.<sup>26</sup> Other commentators have argued that Socrates would allow a radical revision in current linguistic practice: a number of things generally called F might not be accommodated in an adequate definition of F-ness, or that a number of things generally called not F might not be accommodated by said definition, ultimately. The extent to which Socrates would allow linguistic revision is difficult to identify. This is part of the cause of the confusion surrounding his semantic commitments.

Another commentator suggests something like condition (2) as the limit of Socrates' semantic revision. At the beginning or the end of an inquiry, Socrates, as well as his interlocutors, is committed to claims of the form, "F-ness is F" or "F-ness is G" where "G" is a term of approbation being semantically complete. A semantically complete statement doesn't change its truth value in any circumstances. In other words, Socrates and his interlocutors do not entertain possibilities in which virtue or courage turns out to be foul and harmful, under any circumstances.<sup>27</sup> That would require some qualification and any qualification is out of the question for statements about F-nesses. The suggestion is that this would make the F-ness under discussion unrecognizable, and

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<sup>26</sup> A more contemporary desideratum of ethical theories is that they must account for most, if not all, of our pre-theoretic beliefs about what is moral and what is immoral. The semantic correlate to this is that an adequate ethical theory will accommodate what we call "moral" and "immoral" in current linguistic practice.

<sup>27</sup> The exception is at *Republic* Book I, where Thrasymachus refers to justice pejoratively and injustice approvingly. Socrates accepts his proposal at first, though he recognizes the difficulty in doing so.

an obstacle to any kind of meaningful inquiry. There seems to be evidence of (2) in *Charmides*, where Socrates is asking Charmides to define temperance, but also in *Laches*, where they are attempting to define courage. How these premises are used in the argument depends on the interlocutors assuming that they are semantically complete.<sup>28</sup>

- (1) *Chrm.* 160E6-7: Well, I said, didn't you agree just now that temperance is admirable? (Εἶεν, ἦν δ' ἐγώ, οὐ καλὸν ἄρτι ὁμολόγεις τὴν σωφροσύνην εἶναι;)

At this passage, the understanding is that temperance is *always* admirable. Another passage interpreted as “courage is praiseworthy” is intended by Socrates and his interlocutors to mean “courage is *always* praiseworthy” because of how the argument develops.

- (2) *La.* 192C5-7: For I know fairly well Laches that you think courage to be among the fine things-among the finest. (σχεδὸν γάρ τι οἶδα, ὦ Λάχης, ὅτι τῶν πάνυ καλῶν πραγμάτων ἡγῇ σὺ ἀνδρείαν εἶναι- Εὖ μὲν οὖν ἴσθι ὅτι τῶν καλλίστων.)

Concerning the semantic status of F things, however, I argue that Socrates is not committed to an adequate definition of F-ness supporting that all things called F are genuinely F. There are three different positions one could take on the semantic status of F's: the ordinary usage view, the paradigmatic case view, and the radical revision view. My strategy is to argue against both claims of the ordinary usage view and this leads me to conclude the only view left: the radical revision view.

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<sup>28</sup> A statement is semantically complete if and only if there are no circumstances in which the predicate is qualified. A more thorough discussion of this will have to wait until chapter six. See Woodruff 1978.

I return to the view that Socrates assumes, in advance, ordinary usage is also correct usage.<sup>29</sup> The implication is that one of Socrates' expectations in answers to "what is F-ness?" is that it will support conventional judgments about what things to call F and what to call not F. In other words, what people call the Greek equivalents of "courageous" or "virtuous" will be accommodated in the adequate definition of courage, or of virtue.

With respect to the paradigmatic cases view, Socratic definition must support all and only paradigmatic examples; it wouldn't be surprising if borderline cases of what's called not F turns out to be F, or that borderline cases of what is called F turn out to be not F.<sup>30</sup> But what is called F without controversy would be accommodated by an adequate account of F-ness. The dialogue *Euthyphro*, however, represents a case in point of what's called not F turning out to be F.<sup>31</sup> In this respect, *Euthyphro* is a challenge to the paradigmatic case view.

Euthyphro, the religious expert, is at odds with his relatives over his father's accidental killing of a hired man. Euthyphro's relatives are angry at him for attempting to prosecute his own father for murder. To prosecute anyone's relatives was believed to be consummately impious.<sup>32</sup> Euthyphro, however, thinks that it is impious *not* to prosecute

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<sup>29</sup> See Woodruff (1978: 458). See also: "A Socratic definition would be based not on word usage, but on the truth about the subject of definition. It has however, this connection with meaning: once found, a Socratic definition would give to the word for what was to be defined an ideal meaning, the meaning a word would have in discourse informed by a true theory about the way things are" (1982: 149). Note, however, that this doesn't address whether Socrates allows for revision of things called F.

<sup>30</sup> This is suggested in Kraut 1984.

<sup>31</sup> I take the criterion here to be what Athenians generally call impious: prosecuting one's own father.

<sup>32</sup> See Burkert 1985

the wrongdoer, whoever he may be. A Socratic definition will decide clearly whether this action is pious or not. Though Socrates might be surprised, he would allow that Euthyphro's action could be pious, despite virtually all Athenians disagreeing on this point.<sup>33</sup>

The *Laches* illustrates a case where things generally called F turn out to be not F. At *Laches* 196E1-197C4, Socrates recognizes that (1) everybody agrees that the examples of courage in animals that they discuss are paradigmatic and (2) insists on a definition that rules out these examples. So, this is a clear case of Socrates allowing the possibility for revision of cases paradigmatically called F.

Finally, there's the complete revision view. A Socratic definition is not committed to supporting any of the things Socrates and his interlocutors call F. So, an adequate answer to "what is F-ness?" might produce a *definiens* that covers all and only F things that Socrates' interlocutors call not F. In other words, the set of actual F things may not overlap with what is called F at all. This is startling, but Socrates allows such a possibility. In chapter six, I argue against those passages thought to commit Socrates to the ordinary language, or paradigmatic views.

I argue in chapter six that indeed he is not committed to supporting anything called F at all. I can do this by arguing against two views: (1) the set of things called F includes all F things; (2) the set of F things includes all things called F. Since these are individually necessary and jointly sufficient for the ordinary language view, if they are

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<sup>33</sup> See my argument in chapter six.

both false, then the ordinary language view is false as well. This implies, of course, that we are left with the complete revision view, since there's nothing left, logically speaking.

## B. Definitional Conditions to Which Socrates Isn't Committed

In this second section, I address two conditions attributed to Socrates: the paradigm condition, and the value requirement. I argue against the paradigm condition in chapter seven, so I will put off some of the controversy until then. I argue against the value requirement, however, in this section.

B.1. The Paradigm Condition: If  $F\text{-ness} =_{df} G\text{-ness}$ , then  $G\text{-ness}$  is a paradigm for determining  $F$ 's.

First, a clarification on what a paradigm is: A paradigm is the sort of model for determining  $F$ 's that is itself  $F$ . *Euthyphro* 6E3-6 is considered the *locus classicus* of the paradigm requirement for two reasons: Socrates actually uses the word *παράδειγματι*, and, according to some, isolates the paradigm requirement from the explanation condition.<sup>34</sup> Socrates expects that if Euthyphro's account of piety is adequate, then if he can teach him what the form of piety itself is, then Socrates will put that form into service as a means of discerning pious from impious actions. Dancy is the most recent commentator to give a lengthy discussion of the paradigm condition.<sup>35</sup> The following is the *locus classicus* for this condition:

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<sup>34</sup> See Dancy (2004: 116).

<sup>35</sup> Ibid, 115-133

- (1) *Euthyphro* 6E3-6: Then teach me what this form itself is, so that I *may look upon it and using it as a model* I may say that if anything either you or some other does is such as this, it is pious, and if it isn't such as this, say that it isn't pious.  
(Ταύτην τοίνυν με αὐτὴν δίδαξον τὴν ἰδέαν τίς ποτέ ἐστιν, ἢν α εἰς ἐκείνην ἀποβλέπων καὶ χρώμενος αὐτῇ παραδείγματι, ὃ μὲν ἂν τοιοῦτον ᾦ ὦν ἂν ἢ σὺ ἢ ἄλλος τις πράττη φῶ ὅσιον εἶναι, ὃ δ ' ἂν μὴ τοιοῦτον, μὴ φῶ.)

Since Socrates is reticent about what he means by *παραδείγματι* in *Euthyphro*, some interpreters have thought that Socrates has in mind at this passage a standard like a meter-stick: a way of distinguishing that is itself a meter long.<sup>36</sup> The standard meter is in advance a meter long if anything is; that's what enables it to act as a standard: it exemplifies by which what is measured is measured. Others have thought that Socrates is seeking a set of criteria for the resolution of practical problems.<sup>37</sup> Others urge us to be aware of the distinction between possessing the criteria and applying the criteria.<sup>38</sup> Finally, some have supposed that the point of Socrates' inquiries are not strongly connected with a search for standards at all: many of his inquiries do not fit the definitional framework that is the background for the search for standards.<sup>39</sup>

Ultimately, the controversy is not over whether Socrates expects the *definiens* to distinguish F's from not F's; it is over whether his expectations require a paradigm: a way of telling F's from not F's that is itself F. I argue in chapter seven that we ought not to attribute to Socrates the paradigm commitment understood in this way. One of the

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<sup>36</sup> See Dancy (2004: 119).

<sup>37</sup> See Kraut (1984: 256).

<sup>38</sup> See Benson (2000: 145).

<sup>39</sup> See Penner (1992: 163). Robinson 1953 makes a similar complaint. See chapter one for evidence that Socrates' initial questions are reduced to definitional questions.

examples he proposes as ways of distinguishing F's from not F's doesn't fit well with standards that are both ways of distinguishing and are themselves F. This suggests that he can satisfy his demand for a way of distinguishing that doesn't necessarily exemplify the property he wants to define; his criteria are too broad for that.

B.2 The Value Requirement: (1) If  $F\text{-ness} =_{df} G\text{-ness}$ , then G-ness is as valuable as F-ness, or (2) If  $F\text{-ness} =_{df} G\text{-ness}$ , then any property of F-ness must be a property of G-ness.

Richard Kraut proposes a condition on Socratic definition that, like its name suggests, has to do with value: "The property with which a virtue is identified must be as valuable as the virtue in question."<sup>40</sup> This condition admits of two formulations: the *definiens* must be valuable; the *definiens* must be as valuable as the *definiendum*.

According to Kraut, the evidence for this condition comes from two passages: *Republic* 332D7-333E2 and *Charmides* 169B3-5. In the *Republic*, Polemarchus defines justice as helping friends and harming enemies. Socrates points out that if this is the definition of justice, then it is of little use, which defeats Polemarchus' account. Justice, it is assumed, is very useful, hence very valuable. Helping friends and harming enemies doesn't stand up to this level of value.<sup>41</sup> In Plato's *Charmides*, one may argue that Socrates' refutation of temperance as knowledge of knowledge fails the value condition (169B3-5). Temperance is something beneficial and good; it is unclear whether knowledge of knowledge is of any benefit.

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<sup>40</sup> See Kraut (1984: 254).

<sup>41</sup> Ibid

If one formulation of the value requirement is that the *definiens* must be valuable, then it is susceptible to the following critique. For F-nesses that are not virtues, the value requirement doesn't make sense. It is misguided to ask whether Socrates' definition of quickness as "doing much in a short time" (*La.* 192A10-B3) is valuable, or whether his first definition of shape in *Meno*, i.e. shape is the only thing that always accompanies color, is valuable. This reads as a kind of category mistake. And yet Socrates' own definitions are supposed to be models for the F-nesses that are virtues. By supposing that the *definiens* must be valuable, we offer a distinction between F-nesses that are virtues and F-nesses that aren't virtues. One might suspect that there are such differences, but we wouldn't offer that they are different because one condition on answers to "what is F-ness?" is that the *definiens* must be valuable. That would be putting the cart before the horse. Limiting the value requirement to F-nesses that are virtues is an *ad hoc* response to this concern unless one can give a principled way of determining which features-if not all-of Socrates' models are relevant to the F-nesses that are virtues.

The passage from *Charmides* suggests a different formulation for the value requirement: if x is a property of the *definiendum*, then x is a property of the *definiens*.<sup>42</sup> If this formulation can explain the passages Kraut cites, it is hard to see that this has anything to do with value at all. In other words, it is just that the *definiendum* in this case, temperance, has the property of being beneficial. So, it would follow, according to this formulation, that the *definiens* should have that property as well. So, the *definiens* in this case, knowledge of knowledge, lacks that property. It just happens to be the property of being beneficial. But it could be any property, as in the property of being possessed by

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<sup>42</sup> This suggests that F-ness and G-ness are indiscernible.

Charmides. If temperance has it, then what defines it must as well. Thus, we needn't appeal to the notion of value in order to explain the second formulation of Kraut's principle. In the end, this is just an argument to show that Socrates is committed to a more general commitment-the sameness condition-for which I argue in chapter four.

Nevertheless, we shouldn't accept the first formulation of the value requirement since it excludes F-nesses that aren't virtues, which are a source of information about Socrates' commitments.

### C. Non-definitional Conditions

In this section, I discuss the conditions attributed to Socratic definitions that aim at featuring an aspect of Socratic epistemology. As such, they are not conditions on definitions. They are: the coherence condition, the non-circularity condition, the dialectical requirement, and the familiarity condition. These last two are just two different expressions for the same condition.

C.1. Coherence: If F-ness= $_{df}$  G-ness, then G-ness must cohere with an interlocutor's other beliefs about F-ness.

Kahn appeals to the coherence condition to explain Socrates' refutation of Euthyphro's second definition of piety: piety is what the gods love (*Euthyphr.* 6E-8A). According to Kahn, Euthyphro fails to know what piety is because also believes that the gods are hostile and war with one another<sup>43</sup> (6B7-C7). What one god loves another may

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<sup>43</sup> Note that in a rare expression of his own beliefs, Socrates disagrees: he thinks that the gods do not quarrel (*Euthyphr.* 6A6-9).

hate. So, some actions turn out to be pious and impious. Euthyphro's definition does not cohere with his other belief that the gods war with one another.<sup>44</sup>

I think that it is easy to see why this coherence condition cannot be a definitional constraint. In one interpretation of *Euthyphro* 7A-8A, one commentator notes that the argument has the structure of a *reductio ad absurdum*.<sup>45</sup> Typically, a *reductio ad absurdum* targets the proposed definition for rejection. But in this case, Euthyphro's definition of piety doesn't necessarily have to be the case that we reject the definition outright. It just shows that the definition that Euthyphro offers is not consistent with two other premises in the argument: (1) The gods quarrel with one another; (2) the just and unjust, the fine and foul, and (it is implied) the pious and the impious, are the subjects of difference that cause enmity among people. So, if the gods quarrel at all, then they must quarrel about the same things people quarrel about.<sup>46</sup>

That there is an inconsistency between three premises in the argument does not show us, necessarily, which premise ought to be rejected. So, on the face of it, there's nothing wrong with Euthyphro's definition. A well-recognized tenet of Socratic epistemology is that if someone knows what F-ness is, then all his beliefs about F-ness will be consistent.<sup>47</sup> What Socrates demonstrates in this passage is that Euthyphro's

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<sup>44</sup> Dancy thinks that this definition fails because it fails the self-predication condition, which is what underlies the paradigm condition. Benson argues that this argument is a *reductio ad absurdum* and a model example of how the elenchus-on a non-constructivist reading-works. Thus, there are at least three competing interpretations of this argument.

<sup>45</sup> See Benson (2000: 48).

<sup>46</sup> Parenthetically, it wouldn't make sense that the gods quarrel about things which humans have means of resolving. This would be to suggest that humans know something the gods don't.

<sup>47</sup> See Benson 2000, chapter seven.

beliefs about piety are not consistent. Thus, he does not know what piety is. But it is still available to the interlocutor to reject one of these three premises. He could resolve the inconsistency by rejecting, as Socrates himself does, that the gods wrangle with one another. But he doesn't do that.

C.2. Non-Circularity: the *definiens* must not be explained by means of the *definiendum*.

In part of the passage invoked as evidence of the non-circularity condition, Socrates reminds Meno of an objection he offered earlier in the text, which prompted Socrates to formulate the dialectical requirement. (*Men.* 79A3-4) When Meno tries to define virtue as the power to acquire good things justly, Socrates points out how he is undermined by his own earlier admission.<sup>48</sup>

- (1) *Men.* 79C: Rather, you say that every action is virtue if it is performed with virtue, as if you had said what virtue is as a whole. (πάσαν δὲ φῆς πράξιν ἀρετὴν εἶναι, ἐάνπερ μετὰ μορίου ἀρετῆς πράττεται, ὥσπερ εἰρηκῶς ὅτι ἀρετὴ ἐστὶν τὸ ὅλον.)

One way to characterize this objection is to point out that Socrates has been urging Meno to answer the question, “what is virtue?” so that they can then get to the business of finding out whether virtue is teachable (*Men.* 71B1-4). The principle underlying this is that if someone doesn't know what virtue is, then she can't know anything about virtue.<sup>49</sup> In addition to this claim, Socrates adds the premise that justice is

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<sup>48</sup> Only at the later passage does Meno agree that these other virtues are part of virtue. Earlier, he says that there are many other virtues and mentions justice (δικαιοσύνην) at 73E8, courage (ἀνδρεία), temperance (σωφροσύνη), wisdom (σοφία), and munificence (μεγαλοπρέπεια) at 74A4-5.

<sup>49</sup> One statement of the epistemological priority of definition occurs in this dialogue: Or do you think that it is possible for someone who does not know at all who Meno is to know whether he is fine or wealthy or well-born or the opposite of these (*Men.* 71A5-B7)?

part of virtue, and gets Meno to agree to it. So, if Meno doesn't know what virtue is, then he can't know whether justice is a part of virtue. But then Socrates points out that he doesn't know what virtue is, so he couldn't know whether justice is a part of virtue. He can't give an answer in terms of justice to "what is virtue?" since justice is a part of virtue. Another way to characterize the argument, however, is that it introduces the dialectical requirement. So, as Meno is supposedly instructing Socrates in virtue, he must do so in terms with which Socrates is familiar. Some believe<sup>50</sup> that it is difficult to characterize exactly what Socrates' objection is at this passage; Socrates himself summarizes his objection at a breach of the dialectical requirement:

- (2) *Men.* 79D1-4: If you remember, when I was just now answering you about shape, we rejected the sort of answer through the terms of the subject of inquiry and not yet agreed upon. (Εἰ γὰρ καὶ μέμνησαι, ὅτι 'ἐγὼ σοι ἄρτι ἀπεκρινάμην περὶ τοῦ σχήματος, ἀπεβάλλομέν που τὴν τοιαύτην ἀπόκρισιν τὴν διὰ τῶν ἔτι ζητούμενων καὶ μήτῳ ὁμολογημένων ἐπιχειροῦσαν ἀποκρίνεσθαι.)

So, even if it is unclear exactly what the objection is, Socrates himself explains how meeting the dialectical requirement would exclude answers of the sort that Meno gives here. It is not so much that Socrates recognizes two separate conditions; he points out how the dialectical requirement implies non-circularity. So, what drives Socrates to exclude this non-circular definition is the dialectical requirement. But if the one asking the questions admits he is familiar with certain terms, even if, as a result, the answer is circular, there might be nothing wrong with such an answer. It's hard to say because Socrates runs both requirements together at this passage.

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<sup>50</sup> Santas agrees that Socrates' argument at this passage may be intended to show that Meno's definition violates the previously agreed upon principle. But Socrates' argument excludes the use of circularity. Since a circular definition does not answer "what is virtue?" the process has to start up again. Socrates says that they must begin again (*Men.* 79E5-6).

C.3. Dialectical Requirement: the *definiens* must be explained in terms with which the questioner admits he is familiar.

This particular requirement is relative to that with which someone admits he is familiar. As such, the *definiens* must be cognitively available to the questioner. This is a restriction added in addition to whether the definition is true. Socrates makes this distinction himself:

- (1) *Men.* 75D4-7: it is necessary, then, that they [friends] answer in a way more gentle and suited to discussion. By more suited to discussion I mean that answers must not only be true, but through those things with which the questioner admits he is familiar. (δεῖ δὴ πρᾶότερόν πως καὶ διαλεκτικώτερον ἀποκρίνεσθαι. ἔστι δὲ ἴσως τὸ διαλεκτικώτερον μὴ μόνον τὰ ληθῆ ἀποκρίνεσθαι, ἀλλὰ καὶ δι' ἐκαίνων ὧν προσομολογῇ εἶδέναι ὁ ἐρωτώμενος.)

The dialectical requirement is so named because of Socrates' use of *διαλεκτικώτερον*. Socrates introduces this requirement because of Meno's objection to Socrates' definition of shape. Socrates' definition of shape-supposedly a model for virtue-is that shape is the only thing that always follows color (75B10-11). Meno calls this definition "simple-minded" (εὔθεος) because, he asks, what if the questioner denies knowing what color is? Would Socrates have an answer to that?<sup>51</sup>

So, the dialectical requirement could be easily a presupposition about the ability of one who knows what F-ness is to explain to someone who doesn't know what it is. As such, it is not a definitional commitment, but a constraint on the ability of the knower-a constraint on knowledge of the definition. Another passage should prompt us to realize

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<sup>51</sup> See Alan Silverman's discussion of the dialectical requirement in Silverman 2002, chapter two.

that this commitment is indeed important to Socrates, but properly understood, is a feature of his epistemology.

- (2) *Men.* 72C7-D1: ...the one being asked, when looking toward that thing, is well able to make that thing clear to the one asking. (εἰς ὃ καλῶς που ἔχει ἀποβλέψεντα τὸν ἀποκρινόμενον τῷ ἐρωτήσαντι ἐκεῖνο δηλῶσαι, ὃ τυγχάνει οὐσα ἀρετή.)

We could call what Socrates says here the “clarity requirement.” This requirement seems implied by the dialectical requirement: If one uses terms with which the one asking is familiar, then it should be clear. Or perhaps the clarity requirement is necessary, but not sufficient, for the dialectical requirement. But I’m speculating here. I won’t argue for it.

C.4. The Familiarity Condition: the *definiens* must be explained in terms more familiar.

The familiarity condition-so-called by Kahn- is a less specific version of the dialectical requirement. Kahn argues for the familiarity condition by citing *Meno* 75E-76A, the same passage used as evidence for the dialectical requirement. It’s true that some passages provide evidence for several Socratic commitments. But since Kahn describes the familiarity condition with more generality than the dialectical requirement, I think that we can explain familiarity in terms of the dialectical requirement. The familiarity condition, therefore, can be assimilated to the dialectical requirement, or at least meeting the dialectical requirement is sufficient for the familiarity condition.

#### D. Conclusion

This chapter’s main aim is to offer some clarity on behalf of commentators who have written on Socratic definition. In this chapter, I identified sixteen conditions that

appear in various accounts of Socratic definition. I divided them among those to which I argue he is committed, extensional equivalence, property sameness, explanation and semantic completeness, those to which he isn't committed, paradigm and value, and those to which he may be committed, but are not definitional commitments, coherence, non-circularity, the dialectical requirement, and the familiarity condition. In the next chapter, I argue for the first of these conditions: extensional equivalence.

## Chapter III

### The Extensional Equivalence Condition

One crucial issue concerning the nature of Socratic definition is the kind of relationship between *definiens* and *definiendum* presupposed by Socrates. There are two possibilities in order of increasing strength: (1) *definiens* is extensionally equivalent with the *definiendum*; (2) *definiens* is a property identical to the *definiendum*. I argue that extensional equivalence between *definiens* and *definiendum* is a necessary condition in answers to Socrates' "what is F-ness?"<sup>1</sup> question. One passage in Plato's *Meno*, however, suggests that extensional equivalence is not even a necessary condition. One of Socrates' own model answers to "what is shape?" can be read as a simple conditional. A simple conditional doesn't guarantee extensional equivalence. I argue against taking this definition as a simple conditional at the end of this chapter. Still, extensional equivalence alone is not sufficient for an adequate answer to "what is F-ness?" But that will be taken up in chapter four. Finally, I conclude this chapter with a discussion of a distinction that tends to be overlooked: whether Socrates is testing (1) definitions or (2) knowledge of those definitions in his examinations. If Socrates tests definitions, he's committed to descriptive adequacy, that is, an adequate definition will support pre-theoretic beliefs about F's. This is because it then appears as if the definitions fail or succeed depending on whether they accommodate the right examples. If he tests the knowledge of the interlocutor, then he's not committed to descriptive adequacy. This is because an interlocutor's failure to defend his answer to "what is F-ness?" implies only that his

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<sup>1</sup> The *definiendum* is just the subject under discussion, or the models Socrates proposes, which we can take as "F-ness."

definition is inconsistent with some of his other statements, not that the definition is necessarily bad. This distinction is relevant to the discussion of Socrates' semantic commitment in chapter five. So, I will put it off until then.

Contemporary commitments<sup>2</sup> in definitions include the following. If a definition of F-ness is G-ness, then necessarily whatever has F-ness also has G-ness and vice-versa. This is a minimum requirement. It will become clear in this chapter that Socrates' requirement for definitions includes this as well. This is something contemporary theorists don't need to argue for; but with respect to Socrates, an explicit argument is in order because this condition is never stated; it is assumed in the course of discussion.

If the *definiens* is extensionally equivalent to the *definiendum*, then the class of things that has the *definiens* as an attribute also has the *definiendum* as an attribute, and the class of things that has *definiendum* as an attribute, also has the *definiens* as an attribute. We might suppose, for argument's sake, that all courageous people are also temperate, and all temperate people are also courageous. This is just to say that courage is extensionally equivalent with temperance. Alternatively, having a heart and having a kidney are extensionally equivalent since anything that has a heart has a kidney, and anything that has a kidney also has a heart. In other words, the *definiens* picks out all and only instances of the *definiendum*. A proper definition of virtue, for example, will pick out all and only virtuous things. Though calling this adequacy condition "extensional equivalence" comes from Santas, it is by no means the only way to express this commitment. There are other ways to express the extensional equivalence commitment for Socratic definitions.

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<sup>2</sup> See Achinstein 1968.

Benson calls this adequacy condition, “the coextensive condition,” and describes it by saying that a proper answer to “What is F-ness?” will belong to all and only F things. As he explains, the term “belongs” captures the variety of language Socrates uses to describe this condition as well as preserving the relationship he thinks holds between F-ness and F things.<sup>3</sup> Both Kraut and Irwin discuss the extensional equivalence condition by saying that a proposed definition must not be “too wide” or “too narrow.” And Dancy describes Socrates’ commitment to extensional equivalence between *definiens* and *definiendum* in terms of necessary and sufficient conditions, by saying that the *definiens* must at least provide necessary and sufficient conditions for the *definiendum*.<sup>4</sup> But whether this commitment is called, “the extensional equivalence condition,” “the coextensive condition,” or “the commitment to necessary and sufficient conditions,” they all amount to the same thing, which is that any adequate definition of F-ness will at least pick out all and only F things.

A *definiens* can fail to be extensionally equivalent to its *definiendum* in one of three ways: either it is sufficient, but fails to provide a necessary condition for F-ness, which is to say that the *definiens* picks out only F things, but not all F things; so, some F things get left out, so to speak, by the definition. And in this case, the definition would be too narrow. For example, Dusty’s being pregnant is sufficient but not necessary for her being female. Secondly, the *definiens* can be necessary, but fail to provide a sufficient condition for F-ness. Thus, it picks out all F things, but not only F things; some not-F things get thrown into the mix, so to speak. Such a definition would be too wide. For

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<sup>3</sup> See Benson (2000: 108).

<sup>4</sup> I refer the reader to *Plato’s Introduction of Forms*, chapter four, for an excellent and highly technical discussion of Socrates’ commitment to necessary and sufficient conditions.

example, having a lottery ticket is a necessary, but not sufficient, condition for winning a lottery. Or a definition can fail to provide both necessary and sufficient conditions. For example, being the smartest student in class is neither necessary nor sufficient for earning the highest grade in class. It's not necessary because another student who works really hard, but is not that bright could manage the highest grade. It's not sufficient because the smartest student could still fail by not showing up to class.

In Plato's dialogues, Socrates tests the answers for F-ness his interlocutors give by pointing out that they fail to provide necessary or sufficient conditions. But he does not point out when they fail to provide both necessary and sufficient conditions. Indeed, this is a limitation in Socrates' strategy: he can pick out one defect in an interlocutor's answer, but he cannot show all the inadequacies of a particular answer. So, he concentrates on showing how a definition fails to meet either a necessary or a sufficient condition.

My strategy in this chapter is to argue from indirect evidence, i.e. Socrates' responses and objections, for Socrates' commitment to extensional equivalence. I supply three definitions that fail to provide sufficient conditions for F-ness; they fail to pick out only F things. Then, I supply three definitions that fail to provide necessary conditions for F-ness; they fail to pick out all F things. The definitions that fail to provide sufficient conditions for F-ness are the following:

- (1) Courage=<sub>df</sub> a certain endurance of the soul (*La.* 192B9-C1).
- (2) Justice=<sub>df</sub> telling the truth and repaying one's debts (*R.* 331C).
- (3) Temperance=<sub>df</sub> doing of good things (*Chrm.* 163E).

In the second section, I discuss three definitions that fail to provide necessary conditions for F-ness, which are the following:

- (4) Virtue=<sub>df</sub> being suited to ruling over men (*Men.* 73C9-D1).
- (5) Temperance=<sub>df</sub> minding one's own business (*Chrm.* 161B).
- (6) Fineness=<sub>df</sub> gold (*Hi. Ma.* 289E2-4).

In the third section, I identify a passage that seems to undermine the claim that extensional equivalence between *definiens* and *definiendum* is a necessary condition for an answer to “what is F-ness?” At *Meno* 75B10-C1, Socrates offers a definition of shape which suggests that extensional equivalence isn't necessary for Socratic definitions. This is particularly telling because Socrates himself offers this account. He says that shape is the only thing that happens always to accompany color (75B9-11). One way to read this definition of shape is as a simple conditional: for any x, if x is colored, then x is shaped, (x) (Cx→Sx). If this is indeed the correct interpretation of the passage, then x's being colored is offered as a sufficient, but not necessary condition of shape. Thus, it would be a counterexample to the claim that extensional equivalence is necessary for answers to “what is F-ness?” But I argue that this passage can be read in a way that allows this definition to be read as a bi-conditional, i.e. for any x, x is colored if, and only if, x is shaped, (x)(Cx↔Sx).

#### A. The Sufficient Condition

At *Laches* 192B9, Laches says that courage seems to him to be a sort of endurance of the soul (Δοκεῖ τοίνυν μοι καρτερία τις εἶναι τῆς ψυχῆς.) This definition fails Socrates' examination because Laches agrees that courage is

something that is unqualifiedly admirable-i.e. admirable wherever it may be present; there could be no circumstance in which courage would not be admirable. But as Socrates points out, there may be a kind of endurance that isn't admirable: foolish endurance. So, if the *definiens* for courage were an endurance of the soul *simpliciter*, it wouldn't be sufficient for being courage because it would pick out instances of endurance that wouldn't be admirable. Thus the "endurance of the soul" definition for courage may pick out all but not only instances of courage. So, the *definiens* in this case fails to provide a sufficient condition for courage. This leads to the modification of the proposed *definiens*: courage couldn't just be a kind of endurance; it has to be a specific kind of endurance: wise endurance. Only wise endurance would meet the requirement that courage is unqualifiedly admirable.

At *Republic I*, 331D1-2, we find Socrates disputing Cephalus' definition of justice, which he paraphrases as consisting in speaking the truth and giving back what one has taken (Οὐκ ἄρα οὗτος ὁρος ἐστὶν δικαιοσύνης, ἀληθῆ τε λέγειν καὶ ἃ ἂν λάβῃ τις ἀποδιδόναι). As a conjunctive definition, its two conjuncts are, ostensibly, jointly necessary and sufficient for anything to be just. Therefore, it would be enough to undermine this definition by showing one of the conjuncts of the definition fails to provide a necessary condition. But Socrates offers counterexamples that undermine each of the conjuncts. They are neither individually necessary for something's being just. Against the second conjunct, Socrates offers a scenario in which it wouldn't be just to return what one has borrowed: if you borrowed weapons and your friend was out of his mind. Nor would it be just to tell someone who is out of his mind the whole truth (331C). This definition is too wide because some

instances of returning what one has borrowed is unjust, and telling anyone the truth when he is out of his mind is unjust. So, since the definition fails to pick out only instances of just action, it doesn't provide a sufficient condition for anything being F, in this case, being just.

As Critias takes over as interlocutor for Charmides at *Charmides* 163E10-11, he offers a definition of temperance as the doing of good things (τὴν τῶν ἀγαθῶν πράξιν σωφροσύνην εἶναι σαφῶς σοι διορίζομαι). This definition also turns out to be too wide. Socrates points out that a doctor, or any craftsman, could act temperately under this definition of temperance even if he doesn't know that what he is doing produces good consequences. So, we can apply this to anyone: if temperance is the doing of good things, then anyone, even if he intends malice, as long as he provides beneficial consequences, would be acting temperately. Someone could accidentally, i.e. unknowingly, be temperate. Critias balks at this because he wouldn't want a definition of temperance that results in even ignorant people acting temperately. The suggestion then is that doing good things knowingly would be all right, but that is much narrower than the definition of temperance as merely doing good things. Such a definition would fail to pick out only temperate things; there are some intemperate things that are instances of doing good things, in other words.

## B. The Necessary Condition

At *Meno* 73C9-D1, Meno attempts to say what all cases of virtue have in common, but fails to give a necessary condition for anything's being virtuous. His answer to Socrates' "what is virtue?" is that it is to be suited to ruling over men and adds, "if

indeed you are looking for something common to them [virtuous men, women and children] all (Τί ἄλλο γ' ἢ ἄρχειν οἷόν τ' εἶναι τῶν ἀνθρώπων; εἶπερ ἓν γέ τι ζητεῖς κατὰ πάντων.) Socrates is quick to point out, however, that this cannot be an account of virtue if Meno intends to give an explanation that picks out even virtuous slaves. They do not govern anyone, not even themselves. Yet, it should be possible for them to be virtuous, according to Meno's own opinion; he has just claimed that there is virtue even for slaves (*Men.* 71D9-72A1). So, Meno's definition is too narrow: it fails to pick out some F-things, where being F is being virtuous in this case.

At *Charmides* 161B6, Charmides produces a definition of temperance as the minding of one's own business (σωφροσύνη ἃν εἴη τὸ τὰ ἑαυτοῦ πράττειν).<sup>5</sup> There is some suggestion that he has heard this from Critias, though Critias disavows having said it (161C1). Socrates proceeds to point out to him the contrast between minding one's own business and minding the business of others. Something can be done temperately even by minding another's business, broadly interpreted. The example of minding one's own business is writing one's own name. An example of minding another's business is writing the names of others, whether they are friends or enemies. So, the suggestion at this passage is that writing the names of others is (1) not minding one's own business and yet is (2) temperate activity. Thus, Socrates offers an instance of the *definiendum* that is not also an instance of the *definiens*. In other words, Charmides' definition of temperance as minding one's own business fails to provide a necessary condition for something's being temperate.

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<sup>5</sup> There is no word for "business" here. A close equivalent would be "doing one's own."

At *Hippias Major* 289D6-E6, Hippias clearly understands the Socratic questioner's request. He says that it is easy to answer what in all cases is the fine: it is that by which all things appear fine when it is added to them (πάντων ῥᾷστον ἀποκρίνασθαι αὐτῷ τί ἐστι τὸ καλὸν ᾧ καὶ τὰ ἄλλα πάντα κοσμεῖται καὶ προσγενομένου αὐτοῦ καλὰ φαίνεται). In other words, he recognizes the Socratic questioner's request for extensional equivalence because Hippias interprets what Socrates wants is what is present where all and only fine things are. His answer is that anywhere being fine is present, so, too is gold. So, what has the *definiendum* as an attribute, in this case, being fine, must also have the *definiens* as an attribute, in this case being made of gold (χρυσός). We might formalize his claim as the following:

(x)(Fx ↔ Gx) Socrates' counterexamples in this case are meant to undermine the necessary condition in this case by identifying fine things that are not made of gold. Pheidias the sculptor is responsible for making the statue of Athena. But a good many parts of her are made out of ivory, and her eyes are made out of stone. Yet these features are considered fine though they are materials other than gold. Hippias agrees that Pheidias made the statue correctly, and agrees that ivory is fine thing, too (290C1). But it is not made out of gold.

This completes my argument that extensional equivalence between *definiens* and *definiendum* is a necessary condition for answers to "what is F-ness?" Now, I address what appears to be a textual counterexample to this condition.

### B.1. The Textual Objection (*Men.* 75E-76A)

After a concentrated effort to show Meno what he expects in an answer to “what is virtue?” Socrates compares virtues to shapes. A variety of shapes, he says, from the round to the straight, are no less shapes even if they are opposites of each other (74E7-D2). Clearly, his purpose is to show Meno that he wants an answer to “what is virtue?” analogous to “what is shape?” in all the relevant respects. The many virtues that Meno has identified, courage, moderation, wisdom and munificence, are all still one thing: virtue (73A1-3). Likewise, there are many different shapes, but they are all equally shapes (74A1-3). Meno then makes a deal with Socrates: if Socrates can tell him what shape is, i.e. give his own answer to “what is shape?” then he’ll return the favor with an answer to “what is virtue?” Socrates agrees and offers the following definition:

- (1) *Men.* 75B9-11: Let this then be shape for us: the only thing that happens always to follow color. (ἔστω γὰρ δὴ ἡμῖν τοῦτο σχῆμα, ὃ μόνον τῶν ὄντων τυγχάνει χρώματι ἀεὶ ἐπόμενον.)

We should assume, naturally, that Socrates condones this definition because it is one he has offered himself. If read straightforwardly, however, it appears as if Socrates is saying that shape is a necessary, but not sufficient, condition for color: (x) (Cx→Sx). Anything that is colored is also shaped. It wouldn’t follow from this claim alone, of course, that anything that is shaped is also colored. Read like this, this definition is a counterexample to the argument of this chapter, which is that extensional equivalence is a necessary condition in answers to “what is F-ness?” If read as a necessary *and* sufficient condition for anything’s being shaped, (x) (Cx↔Sx), then it will support the argument of

this chapter. So, the question is, why should we interpret Socrates' statement here as the more robust claim that anything is colored if and only if it is shaped?

Two considerations should lead us to read Socrates first definition of shape, the "follows color" definition as a bi-conditional. The first consideration is that in the context of the passage, it makes sense to read the "follows color" definition as a bi-conditional. The second consideration appeals to the principle of charity in interpretation.

It has long been noticed that the Socratic dialogues often have an *ad hominem* feel about them: Plato tailors the discussion according to the interests and beliefs of the interlocutors.<sup>6</sup> This is why, for example, Socrates formulates his expectations for how he wants Meno to answer "what is virtue?" in terms of non-difference between instances of virtue, rather than sameness between them.<sup>7</sup> Meno had given his first answer to "what is virtue?" by pointing out that each person, each age and each action has its own virtue, thus emphasizing the differences between them (*Men.* 72A3-5). Socrates acknowledges that there are differences between individual bees, but these differences are not relevant; he wants to know with respect to what virtuous instances do not differ. So, he compares virtuous people to bees. Just as bees do not differ with respect to being bees, virtuous people do not differ with respect to being virtuous (*Men.* 72B3-6).

Earlier in the dialogue, Meno gave an answer to "what is virtue?" as to be suited to ruling over others (*Men.* 73C9). To this he adds, "if you are searching for one thing common to them all" *κατὰ πάντων*). So, clearly in this case, Meno attempts to meet Socrates extensional equivalence commitment. Where he fails is that this definition

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<sup>6</sup> See Penner 1992 for a survey of the characteristics associated with the Socratic dialogues.

<sup>7</sup> See chapter two for a discussion of the non-difference condition.

doesn't provide a necessary condition for anything being virtuous. A slave can be virtuous. If even a slave can be virtuous, then the virtue cannot be explained through ruling over others. Slaves don't rule over anyone, not even themselves.

So, Meno fails to provide a necessary condition for virtuous instances and Socrates is tailoring his responses to suit Meno's beliefs. Given this, we should expect that when Socrates provides a model for Meno to follow, that model will point the way to rectifying Meno's previous answer's failure. Therefore, we expect that Socrates' answer to "what is shape?" provides a necessary condition for anything to be shaped. If Socrates were giving a model, it would make sense that it emphasizes the correction in earlier failed answers. If we read his model definition as a simple conditional, however, we'll be forced to read the "follows color" definition as a sufficient condition for anything to be shaped, but not necessary. Given the context of the passage, this makes little sense. If, on the other hand, we read the "follows color" definition as a bi-conditional, as I recommend, it includes a necessary as well as sufficient condition for anything's being shaped. In other words, it corrects the failure of Meno's earlier answer, which is just what we should expect. Reading Socrates' definition this way relates to Meno's previous definition and gives more coherence to the passage as a whole.

Moreover, the principle of charity suggests that we read Socrates' "follows color" definition as a bi-conditional. In ordinary conversation, people often say, "if" when they really mean "if and only if." We are being charitable in assuming that they mean "iff" when they say, "if." As a trivial example, a story about the Coral Gables City

Commission details whether the city wants to obtain the land from the federal government. The concluding passage<sup>8</sup> is this:

- (2) “Yes,” the commissioners said, “the city wants the property if the voters agree.” On the other hand, commissioners said, “no, the city doesn’t want it unless the voters say they do.”

One suggestion is that the views expressed here are inconsistent. But a better (more charitable) way to read the passage is to translate: “The city wants the property if the voters want it, and the city doesn’t want it unless the voters want it.” This is logically equivalent to, “The city wants the property if and only if the voters want it.” Clearly, it would be more charitable to interpret the claim in this newspaper as a bi-conditional, even if it isn’t obvious at first that the commissioners were stating a bi-conditional. So, analogously, if we are to interpret Socrates charitably, we should take him as stating necessary and sufficient conditions for anything to be shaped, rather than a sufficient condition. Moreover, given all the other textual evidence I supply in this chapter for his commitment to extensional equivalence, we should read the “follows color” definition of shape this way:  $(x) (Cx \leftrightarrow Sx)$ .

Having addressed the apparent textual counterexample to the argument of this chapter, I turn to address one of the presuppositions of this discussion, that Socrates tests the definitions interlocutors produce.

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<sup>8</sup> This passage is taken from Pospesel’s *Introduction to Logic*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, pp. 89-90.

### C. Definitions and Knowledge

In the course of the discussion in this chapter, I presuppose that Socrates' refutations are refutations of the definitions offered by the interlocutors. But it is important to point out that sometimes Socrates seems to test the interlocutor himself, not merely the definition he produces. This distinction between definition, on one hand, and definitional knowledge the interlocutor ostensibly possesses, is important. The relevance is seen in the following question: does Socrates show that definitions fail, or does he show that interlocutors fail to know what the definitions are? The short answer is that he does both; he recognizes explicitly at some passages whether he's testing the interlocutor or whether he's testing the definition the interlocutor produces. But he runs them together, as I will argue. Since he runs them together, this suggests that we should decide whether he's testing the definition or the interlocutor. I think that this can be clarified once we realize that to produce an adequate definition of F-ness, even by Socrates' lights, one needn't be committed to supporting intuitive judgments about F's. In other words, in an adequate definition of F-ness, there will be genuine F things that fall under the definition, so to speak, but these needn't have anything in common with pre-analytic beliefs about what it is to be an F. The question, then is, how can a definition fail under these circumstances? If Socrates is not committed to supporting the examples of F's that are produced in the dialogues, then against what are definitions tested? My response is that sometimes definitions are tested and sometimes interlocutors themselves. But this needn't thereby generate a conflict.

In *Laches*, Nicias is keenly aware that the subject of inquiry, courage, will be inseparable from how he and Laches answer Socrates' questions. The dialogue begins

with Lysimachus and Melesias wondering if they should have their sons learn how to fight in armor. They seek Laches' aid in settling the question. This eventually develops into a discussion of the nature of courage, for which Laches recommends the help of Socrates (187D). Nicias points out that Laches is not well-acquainted with Socrates and his reputation: for he doesn't realize that the nature of courage will be examined through Nicias and Laches themselves.

- (1) *La.* 187E6-188A2; 188B4-C1: Whoever comes into close contact with Socrates and associates with him in conversation must necessarily...keep on being led about by the man's arguments until he submits to answering questions about himself concerning both his present manner of life and the life he has lived hitherto....but I realized some time ago that the conversation would not be about the boys but about ourselves, if Socrates were present. (ὅς ἄν ἐγγύτατα Σωκράτους ἦ καὶ πλησιάζῃ διαλεγόμενος, ἀνάγκη αὐτῷ... μὴ πᾶσαι ὑπὸ τούτου περιεγόμενον τῷ λόγῳ, πρὶν ἐμπέσῃ εἰς τὸ διδόναι περὶ αὐτοῦ λόγον, ὅντινα τρόπον νῦν τεζῇ καὶ ὅντινα τὸν παρεληλυθότα βίον βεβίωκεν... ἀλλὰ καὶ πάλαι σχεδόν τι ἠπιστάμην ὅτι οὐ περὶ τῶν μεираκίων ἡμῖν ὁ λόγος ἔσοιτο Σωκράτους παρόντος, ἀλλὰ περὶ ἡμῶν αὐτῶν.)

Nicias observes that in a conversation with Socrates, the subject of inquiry is really the interlocutors. Socratic examinations end up being about the person who's answering the questions, rather than some discarnate reality. On the other hand, in other passages it is the account that Socrates is interested in; it doesn't matter who puts it forward. In *Republic*, for example, Thrasymachus makes perhaps the boldest claim in the dialogues: he puts injustice in the class with virtue and wisdom, and justice with the opposites of these (348E). Socrates notes how difficult it will be to address this if only because it stands so far apart from conventional beliefs about justice and injustice. Just when he

says that he believes Thrasymachus to be answering according to his own beliefs,

Thrasymachus says this:

- (2) *R.* 349A9-10: What difference does it make to you, whether I believe it or not? Is it not my account you're supposed to be examining?(Τί δέ σοι, ἔφη, τοῦτο διαφέρει, εἴτε μοι δοκεῖ εἴτε μή, ἀλλ' οὐ τὸν λόγον ἐλέγχεις;)

Socrates' response to this is telling: "it makes no difference," he says (*R.* 349B1). So, this seems to be a case in which Socrates' questions are aimed at the argument, not necessarily the person.

In *Charmides*, Socrates seems to run both together: he doesn't distinguish clearly whether he's examining the argument or examining the man. In this dialogue, Critias sings the praises of Charmides, extolling his temperance. He is embarrassed by this and so cannot answer Socrates' question directly. For if he denies his temperance, he makes Critias a liar, and if he should praise himself, it would be distasteful. Socrates' solution is the following:

- (3) *Chrm.* 158D8-E2: We ought to investigate together the question whether you do or do not possess the thing I am inquiring about, so that you will not be forced to say anything against your will. (κοινῇ ἂν εἴη σκεπτόμενοι εἴτε κέκτησθαι εἴτε μὴ ὁ πυνθάνομαι, ἵνα μήτε σὺ ἀναγκάζῃ λέγειν ἃ μὴ βούλει.)

This passage suggests that Socrates is indeed examining Charmides, but through the account he puts forth. So, especially in this dialogue, Socrates doesn't make a distinction because of the way the dialogue develops: Socrates is examining whether Charmides possesses temperance, but he must do it through what Charmides says. Socrates recognizes a connection between the argument and the one who believes it.

Later, Charmides offers a definition of temperance as minding one's own business (161B6). He claims to have heard from someone else. Socrates accuses him of having picked it up from Critias, but Critias doesn't own up to it (161C2). As Socrates presses Charmides to tell him from whom he heard it, Charmides asks him why that should matter and Socrates responds that it doesn't:

- (4) *Chrm.* 161C3-6: What difference does it make from whom I heard it? None at all, since the question at issue is not who said it, but whether what he said is true or not. (Ἄλλὰ τί διαφέρει, ἦ δ' ὅς, ὁ Χαρμίδης, ὃ Σώρατες, ὅτου ἤκουσα; Οὐδέν, ἦν δ' ἐγώ, πάντως γὰρ οὐ τοῦτο σκεπτέοι, ὅστις αὐτὸ εἶπεν, ἀλλὰ πότερον ἀληθὲς λέγεται ἢ οὐ.)

The concern at this passage suggests that Socrates intends to test the account, not the person who said it. Though in this very same dialogue, in texts close to one another, Socrates starts out saying that he's going to examine Charmides! Something is odd here. At this passage, however, he's concerned about the truth of the definition; not that whoever came up with it should demonstrate that he knows what it is.

It should be clear, then, that at some passages, (1) Socrates acts like he's testing the interlocutors, and at others, (2) he acts like he's testing the account. And that in the same dialogue, he runs these two different things together, perhaps because he thinks he's both examining the account and examining the interlocutor at the same time. Nevertheless, how we answer the question, "Which is Socrates examining, the interlocutor, or the account?" will have consequences for the semantic status of the counterexamples he offers.

### C.1. The Problem of the Distinction

Commentators have wondered to what extent Socrates is committed to the counterexamples he offers. And as a result, to what extent he and his interlocutors call instances of courage or temperance are in fact instances of courage and temperance. If Socrates is testing definitions, then he is using the counterexamples he offers as data to support that definition. Building an ethical theory, for example, relies on those intuitive assessments of what's right and wrong, hence what people pre-theoretically call "right" and "wrong." If an ethical theory fails to accommodate those intuitive assessments, then so much the worse for the ethical theory. Are Socratic definitions like this? Do they require conventional beliefs about what things are called as data for a satisfactory account?

It seems that if a Socratic definition must account for all pre-theoretic beliefs about F's, then an adequate account will not allow any revision for those uncontroversial examples of F's. So, an adequate account of courage must accommodate answers like Laches' first: *standing in battle-line and not fleeing as an account of courage*, for example. The purpose of a Socratic definition is to string up all the data and explain what all these instances have in common, leaving nothing out that is uncontroversial.

On the other hand, if a Socratic definition doesn't have to account for any pre-theoretic beliefs, then it isn't subject to the same restriction as many contemporary ethical theories. Any ethical theory-it is hoped- that says torturing babies for fun is sometimes acceptable will be rejected outright because it doesn't fit with pre-theoretic notions of what's good, and hence what is called "good." So, in uncontroversial examples, we cannot be wrong, provided that they are uncontroversial. But then it seems like

uncontroversial examples don't give much guidance in what has to be accounted for by the theory.

If Socrates is testing an interlocutor's definitional knowledge, and there's no special status between the definition that's offered and the interlocutor's other beliefs, then Socrates doesn't seem committed to the truth of any of these, necessarily. If, on the other hand, Socrates is testing the definition itself, then he tests it by testing for consistency between the definition and the other beliefs of the interlocutor. In these cases, we say the definition fails when it can't cope with paradigmatic counterexamples. On the other hand, an interlocutor might fail to know the definition when what he's claimed is in conflict with his other beliefs. But then it would be available to him, if he wished, to jettison the offending beliefs, even if they happened to be paradigmatic examples.

#### D. Conclusion

In this chapter, I argue that for Socrates extensional equivalence between *definiens* and *definiendum* is a necessary condition in answers to "what is F-ness?" To substantiate this claim, I offered two different types of definitions examined by Socrates: ones that do not provide sufficient conditions for anything's being F, and ones that do not provide necessary conditions for anything's being F. I also entertained a textual objection to the extensional equivalence condition, which I argued, could be explained away by appealing to the context of the passage and the principle of charity. Finally, I explored an ambiguity in assessing an aspect of Socrates' activity: at some passages, he tests definitions-and gives textual indicators that he's doing so; at others, he tests his interlocutors, i.e. whether they demonstrate definitional knowledge; he gives indicators

for this as well. Whether Socrates is testing definitions or definitional knowledge will have consequences for the status of instances of the *definienda*. If he's testing definitions, he's committed to the instances being genuine F's. For how could a definition fail except by not accommodating Socrates and his interlocutors believe to be genuine F's? This has a semantic consequence, as well. Genuine F's are correctly called F. But this may be the same set of F's that are pre-theoretically called F. If so, then there can be no revision among interlocutors' beliefs about what's called F. If, on the other hand, Socrates is testing the definitional knowledge of the interlocutors, then whether what is called F doesn't really matter. For if an interlocutor possesses genuine definitional knowledge, he might show Socrates how what he believes is a courageous instance, for example, isn't a genuine courageous instance. Socrates wouldn't be bothered by this, apparently, but only if he's testing definitional knowledge and not definitions. The resolution of this issue will come up at the end of chapter six once we understand the difference between genuine F's and what interlocutors call F's

## Chapter IV

### The Property Sameness Condition

In chapter three, I argued that extensional equivalence between *definiens* and *definiendum* is necessary for answers to “what is F-ness?” I addressed the passage at *Meno* 75B9-C1 that suggests that an answer to a “what is F-ness?” question need only be a simple conditional. I argued also that judging from this passage, we should interpret Socrates’ definition of shape as a bi-conditional: for any  $x$ ,  $x$  is colored if, and only if,  $x$  is shaped,  $(x)(Cx \leftrightarrow Sx)$ . But there’s another problem: Socrates also says at this passage that he would be content if Meno were to give a similar answer for virtue (ἐγὼ γάρ κἂν οὕτως ἀγαπῶην εἰ μοι ἄρετήν εἴποις).<sup>1</sup> If he would be content with an answer that merely meets the extensional equivalence condition, then Socrates suggests that extensional equivalence between *definiens* and *definiendum* is also sufficient for answers to “what is F-ness?” After all, he wants Meno to tell him what virtue is; he offers an answer to “what is shape?” that is supposed to be a model for Meno’s answer to “what is virtue?” The model identifies a property extensionally equivalent with shape. So, the suggestion is that Socrates wants Meno to tell him what is extensionally equivalent with virtue. And if he did so, Socrates would be content. Would such an answer satisfy all of Socrates’ expectations?

The quick answer is no. The other conditions that answers to “what is F-ness?” must meet are the explanatory condition and the semantic completeness condition for statements about F-nesses. I argue for the explanatory condition in chapter five, and the semantic completeness condition in chapter six. We still have to explain, however, why

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<sup>1</sup> See *Men.* 75B11-C1.

he says he would be content if Meno were to tell him what alone of all the things that are accompanies virtue.<sup>2</sup> I argue that despite the passage at *Meno* 75B9-C1, extensional equivalence is not sufficient for Socrates: he expects a stronger relationship to obtain between *definiens* and *definiendum*: property sameness. The aim of this chapter is three fold: (1) to give an interpretation of *Meno* 75B8-C1 which explains Socrates' apparent satisfaction with an answer to "what is virtue?" that provides merely necessary and sufficient conditions for virtue; (2) to defend an interpretation of *Charmides* 160E-161B that illustrates Socrates' commitment to property sameness, which is that if F-ness= $\text{df}$  G-ness, then F-ness is a property identical to G-ness; (3) to argue that if we suppose Socrates is committed to property sameness in answers to "what is F-ness?" we can explain passages where he cites unity and non-difference as other requirements of answers to "what is F-ness?"

#### A. *Meno* 75B8-C1

Again, we revisit the same passage cited in the last chapter. But like so many passages in Plato's dialogues, we revisit it in a new light, emphasizing something new about it. In this case, it is Socrates' curious remark that he would be content if Meno answered him about virtue in the way he answered Meno about shape. A satisfactory answer for shape, Socrates says, would encompass all shapes since the round is no less shape than the straight,<sup>3</sup> even if these are opposite each other (ἐναντία ὄντα

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<sup>2</sup> Klein suggests that Socrates is hinting at the following analogy: color is to shape as knowledge is to virtue (1965: 60).

<sup>3</sup> See *Men.* 74D2-E2.

αλληλοῖς). Socrates tries out his own answer to “what is shape?” so that Meno may practice for his answer to “what is virtue?”

- (1) *Men.* 75B8-C1: Let shape be this for us, what only of all the things that are always happens to accompany color. Perhaps this is acceptable to you or do you seek something else? I would indeed be content if you would answer me in this way about virtue. (ἔστω γὰρ δὴ ἡμῖν τοῦτο σχῆμα, ὃ μόνον τῶν ὄντων τυγχάνει χρώματι ἀεὶ ἐπόμενον. ἱκανῶς σοι, ἢ ἄλλως πως ζητ εἶς; ἐγὼ γὰρ κἂν οὕτως ἀγαπῶ εἴ μοι ἀρετὴν εἴποις.)

This passage is controversial because Socrates offers a definition of shape that meets neither the property sameness condition, nor the explanatory commitment. By comparing this passage in *Meno* with another in *Euthyphro*, it appears as if Socrates ought to reject the definition of shape he himself puts forward. He points to a feature of shape—namely, that it always accompanies color—but doesn’t say what shape itself is; he doesn’t give the οὐσία of shape. When Euthyphro attempts a definition of piety as what all the gods love, Socrates criticizes his answer: though Euthyphro has provided a πάθος of piety, he has not provided its οὐσία.<sup>4</sup>

We might be able to explain away this conflict by suggesting that these are two different dialogues, each with its own context. Thus, it is not surprising if we find inter-textual conflicts. But even if that were true, and one ought not to rely too much on cross-dialogue comparison, there is another problem. When Socrates describes what sort of answer he expects, he compares virtue to bees. In explaining what he would want if he

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<sup>4</sup> See *Euthyphr.* 11A7-8. A complete discussion of the difference between πάθος and οὐσία would take us too far from the point here, as this distinction has a long and complicated history. The distinction at stake here is, roughly, between the active power that things possess inherently, and the passive activations of what is acted upon. Roughly, the difference is between quality and essence (Peters 1967: 153).

were to ask him about bees, Socrates uses the word “οὐσίας” which is translated as “nature” in most cases. He preps Meno by asking him if he would know what to say were Socrates to ask him about the nature of bees (εἰ μου ἐρομένου μελίτης περὶ οὐσίας ὅτι ποτ’ ἔστιν).<sup>5</sup> So, even if we acknowledge a conflict between what Socrates says in *Euthyphro* and in *Meno*, the conflict arises also between different passages of the same dialogue. Socrates clearly expects an οὐσία in an answer to “what is F-ness?” At this passage, he doesn’t even meet his own requirement. How is this explained?

In general, commentators explain this passage by comparing Socrates’ “follows color” definition of shape with another definition of shape he offers later, what I call the “limit” definition of shape, concluding that Socrates, after all, prefers the “limit” definition of shape to the “follows color” definition. This suggests, perhaps, that he doesn’t take the “follows color” definition of shape seriously.

After Meno balks at Socrates’ “follows color” definition of shape, Socrates introduces the dialectical requirement.<sup>6</sup> This leads Socrates to first gain Meno’s assent to the terms through which Socrates will present his second definition of shape. First, Meno agrees that he understands what an end, limit or boundary is, for these are all the same, according to Socrates (75E1-5). Then, Meno agrees that he understands what a plane or solid is, as in geometry (76A1-2). After this, Socrates announces the definition of shape that Meno should agree he understands:

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<sup>5</sup> See *Men.* 72B1-2.

<sup>6</sup> See chapter two for a discussion of this requirement: answers must not only be true but in terms with which the questioner admits he is familiar.

- (2) *Men.* 76A5-7: For I say this belongs to every shape, it is that which limits a solid; in a word, I would say that shape is the limit of a solid. (κατὰ γὰρ παντὸς σχήματος τοῦτο λέγω, εἰς ὃ τὸ στερεὸν περαίνει, τοῦτ' εἶναι σχῆμα ὅπερ ἂν συλλαβὼν εἴποιμι στερεοῦ πέρας σχῆμα εἶναι.)

Two commentators argue that Socrates prefers this “limit” definition of shape to the “follows color” definition of shape. Kahn argues that since Socrates requests at *Meno* 72B1 that he wants the essence (οὐσία) of virtue, we should think that he prefers the “limit” definition to the “accompanies color” definition. The “limit” definition of shape fulfills this request for an οὐσία better than the “follows color” definition of shape. To this, Kahn offers external considerations: the “limit” definition of shape fits better into a mathematical framework and is genuinely scientific.<sup>7</sup> So, perhaps also from the principle of charity, we should think that Socrates prefers the “limit” definition of shape.

Santas argues that Socrates prefers the “limit” definition because it fulfills two important purposes to which Socratic definitions are put: the diagnostic use and the aitiological use.<sup>8</sup> Under the pragmatics of Socratic definitions, Santas argues that the “limit” definition of shape fulfills the diagnostic use and the aitiological use of Socratic definitions better than the “follows color” definition.

The diagnostic use of a definition is an appeal to a standard, rule or principle that resolves disputes over whether a given action has a certain quality. In *Euthyphro*, for example, Socrates asks Euthyphro for the definition of piety so that he can put it to use, diagnosing whether certain actions are pious or not.

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<sup>7</sup> See Kahn (1996: 177).

<sup>8</sup> See Santas (1979: 115-117).

- (3) *Men.* 6E2-6: Then teach me what this idea is, so that by looking at it, and using it as a model, I can say whether what you or others do is such a sort as to be pious and if not, not. (Ταύτην τοίνυν με αὐτὴν δίδαξον τὴν ἰδέαν τίς ποτέ ἐστιν, ἵνα εἰς ἐκείνην ἀποβλέπων καὶ χρώμενος αὐτῇ παραδείγματι, ὃ μὲν ἂν τοιοῦτον ᾦ ὧν ἂν ᾦ σὺ ἢ ἄλλος τις πράττει φῶ ὅσιον εἶναι, ὃ δ' ἂ μὴ τοιοῦτον, μὴ φῶ.)

Euthyphro's case has the features of an ethical dilemma: he thinks that prosecuting his father for murder is pious; his relatives think it is impious (4D5-E3). Especially in this context, it makes sense that Socrates would expect that an adequate definition of piety would help in distinguishing whether what Euthyphro does is pious or impious. But this definition could be generalized to any action, as Socrates says.

Santas also points out that the diagnostic use of a definition would be sufficient but not necessary for determining pious actions. For if it were a necessary condition as well, this would involve Socrates in a hopeless circularity. If the possession of a definition were necessary to make judgments about what's pious, then neither he nor his interlocutors could determine any instances at all. Thus, the instances of the kind could not be the data through which we could generalize and discover the right definition. So, it would be impossible to tell whether instances of the *definendum* are counterexamples or confirmation instances.

In comparison with the “follows color” definition, Santas' point is that it is difficult to determine whether shape is what (a) *always* follows color and (b) is the *only* thing that always follows color. In sharp contrast to this, the “limit” definition of shape tells us instantly whether something is a shape. His example is that we can tell immediately that the limit of a cube is a figure.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> See Santas (1979: 133).

The aitiological<sup>10</sup> use of a definition is that use which allows one to defend or support a judgment about whether anything is an instance of a particular kind. This use is articulated in *Hippias Major* where Socrates calls on Hippias to tell him what the beautiful is so that he can defend, when challenged, his appraisal of whether certain speeches are beautiful or not.

With respect to Socrates' two definitions of shape and their aitiological purpose, Santas compares two arguments, one which relies on the "follows color" definition of shape, and the other, which relies on the "limit" definition of shape. In the first argument, supporting a judgment about whether something is an instance of shape might look like this:

- (1) Shape=<sub>df</sub> the only thing that always follows color.
- (2) Round is an instance of the only thing that always follows color.
- (3) So, round is an instance of shape.

On the other hand, a defense using the "limit" definition of shape might look like this:

- (1) Shape=<sub>df</sub> the limit of a solid
- (2) Round is the limit of a sphere.
- (3) A sphere is a solid.
- (4) So, round is a shape.

Santas' observation is that the second premise of the first argument is not known to be true, and would be difficult to demonstrate. Premises 2 and 3 of the second argument are true and indisputable.<sup>11</sup> Therefore, the "limit" definition of shape is better than the

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<sup>10</sup> This is closely related to the explanation condition: If F-ness=<sub>df</sub> G-ness, then for anything that is F, it is F because it is G. See chapter five.

<sup>11</sup> Why these are true and indisputable has to do with their analytic truth, perhaps, since Santas doesn't explain. I'm speculating that negating them would be like denying that stallions are male horses, as in the case of (2), or denying that man is an animal, in the case of (3).

“follows color” definition of shape relative to the aitiological purpose of definitions as well. And if the “limit” definition is better relative to Socrates’ purposes, then he must prefer it to the “follows color” definition of shape.

Thus, I have set out three considerations for thinking that Socrates prefers the “limit” definition of shape to the “follows color” definition of shape. The “limit” definition: (1) satisfies Socrates’ request for an *ὁσία*, (2) fulfills better the diagnostic use to which he expects to put the definition, (3) fulfills better the aitiological use to which he expects to put the definition. We might even grant these considerations, and that Socrates prefers the “limit” definition to the “follows color” definition, all things considered. But neither of these commentators addresses why Socrates would be content if Meno were to give him a definition of virtue like the “follows color” definition. This remark can be explained, I maintain, by appealing to (a) the limitation of Socratic refutation, and (b) the context of this particular passage.

Socrates is limited in how he can criticize proffered definitions. A given definition may have several inadequacies, but Socrates’ aim is generally to target only one of those inadequacies explicitly. For example, one of the definitions of the fine, to which Hippias agrees, is *pleasure through hearing and sight*<sup>12</sup> (*Hi. Ma.* 298A7). Socrates asks if being pleasant through hearing and sight could explain fine laws and fine activities (298B1-3). The suggestion is that we would need a different account of fine laws and fine activities because being pleasant through hearing and sight wouldn’t explain their fineness. Hippias bites at this, and agrees with Socrates’ initial objection (298C3-4).

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<sup>12</sup> Woodruff notes that where Hippias uses “and”, Aristotle uses “or”, which makes it look more like a definition, but the two come to the same (1982: 81).

Socrates lets this pass, however, and accepts the account of the fine as being pleasant through hearing and sight. He wants to avoid getting stuck on a similar point they've just addressed earlier in the passage (298C5-7). Socrates then goes on to address whether everything pleasant is also fine. The point of citing this passage is show that Socrates' recognizes two things wrong with this definition. The first problem, he suggests, is that it fails to provide a necessary condition. But he lets that go, and doesn't examine that feature, or provide a counterexample. The second problem is that it fails to provide a sufficient condition because some properties, like being pleasant to eat, or some activities, like making love, we would be ashamed to call fine (299A5-B1). Socrates pushes aside the first problem in order to deal with the second. He recognizes that he can only take one problem at a time, even if there may be many things wrong with an offered definition.

In sum, Socrates cannot be expected to point out everything that's wrong with a definition, just one defect in particular. This limitation, however, is at the core of the *ad hominem* feel of Plato's dialogues. Particular refutations can be highly idiosyncratic and personal; they are directed at a particular interlocutor's understanding and his beliefs. So, it wouldn't be surprising if Socrates tailored his objections with an eye to making intellectual progress, but this requires taking an interlocutor's particular perspective into account.

If we suppose that in some cases Socrates measures his explanations according to his interlocutor, then we would find him illustrating what he wants in ways that accommodate the understanding of that interlocutor. It would make sense for Socrates to offer model definitions for F-ness that remedy the defect he sees in a previous answer

given by an interlocutor. If this is indeed Socrates' approach, this would explain why he would be content with Meno's answer for virtue along lines similar to the "follows color" definition of shape. Earlier in the dialogue, Meno fails to provide a *definiens* that is coextensive with the *definiendum*. So, if Meno managed to provide a definition that fulfills extensional equivalence, Socrates would be content with that because that is something Meno has been unable to do until now.

Meno's last attempt at answering "what is virtue?" fails to provide a necessary condition for virtue.<sup>13</sup> His definition of virtue is that it *is to be suited to ruling over men* (73C9-D1). Socrates points out that in Meno's own view, slaves can be virtuous, but the definition of virtue doesn't apply to them. So, his account doesn't cover all instances of virtue. After this passage, Meno goes on to complain about being unable to come up with an account that covers all and only the other virtues: courage, moderation, wisdom and munificence and the rest. But Meno says that he cannot find what Socrates is looking for: one virtue for them all (74A11-B1). In response, Socrates says that he is eager to make progress (*προσβιβάζει*) because he thinks that virtue is not exceptional in the respect of having one thing in common for all and only virtuous things (74B2-4). Plato's use of *προσβιβάζει*<sup>14</sup> here foreshadows how Socrates will bring Meno nearer to understanding his expectations, which is why he offers a definition of shape that rectifies and emphasizes the defect of Meno's last definition, even if it doesn't meet all of Socrates' requirements.

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<sup>13</sup> See chapter three, pp. 64-65.

<sup>14</sup> This is the causal of *proj baihw*: *to make to approach or bring nearer* (Liddell and Scott, 7<sup>th</sup> ed. 1997).

To summarize my explanation of this curious passage, I emphasize that Socrates is eager to make progress in his discussion with Meno. The context in which he articulates this aim comes when he (1) states his assumption that there is something which is common *and* peculiar to all and only the other virtues, and (2) reiterates this generalization from the other examples he's provided. Meno denies earlier that an answer to "what is virtue?" will conform to the same expectations as an answer to "what is health?" in the particular respect which Socrates maintains: that there is a unifying account for virtuous people (73A4-5). Here, Meno says he cannot identify something that's the same in all these cases (74A11-B1). So, if we interpret "making progress" as getting Meno to identify something that's the same in all cases of virtue, we can expect Socrates to provide a model definition of shape that illustrates this. The "follows color" definition of shape does it.

A limitation to this approach, however, is that we cannot presume that Socrates' model definitions embody all the conditions of an adequate answer to "what is F-ness?" out of context. Thus, such model definitions cannot be relied on as support *simpliciter* for a Socratic model of definition; they have to be interpreted; we must take into account the context of the passage and the differing capabilities of the interlocutors.

Finally, the passage at *Meno* 75B8-C1 suggests that for Socrates an answer to "what is F-ness?" needn't do more than be extensionally equivalent to F-ness. I argue that this passage does not commit Socrates to merely extensional equivalence between *definiens* and *definiendum* once we understand the limitation in Socratic refutations and examine the context of the passage. I now turn to a more positive argument for thinking that Socrates expects a stronger relationship than mere extensional equivalence: namely,

that the *definiens* be the same property as the *definiendum*. *Charmides* 160E-161B provides the main support for this view.

#### B. *Charmides* 160E-161B

In “Elenctic Definitions,” George Nakhnikian cites the refutation of “temperance is modesty” (καί εἶναι ὅπερ αἰδῶς ἡ σωφροσύνη) at *Charmides* 160E-161B to show that the relation between *definiens* and *definiendum* for Socrates must be one of property identity.<sup>15</sup> Nakhnikian recommends we observe that Socrates’ argument proceeds in two steps:

- (1) Socrates is not content merely with the observation that there is no perfect coincidence between the class of temperate men and the class of modest men. He goes on to argue to the conclusion that the property of temperance is not the same as the property of modesty. (1971: 131)

In this section, I defend Nakhnikian’s summary of the argument by doing two things: (a) making explicit the argument at *Charmides* 160E-161B, and (b) defending his argument against the objection that the premises can be read as Pauline Predications.<sup>16</sup>

First, a few words about the relationship between property sameness and extensional equivalence: If the class of things that has the *definiendum* as a property is the same as the class of things that has the *definiens* as a property, then the *definiens* is

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<sup>15</sup> Though Nakhnikian uses the phrase “property identity” and I use “property sameness,” the argument at *Charmides* 160E-161B supports both. I use the phrase “property sameness” to point out that Socrates’ request for what is the “same” in all F things doesn’t necessarily entail identity. There is no harm in calling this his commitment to “property identity,” since it relies on Leibniz’s Law.

<sup>16</sup> Pauline predications are ways to read sentences of the form, “Justice is pious” and “Piety is just” as assigning predicates to the unnamed instances of the εἶδος named by the subject-term. Thus, “Justice is pious” really cashes out to “Justice is such that anyone who has this property is necessarily pious.” Such predications are called “Pauline” after St. Paul who is attributed with statements like “Charity is kind.” St. Paul meant these statements to be taken as “anyone who is charitable is necessarily kind.” (1974: 406-7)

extensionally equivalent to the *definiendum*, but they needn't be the same property. The stronger claim is that the *definiens* is in fact the same property as the *definiendum*; Compare, for example, the class of renates-creatures with kidneys-with the class of chordates-creatures with hearts. They are extensionally equivalent because every creature that has a kidney also has a heart, and every creature that has a heart also has a kidney. But the property of having a kidney is distinct from the property of having a heart.<sup>17</sup> Property sameness implies that the classes are extensionally equivalent, but extensional equivalence doesn't imply property sameness.

With this distinction in mind, we can see more clearly Nakhtnikian's point about the argument at *Charmides* 160E-161B. It is sufficient to undermine Charmides' definition of temperance as modesty to show that some modest people are not temperate; this definition of temperance as modesty does not provide a sufficient condition for anything's being temperate. Doing so would show that modesty is not extensionally equivalent to temperance. And since modesty is not extensionally equivalent with temperance, it follows that modesty is not the same property as temperance.

In other words, once Socrates establishes that the class of temperate men and the class of modest men are not extensionally equivalent, he is allowed, without any additional premises, to conclude that the property temperance is not the same property as modesty. But Socrates points out in addition, according to Nakhtnikian, that Socrates expects the *definiens* and the *definiendum* in this case to be the same property. Otherwise, his argument would have gone differently, perhaps like the others I discussed in chapter

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<sup>17</sup> This well-worn example is cited in discussions about meaning, i.e. that "renate" doesn't mean the same thing as "chordate" even if they are extensionally equivalent (Quine 1951: 31). My use of this example to illustrate the difference between extensional equivalence and property sameness is, I take it, uncontroversial.

three. To show that a definition fails extensional equivalence, Socrates need only identify a counterexample to the sufficiency claim or the necessity claim of the *definiens*. The trick is, however, to argue that Nakhtnikian is right in his characterization of this argument.

### B.1. The Basic Argument

Charmides offers a definition of temperance as modesty. His reasoning is that the possession of temperance makes one bashful (*Chrm.* 160E1-4). The premises that follow his definition are the following:

- (1) Temperance<sub>df</sub> Modesty
- (2) Temperance is (always) good.
- (3) Modesty is not (always) good.
- (4) So, Temperance  $\neq$  Modesty

In general, the argument Socrates offers at *Charmides* 160E-161B relies on Leibniz's Law.<sup>18</sup> From the assumption that temperance and modesty are the same, it follows that they share all the same properties. Socrates points out that one property they do not share is being unqualifiedly good. Temperance is, in all cases, unqualifiedly good (160E13). Modesty is not unqualifiedly good: there are circumstances in which it is not good (161A4). Thus, they cannot be the same. Nakhtnikian's point about this argument is that if Socrates only expected extensional equivalence to obtain between *definiens* and *definiendum*, the argument would have gone differently. The suggestion is that if Socrates

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<sup>18</sup> Formalized, the principle is this:  $a=b \leftrightarrow (F)(Fa \rightarrow Fb)$ ; read from left to right, this is called "the indiscernibility of identicals." Read from right to left, this is called "the identity of indiscernibles." Together we now call them "Leibniz's Law."

were interested in only extensional equivalence here, then he would have described a situation in which someone's being modest would have resulted in her being intemperate, or that someone's being temperate would have resulted in her being immodest. The way the argument develops, however, Socrates identifies a situation in which being modest is not good, i.e. when one is in need. Then he goes on to underline that Modesty is not good in all situations, rather than simply some modest people are not good.

## B.2. Criticism

Santas doubts that the argument at *Charmides* 160E-161B can be read as clearly as I suggest above. His main criticism is that when we compare the argument in *Charmides* against a similar argument at *Laches* 192C-D, we cannot tell on the face of it whether Socrates means to be denying extensional equivalence or property identity between *definiens* and *definiendum*. This is because such readings are ambiguous. At *Laches* 192B9, Laches says that courage is a sort of endurance of the soul (Δοκεῖ τοῖνυν μοι καρτερία τις εἶναι τῆς ψυχῆς.) The main assumption in this argument is courage is admirable wherever it is present; it turns out, however, that all endurance is not admirable. Only wise endurance is admirable whereas foolish endurance is not. In this argument, we may read, as Santas points out, the claim that courage is always admirable as either (a) whatever is courageous is also admirable, or (b) the property, courage, is admirable. So, if we read the claim in the first way, the argument constitutes a denial of extensional equivalence. If read in the second way, however, it

constitutes a denial of property identity.<sup>19</sup> The implication is that since the claim that temperance is good at *Charmides* 160E4-5 is also ambiguous, it cannot be evidence for believing that Socrates expects the *definiens* and *definiendum* to be the same property.

Though perhaps the argument in *Laches* could be read ambiguously, I argue that the claim that temperance is good cannot be read as (a) whatever has temperance is also necessarily good. Rather it must be read as a (b) claim about the property temperance. Read this way, the conclusion that follows from this argument must then also be read as (c) temperance and modesty, the properties, are not the same, which is a denial of property identity, which is what Nakhnikian maintains.

#### B.2.a. Pauline Predication

Santas claims that in passages like *Laches* 192C-D, we have an option of reading them in two different ways. But, strictly speaking, this is not an option. Either such claims as “Courage is admirable” are straightforward subject-predicate statements, or they are Pauline predications, read as “whatever is courageous is also admirable,” or the set of courageous people is also admirable. Once we see why Vlastos adopted this convention of explaining some of these statements, which are abundant in Plato’s works, as Pauline predications, we’ll see that *Chrm.* 160E-161B is not ambiguous.

There is a long history of understanding statements like, “Justice is just,” which appear in Plato’s works, like any other statement in which the individual identified by the subject term is a member of the class possessing the property expressed by the predicate

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<sup>19</sup> See Santas (1979: 110).

term.<sup>20</sup> The reasoning is that prior to Vlastos' argument for the Pauline predication reading, there were only two possibilities in the literature: Either such statements are read as identities, i.e. they are read straightforwardly, as above. Read as an identity, "Justice is just" would simply be "Justice is Justice." The straightforward reading was apparently the more natural of the two.

Vlastos it was absurd to read analogous statements like, "Justice is pious," which appears at *Protagoras* 331B2, or "Piety is just," which appears at *Euthyphro* 11E7-12A2, as straightforward subject-predicate statements. With respect to Plato, he pointed out, no one would be tempted to read "Piety is just," straightforwardly. To do so would be to suppose that Plato wants an abstract form to have a property that only concrete individuals would have, which was absurd. It became evident to Vlastos that in "Piety is just" the copula was not meant to assign the predicate to the εἶδος itself, but rather to the instances of that εἶδος. Thus, a more satisfactory, alternative reading of the statement, "Justice is pious" becomes "Justice is such that anyone who has this property is necessarily pious."<sup>21</sup> Had St. Paul been a Platonist, he would have undoubtedly meant by the statement, "Charity is kind," that "Charity is such that anyone who is charitable is necessarily kind."

Now, what Vlastos claims here is not that whenever we are confronted in Plato's dialogues with a statement like, "Courage is praiseworthy" we have options in interpretation. It is not open to us to interpret such a phrase straightforwardly, such that courage itself is a member of the class of praiseworthy things, or as Pauline predications.

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<sup>20</sup> See Vlastos (1974: 405).

<sup>21</sup> See Vlastos (1974: 407).

Rather, because we are dealing with Plato, who believes that the things named by virtue terms are abstract universals, we cannot interpret such phrases straightforwardly, but that we *must* interpret them as Pauline predications. To read these phrases straightforwardly would be to commit “egregious nonsense.”<sup>22</sup> To apply a predicate to the abstract term “Piety” would be as absurd as applying a predicate to the multiplication sign.

The ambiguity-perhaps the one that Santas suggests-comes in to this discussion in a different way. If we are materialists, then we can read statements like, “Gold is yellow” straightforwardly because we are predicating the property of being yellow to all that stuff out there in the universe. Thus, we are not forced to read, “Gold is yellow” as “Gold is (a Form) such that any (material) instance of it is necessarily yellow.” But this is because we are not Platonists about the Form of Gold. Vlastos’ point is that if we are like Plato, and believe that the thing indicated by the subject term is an abstract universal, then we have to read “Piety is just” as a Pauline Predication.<sup>23</sup> We have no other option.

So, against Santas’ charge of ambiguity, the argument at *Charmides* 160E-161B is not ambiguous at all. In fact, according to Vlastos, the claim, “Temperance is good” must be read as a Pauline predication in this passage. But if Vlastos’ argument is that all such claims *must* be read as Pauline predications, we will see in the next section that this passage is a counterexample to his argument.

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid

<sup>23</sup> Ibid, pp. 407-408

### B.3. Response

Santas denies that the conclusion of the argument at *Charmides* 160E-161B can be read unambiguously as a denial of property identity. That is, it isn't clear that "temperance is not modesty" should be read as a denial of property identity or as a denial of extensional equivalence. If the conclusion is ambiguous between two readings, then one or more of the premises must be ambiguous, as well. In other words, at least one of the premises in the argument at *Charmides* 160E-161B could be read as a Pauline predication. The natural candidate for a Pauline statement is the first premise of the argument:

- (1) *Chrm.* 160E13: Temperance is (always) good. (Οὐ μόνον οὖν ἄρα καλόν, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἀγαθόν ἐστίν.)

So, the suggestion is that this premise could be read as: (1\*) Temperance is such that whoever is temperate is necessarily good. Thus, we can take (1\*) as a claim about the class of temperate people being necessarily good. Read this way, and substituted into the argument, however, we get an obvious redundancy. And because of this redundancy, we cannot read this premise as a Pauline predication. Socrates reaches this main premise (1) by distinguishing between the class of temperate people, on the one hand, and the property of temperance, on the other. Thus, it would make little sense to read this first premise as a Pauline predication, i.e. a claim about the class of temperate people. So, contrary to Vlastos' claim that we must read such phrases as Pauline predications, here, in this passage at least, such an interpretation is unavailable. To illustrate why this interpretation is unavailable, however, I must explain how Socrates comes to this main premise, for it isn't easy to see the structure of the argument.

Just after Charmides gives his definition of temperance as modesty, Socrates crafts his refutation by asking the following three questions to which Charmides agrees.

- (1a) 160E6-7: Well, I said, did you not just now agree that temperance is admirable? (Εἶεν, ἦν δ' ἐγώ, οὐ καλὸν ἄρτι ὁμολόγεις τὴν σωφροσύνην εἶναι;)
- (1b) 160E9: Then are temperate people also good? (Οὐκοῦν καὶ ἀγαθοὶ ἄνδρες οἱ σώφρονες;)
- (1c) Could what does not make people good be good? (Ἀρ' οὖν ἂν εἴη ἀγαθὸν ὃ μὴ ἀγαθοὺς ἀπεργάζεται;)
- (1d) Not only is temperance admirable then, but it is also good. (Οὐ μόνον οὖν ἄρα καλόν, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἀγαθόν ἐστιν.)

What, exactly, is going on at this passage is a bit of a mystery. Commentators are not sure, for example, what role (1a) plays in the argument. Some claim that (1a) is basis on which (1b) is inferred, as Οὐκοῦν may sometimes play an inferential role.<sup>24</sup> But Socrates' use of "Οὐκοῦν" doesn't fit any of the inferential examples Deniston gives very well.<sup>25</sup> So, Socrates' use of this word can't help to determine whether it is playing an inferential role or introducing a new point. (1c) is such a mess that many have suggested emending the text: repositioning μὴ in front of ἀγαθόν so that the question matches what Socrates says later at 161A8-9.<sup>26</sup> Nevertheless, for the conclusion that

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<sup>24</sup> See Dancy 2004 and Deniston (1929: 434-5).

<sup>25</sup> See Dancy (2004: 111, footnote 36).

<sup>26</sup> Some scholars suppose there is a corruption in the text is at this passage. At 161A8-9, Socrates says, "If indeed it makes good men who have it, then temperance is good, and not bad." So the question becomes, "Could what is not good make men good?" And the answer is no, of course. If we read the problematic premise at step 3 as the logical equivalent of 161A8-9, this earlier claim is rephrased later. After turning the question at 160E11 into a statement, we have: (1) If it is not good, then it doesn't make good men (160E11). This is logically equivalent to: (2) If temperance makes good men, then it is good (161A8-9). This would make the phrase at 161 A8-9 a reiteration of this earlier question. A reiteration here

temperance is (always) good to follow, we need two premises: (a) Temperance makes people good, (b) What makes people good is (always) good. So, temperance is always good. Socrates might mean that temperate people are good because of temperance, and not just accidentally, but he doesn't say that. The resources for (b) might be contained in his question at 160E11, and since it can be assimilated to what he says later, it is at least plausible. In general, the passage is difficult.

One thing about this argument, however, is clear: we cannot read (1d) as a claim about the class of temperate people being good, i.e. as a Pauline predication. To do so would be redundant. Socrates already asks at (1b) if temperate people are good. So, he already distinguishes between temperate people, on the one hand, and the property of temperance. Thus, if we were to read (1d) as a Pauline predication, we could substitute "temperance is good" with "temperate people are good." This would make Socrates repeat himself, but it wouldn't make sense for him to be merely repeating himself while changing the phrasing of what he says. I suggest instead that this avenue of interpretation is closed. And since the Pauline predication reading is closed, we must accept the straightforward reading. In accepting the straightforward reading, we also accept that Socrates' refutation at *Charmides* 160E-161B is a denial of property identity between temperance and modesty, rather than a denial of a proposed claim about temperate people being necessarily modest.

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makes sense for there to be a reiteration at the conclusion of the argument. If what Socrates claims in *Charmides* is that temperance is good without qualification because what is good *simpliciter* cannot then produce things or men that are not good, then the statement at 160E11 may be left alone. It is as if Socrates is asking, "Could what is good (without qualification) result in people not being good?" And I think that we can get this understanding of 160E11, leaving it as it is.

#### B.4. Summary

In the last section, I defended an interpretation of *Charmides* 160E-161B that highlights Socrates' commitment to property identity between *definiens* and *definiendum* in an adequate answer to “what is F-ness?” The main criticism against my interpretation of this passage comes from Santas, who maintains that the passage cannot be relied on as evidence of Socrates' commitment to property sameness because, it is implied, the premise “Temperance is (always) good” can be read as a Pauline predication, i.e. “temperance is such that whoever has temperance is necessarily good.” I provide an argument from redundancy against this interpretation. So, the Pauline reading of “temperance is (always) good” is unavailable at this passage. This leaves the straightforward reading and thus, Socrates' commitment to property sameness.

#### C. Unity and Sameness

In chapter two, I discussed why we should read Socrates' request for what is the same (τὰὐτόν) in those passages where he explains what he wants as an expectation of property sameness between *definiens* and *definiendum*.<sup>27</sup> I explained that there are two ways to read Socrates' request for what is “the same”: as a unity condition, or as a property sameness condition. Recall that the unity condition states only what all F's have in common, not what only F's have in common. The logical hierarchy between unity, extensional equivalence, and property sameness is such that unity is necessary for extensional equivalence and property sameness, but property sameness is sufficient for both extensional equivalence and unity. So, it would make sense for Socrates to express

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<sup>27</sup> See *Euthyphr.* 5D1-5, 6D10-E1, *La.* 191D10-11, and *Men.* 72A6-B7, 72E4-8.

the property sameness condition in his use of “same” (ταὐτόν) because that would imply both extensional equivalence and unity. As it stands, this argument appears to be begging the question. After all, I’ve only argued so far that *Charmides* 160E-161B commits Socrates to property identity between *definiens* and *definiendum*. Why then must we read the other passages as expressions of property sameness? Why also must we read ταὐτόν as an identity claim between *definiens* and *definiendum*? Surely there are other ways in which ταὐτόν is read as “same,” but which doesn’t imply identity. Yes, there are, and the alternatives are found in Aristotle. This next section is a discussion of two important principles I’ve assumed thus far: that Socrates expects the *definiens* to be a property, and that he expects a sameness relation between *definiens* and *definiendum*. Both of these assumptions require some justification.

### C.1. Properties

Properties may be described as the qualities, features, characteristics or attributes of things. After that, virtually nothing said about properties is uncontroversial. With respect to Socrates, most commentators think that what he wants to define is a property, signaled by the word, εἶδος. But in other passages, what Socrates seeks may be more accurately described as a capacity, indicated by the word δύναμις. The difficulty with this distinction of terms is that properties and capacities seem to be different sorts of things. So, we would like to know which of these Socrates means when he uses the words he does. In this section, I argue that the words εἶδος and δύναμις cannot by themselves indicate whether Socrates expects a property or a capacity. The reason is that

in *Meno*, just when he ought to describe what he's looking for as a δύναμις, he uses the word εἶδος instead. This tells me that perhaps the most generic way to refer to Socrates' request is as a request for a property, since that seems to be the least question-begging approach. This is then just a short quasi-justification of attributing to Socrates the view that he expects a property in answers to “what is F-ness?” A more thorough discussion of the controversy of the nature of the causality between the εἶδος and its instances will be postponed until chapter five.

A typical passage where the word εἶδος expresses what Socrates is after comes in Plato's *Euthyphro*:

- (1) *Euthyphr.* 6D9-11: Do you remember that I did not ask you to teach me just one or two of the many pious things, but that characteristic by which all pious things are pious? (ἀλλ' ἐκεῖνο αὐτὸ τὸ εἶδος ᾧ πάντα τὰ ὅσια ὅσιά ἐστιν;)

Socrates does not always characterize what he wants in this way. He sometimes calls what he wants a capacity, or δύναμις, as he does in Plato's *Laches*. He explains what he wants in an answer to “what is courage?” by comparing it to an answer to “what is quickness?” If someone were to ask him what quickness (ταχυτήτα) is, Socrates would say that it is *the capacity to accomplish much in a short while* (τὴν ἐν ὀλίγῳ χρόνῳ πολλὰ διαπραττομένην δύναμιν ταχυτήτα.) After this, Socrates asks Laches what courage is, calling it a δύναμις (192B6).

So, if we are to take what Socrates says here about quickness and courage, we would expect that if he were to offer an example that is better described as a capacity, he would call it a δύναμις. The problem is that what he should call a δύναμις, he calls

an εἶδος. With this apparent flexibility of terms, we lose any grip we might have had on a verbal distinction corresponding to a genuine distinction between a property and a capacity.

In trying to get Meno to tell him what virtue is, Socrates offers a number of comparisons: he compares the virtues to health, size and strength (72D4-E8). He intends to get Meno to accept something Meno has been reluctant to accept: that just as health, size and strength do not differ with respect to being health, size and strength, regardless of the different sorts of people who possess them, so too, is this the same with virtue. On one of these comparisons in particular, strength (ἰσχύς), he elaborates more fully in order to make the point that it doesn't differ with respect to men or women:

(2) *Meno*. 73E4-7: If a woman is strong, won't it be by the same form and the same strength that she is strong? For by the same, I say this: with respect to strength being strength, it does not differ whether in a man or in a woman. (ἐάνπερ ἰσχυρὰ γυνὴ ἢ τῷ αὐτῷ εἶδει καὶ τῇ αὐτῇ ἰσχυΐ ἔσται; τὸ γὰρ τῇ αὐτῇ τοῦτο λέγω. οὐδὲν διαφέρει πρὸς τὸ ἰσχύς εἶναι ἢ ἰσχύς, ἅντε ἐν ἀνδρὶ ἢ ἅντε ἐν γυναικί.)

Though Socrates uses the term we might expect designates a property, if he were truly distinguishing between a property and a capacity, we should expect him to say “δυναμῖς” at this passage. After all, strength is likely to be either (a) a power to resist force or (b) a capacity for exertion and endurance. So, why then does not Socrates describe strength here as a δύναμις? He instead calls strength here an εἶδος. My suggestion is that there are some F-nesses perhaps that are better described as capacities, like quickness, courage, or even strength. But since the context of this passage includes comparisons between virtues and bees, as well as health, size and strength, then perhaps

the catch-all term is εἶδος. So, if that corresponds to property, or characteristic, we can refer to what Socrates expects as a property, even if we haven't settled the issue completely.<sup>28</sup> And if strength is not picked out as a capacity, even as it appears to be an example of a capacity, I believe we can assimilate talk of what Socrates expects in general as a property.

## C.2. Identity and Sameness

I have argued that *Charmides* 160E-161B is the passage where Socrates illustrates his commitment to property sameness. But some commentators maintain that it illustrates Socrates' commitment to identity, not just sameness. "Identity" may be a peculiar word to use, but I was motivated to use it initially because I defended Nakhtnik's evaluation of the argument, and he, as well as other commentators, uses the phrase, "property identity." The customary notion of identity is expressed by Leibniz's Law, and the argument at *Charmides* 160E-161B depends on Leibniz's Law. Of course, it is well-known that there is no good Greek equivalent of "identical."<sup>29</sup> There is only the Greek for "same" (ταὐτόν) but this cannot be unequivocally translated as "identical."<sup>30</sup> I urged on logical grounds that Socrates' use of ταὐτόν be interpreted as "same" in those places where he explains what he wants because that would make such passages consistent with the argument at *Charmides* 160E-161B.<sup>31</sup> I now turn to consider a

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<sup>28</sup> See Santas' qualified discussion of attributing to Socrates a request for a property (1979: 108).

<sup>29</sup> See White 1971.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid

<sup>31</sup> See *La.* 191E10-11, *Euthyphr.* 5D1-5, and *Men.* 75A5-8.

problem for reading Socrates' use of  $\tau\alpha\upsilon\tau\acute{o}\nu$  as "identical." We will see that we are not forced to read such passages in this way, and if we are not forced to read such passages in this way, my argument that we read them in this way depends exclusively on the observation of the logical relationship between unity, extensional equivalence, and property sameness. For background to this discussion, we see that Aristotle cites three different meanings or uses of  $\tau\alpha\upsilon\tau\acute{o}\nu$ , which can be translated as "same in number," "same in genus," "same in species." "Same in number" seems to be the closest translation to "identical."

In *Topics*, Book VII, Aristotle treats sameness in the respect that they are one in number. This prompts him to offer a restricted version of what we would call "Leibniz's Law," in which he says that if A and B are the same, then any accident of A is also an accident of B and vice versa. So, we might say that this use of  $\tau\alpha\upsilon\tau\acute{o}\nu$  ought to be translated as "identical." But the problem is that Aristotle identifies another notion of sameness that doesn't imply identity.

If we mean by "same" what is the same in genus or in species, then such uses of "same" do not depend on Leibniz's Law and thus, do not imply identity. If A is the same in genus or species with B, then A is similar, but not identical, to B. Aristotle tells us that this use of  $\tau\alpha\upsilon\tau\acute{o}\nu$  expresses a similarity relation, and not an identity relation. The word is the same in both cases.

To further complicate matters, Aristotle also connects his notion of sameness to oneness: sameness is a kind of oneness. The result is that for sentences of the form, "A

and B are one,” we may mean either (1) A is identical to B, or (2) A and B make up one thing which has them as constituents.

To summarize, then, we have three possible uses of ταῦτόν, all of which are plausible.<sup>32</sup> Ταῦτόν can indicate (a) one in number, (b) one in genus or species (c) two parts of the same thing. Given this multiplicity of readings, we cannot *prima facie*, saddle Socrates with any one of them.

I submit that there is a more intractable problem with attributing to Socrates the view that *definiens* and *definiendum* are the same property. But it is problem well-familiar to philosophy. I argue in chapter five that Socrates is also committed to an explanation condition in which the *definiens* explains what makes things instances of the *definiendum*. If Socrates is committed to this, then he is also committed to an explanatory priority between *definiens* and *definiendum*. This would mean that the relationship between *definiens* and *definiendum* is not symmetric. But wouldn't it be symmetric if the *definiens* and *definiendum* are the same property? In the next chapter, I discuss one attempt to illustrate how explanatory priority and property sameness are compatible.

#### D. Conclusion

I began this chapter with a discussion of an apparent textual counterexample to my argument that extensional equivalence between *definiens* and *definiendum* is merely a necessary condition, not sufficient for answers to “what is F-ness?” In his first definition of shape-the “follows color” definition- in *Meno*, Socrates suggests that answer to “what

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<sup>32</sup> I call these assumptions plausible on the grounds that since Aristotle was more precise and developed in his terminology, and he admits of a plurality of uses of **ταυτόν**, it is likely that Plato was not any stricter in his use.

is virtue?” along those same lines would satisfy all his expectations. I argued that Socrates offered this model for virtue because the “follows color” definition rectified a defect in Meno’s previous answer to “what is virtue?” This doesn’t require, therefore, that Socrates’ model definitions be flawless examples of answers to “what is F-ness?” I then argued that the passage at *Charmides* 160E-161B illustrates Socrates’ commitment to property sameness between *definiens* and *definiendum*, and that this is another necessary conditions in answers to “what is F-ness?” I responded to an objection to my reading, and concluded with some remarks about why we should assume that Socrates wants a property and that should be the same as the *definiendum*.

## Chapter V

### The Explanation Condition

In chapter two's presentation of the explanation condition, which is that if F-ness=<sub>df</sub> G-ness, then for anything that is F, it is so because it is G, I identified the passages most commentators think express Socrates' commitment to it.<sup>1</sup> I also identified those passages that express Socrates' assumption of some kind of causal relationship between F-ness and F things, which is the ground for his explanation condition.<sup>2</sup> But to simply point to passages where Socrates expresses his commitment is to presuppose that he has such a commitment. His language is notoriously vague, and we therefore cannot simply point to the passages that suggest such a commitment as the sole evidence.<sup>3</sup> What is required is to cite an argument where he invokes this explanation condition specifically in order to undermine an interlocutor's definition. This occurs, I maintain, at *Euthyphro* 9B-11B.

More has been written on this passage in *Euthyphro* than probably any other single argument in Plato.<sup>4</sup> It is imperative, therefore, to clarify how the argument goes, and in so doing, to clarify the controversy surrounding this argument. In general, the controversy is over whether or not Socrates' argument depends on a questionable

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<sup>1</sup> See *Men.* 72C7-8, *Euthyphr.* 6D10-11, and *Hi. Ma.* 290D5-6.

<sup>2</sup> See *Grg.* 520D1-2 and *Prt.* 332A8-B1.

<sup>3</sup> Three passages thought to express the explanation condition are: (1) *Men.* 72C7-8: they all have some one form **through which** they are virtues (ἐν γέ τι εἶδος ταῦτόν ἅπασαι δι' ὃ εἰσὶν ἀρεταῖ). (2) *Hi. Ma.* 290D5-6: What is appropriate for each thing **makes** each thing beautiful (ὅτι ὃ ἂν πρέπη ἐκάστω, τοῦτο καλὸν ποιεῖ ἐκάστων). (3) *Euthyphr.* 6D10-11: the form or characteristic **in virtue of which** everything pious is pious (τὸ εἶδος ᾧ πάντα τὰ ὅσια ὅσια ἐστίν).

<sup>4</sup> See the three landmark studies: Geach (1966), Cohen (1971), and Sharvy (1972).

substitution of the expressions for “pious” and “god-loved.” This substitution instance, it has been argued, is questionable because it depends on a questionable substitution principle that breaks down in explanatory contexts, which is exactly the context in which Socrates introduces the substitution! I argue, however, that Socrates’ argument at *Euthyphro* 9B-11B needn’t be understood as relying on this substitution instance.<sup>5</sup> If his argument doesn’t require the substitution principle, then we shouldn’t attribute it to him. One might ask, of course, why he makes a substitution at the passage, but one needn’t be motivated to answer the question if it doesn’t help the argument.

Another concern that relates to the explanation condition is that it runs afoul, or so one might argue, of his commitment to the sameness condition, for which I argue in chapter four. If the *definiens* must be explanatorily prior to the *definiendum*, as the explanation condition requires, then in what way is the *definiens* the same as the *definiendum*? If the *definiens* is the same as the *definiendum*, then we might expect their relationship to be symmetric. But if the *definiens* is explanatorily prior to the *definiendum*, then the relationship is asymmetric. One of Socrates’ own examples, however, that shape is the limit of a solid, may point the way to resolving this conflict. The notion of sameness that Socrates assumes is one that must not deny, if he is to be consistent, the explanatory priority he establishes in *Euthyphro* 9B-11B.

In this chapter, I present the textual details at *Euthyphro* 9B-11B in the first section. I then articulate a version of the argument that relies on some kind of substitution principle in the second section. Then, I offer another version of the argument that doesn’t depend on a substitution principle in the third section. Then, I give additional reasons to

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<sup>5</sup> I am indebted to Sharvy’s (1972) discussion of this argument.

think that Socrates is committed to the explanation condition in the fourth section.

Finally, I present the conflict between sameness condition and the explanatory condition and review an attempt at a solution in the fifth and final section of this chapter.

#### A. The Text: *Euthyphro* 9B-11B

The background to this dialogue is that Euthyphro, a supposed religious expert, is prosecuting his father for murder, about which his relatives are angry (4D5-7). Socrates notes that it is not an ordinary man who could do this, but one far advanced in wisdom (4A11-B2). As such, Euthyphro attempts to explain what piety is so that Socrates can come to understand, as Euthyphro apparently does, how prosecuting his father for murder could be a pious action, despite its conflict with the view of the many that it could not be a pious action (4E4-8). Socrates' examination includes presumptions about explanatory priority in order to address Euthyphro's third attempt to say what piety is. He says that the pious is what all the gods love, and what they hate, is the impious.

- (1) *Euthyphr.* 9E1-3: I say that the pious is this: what all the gods love, and the opposite, what all the gods hate, is impious. (Αλλ' ἐγώ γε φαίην ἄν τοῦτο εἶναι τὸ ὅσιον ὃ ἅν πάντες οἱ θεοὶ φιλοῦσιν, καὶ τὸ ἐναντίον, ὃ ἅν πάντες θεοὶ μισῶσιν, ἀνόσιον.)

Or, more simply:

- (1a) Piety=<sub>df</sub> what all the gods love.

So, Euthyphro lays down his answer to “what is piety?” At 10A2-3, Socrates asks the question that has become the bugbear of divine command theorists: Is it pious because it

is loved by the gods? Or is it loved by the gods because it is pious?<sup>6</sup> With this question, Socrates offers Euthyphro the following two alternatives:

(2) Loved by the gods because pious (L bec P).

Or:

(3) Pious because loved by the gods (P bec L).

Euthyphro agrees to (2), which is what ultimately undermines his attempt to define piety as what all the gods love.<sup>7</sup> At first, however, Euthyphro does not understand Socrates' question, and requires some clarification (10A4). In order to illustrate the import of these choices more clearly, then Socrates gives a number of examples that emphasize the priority of (a) processes or activities that result in an alteration of some sort to (b) a thing's being in that altered condition as a result of the activity. This is a complicated distinction and difficult to generalize, but it can be seen more clearly through Socrates' examples. What underlies this distinction for Socrates is some rudimentary view about the priority of causes (broadly understood) to their effects. Socrates identifies this distinction with his use of the passive third person verb for things of the sort found in (a) and the passive participle for things of the sort found in (b). Euthyphro says that he thinks he understands this distinction (10A9). We might abbreviate in the following way: (a) is generalized by expressions of the form, "is F-ed" and (b) is generalized by expressions of the form, "being F-ed." Socrates' own examples clarify this distinction with the following examples:

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<sup>6</sup> Anthony Flew suggested that the extent to which one understands philosophy is the extent to which one understands this question.

<sup>7</sup> Other efforts have been made to show that Euthyphro could have chosen the other alternative and he wouldn't have been inevitably refuted. See Amico 1996.

- (a) is carried (φερέται) or is led (ἄγεται) or is seen (ὁράται) or is loved (φιλεῖται)
- (b) being carried (φερόμενον) or being led (ἄγόμενον) or being seen (ὁρώμενον) or being loved (φιλούμενον)

Socrates main point here is that when we use expressions of the form, “p because q” it follows that it is not the case that “q because p.” Something is *being* carried because it *is* carried. Yet, it is not the case that something *is* carried because it is *being* carried.<sup>8</sup> The direction of explanation can only go in one direction. This is the asymmetry involved in the relationship between things in (a) and things in (b). Since what is indicated in (a) is explanatorily prior to (b), we say that (b) because (a) is true, but (a) because (b) is false. We might symbolize it more formally, illustrating the explanatory priority, or the asymmetry, in this relationship, by writing:

- (c)  $(p \text{ bec } q) \rightarrow \sim(q \text{ bec } p)$

With respect to Euthyphro’s definition, then, we would say that something is being loved because it is loved, but it is not the case that something is loved because it is being loved. So, something is being loved by the gods because it is loved by them (φιλεῖται ὑπὸ θεῶν).<sup>9</sup> Socrates then introduces a new word, “god-loved” (θεοφιλὲς) to take the place of “being loved” (φιλούμενον). Thus, something being

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<sup>8</sup> Or more colloquially, “something is a load because it is being carried, but it is not being carried because it is a load” (Sharvy 1972: 131).

<sup>9</sup> Commentators take great pains to notice the disanalogy between the effects of loving and the effects of carrying. The action of loving doesn’t necessarily result in an alteration of the thing being loved whereas the action of carrying does alter the thing being carried. But if there’s a disanalogy, it isn’t simply between the examples Socrates uses to compare to the effect of loving. After all, the action of seeing doesn’t result in an alteration of the thing’s being seen. I suggest that Socrates has this in mind when he uses the verb γίγνομαι since this verb is supposed to cover all sorts of change, not merely accidental and substantial change.

loved by the gods is also god-loved (10D9-10). Hence, we have an additional premise, generalized from Socrates' examples:

(4) What is god-loved (being loved by the gods) is so because it is loved by the gods.

But not:

(4\*) What is loved by the gods (is loved by the gods) is so because it is god-loved (being loved by the gods).

Now, since Socrates establishes an explanatory hierarchy among the pious, being god-loved, and is loved by the gods, I must, for the sake of simplicity and in the interest of making the logical relationships explicit, abbreviate the following items Socrates has distinguished in the course of his argument here: G: Being God-Loved ( $\theta\epsilon\omicron\phi\iota\lambda\acute{\epsilon}\varsigma$ ), P:

The Pious ( $\tau\omicron\delta\ \acute{\omicron}\sigma\iota\omicron\nu$ )<sup>10</sup>, and L: Is Loved by the ( $\phi\iota\lambda\acute{\epsilon}\iota\tau\alpha\iota\ \acute{\upsilon}\pi\omicron\ \theta\epsilon\acute{\omicron}\nu$ ). The

hierarchy goes like this: G bec L bec P.

(2a)  $(L\ \text{bec}\ P) \rightarrow \sim (P\ \text{bec}\ L)$

If it is loved by the gods because it is pious, then it is not pious because it is loved by the gods. This is introduced by Socrates at 10A1-2, and accepted by Euthyphro at 10D5.

(4a)  $(G\ \text{bec}\ L) \rightarrow \sim (L\ \text{bec}\ G)$

If it is god-loved because it is loved by the gods, then it is not loved by the gods because it is god-loved. This is introduced by Socrates and accepted by Euthyphro at 10D9-10.

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<sup>10</sup> This expression seems to have three different meanings or uses, as the attribute, piety, the collection of pious things, or as a quantifier-noun, like "everyone." Sharvy maintains that in the first premise of the argument, the subject should be read as a quantifier-noun, not as an attribute, i.e. for any pious x, x is loved by the gods because x is pious. But the conclusion of the argument maintains that we are not allowed to define piety, the attribute, as the god-loved (122). For Socrates' interchangeable use of the feminine predicate adjective for piety, see 5C9:  $\tau\omicron\delta\ \epsilon\upsilon\sigma\epsilon\beta\acute{\epsilon}\varsigma$ .

Socrates' conclusion to this passage is that the pious and the god-loved are different from one another (10D13). After which he reminds Euthyphro that he agreed to (2a) at 10E2-3; and he reminds him that he agreed to (4a) at 10E5-8. The importance for the controversy surrounding this argument, however, is what Socrates does next: he explains a consequence of piety and god-loved being the same (if they were the same).<sup>11</sup> And this is the passage that has caused all the controversy.

- (5) *Euthyphr.* 10E9-11A3: For if the god-loved and the pious were the same, dear Euthyphro, (1) if through being pious, the pious were loved, and (2) through being god-loved, the god-loved were loved, then (3) if through being loved by the gods the god-loved were god-loved and (4) the pious through being loved would be pious. Now you see that the opposite holds, as they are altogether different from one another. ( Ἀλλ' εἴ γε ταῦτόν ἦν, ὃ φίλε Εὐθυφρων, τὸ θεοφιλὲς καὶ τὸ ὅσιον, εἰ μὲν διὰ τὸ ὅσιον εἶναι ἐφιλεῖτο τὸ ὅσιον, καὶ διὰ τὸ θεοφιλὲς εἶναι ἐφιλεῖτο ἂν τὸ θεοφιλὲς, εἰ δὲ διὰ τὸ φιλεῖσθαι ὑπὸ θεῶν τὸ θεοφιλὲς θεοφιλὲς ἦν, καὶ τὸ ὅσιον ἂν διὰ τὸ φιλεῖσθαι ὅσιον ἦν. νῦν δὲ ὁρᾷς ὅτι ἐναντίως ἔχετον, ὥς παντάπασιν ἐτέρω ὄντε ἀλλήλων.)

Following the previous abbreviations, G for (Being God-Loved), P for (Piety or the Pious) and L for (Is Loved by the Gods), the general claim at this passages seems to be this: (1) if  $P=G$ , then if (L bec P), then (L bec G), and (2) if  $G=P$ , then if (G bec L), then (P bec L).<sup>12</sup> Many commentators have supposed that in this passage, Socrates clearly displays his commitment to some kind of substitutivity principle, and that the argument depends on such substitution for its success. After all, what would allow his move from (L bec P) to (L bec G) in (1) and (G bec L) to (P bec L) in (2) if he weren't swapping G

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<sup>11</sup> See Ταῦτόν at 10E9.

<sup>12</sup> At this passage, Socrates is going back and forth between the attributive use and the referential use of definite descriptions, as in (2) above: in the first part, we take "being god-loved" attributively; in the second, we take "god-loved" as referential. For a discussion of the difference between the referential and attributive use of definite descriptions, see the now-classic Donnellan (1966).

for P in the first conditional, and P for G in the second? Among these commentators, the only question seems to be what kind of substitution principle his argument depends on, not whether this argument in fact depends on a substitution principle. But I think that this latter question is the one we need to ask.

In the next section, I make more explicit a reconstruction of Socrates' argument at *Euthyphro* 9B-11B that relies on a substitution principle. I point out some of the questionable consequences associated with the kind of substitution principle supposed to explain this particular substitution instance. My interpretation, of course, provokes a further question: why is Socrates substituting these expressions at all, if they don't have anything to do with argument? I suggest that what is really going on at this passage is that Socrates is illustrating a kind of causality that is transitive through the priority he's established early on. Socrates assumes already that F things are F because of F-ness. This is trivially true, but uninformative. He expects that the *definiens* for F-ness will explain what makes things F. Viewing this passage at 10E9-11A3 as the *locus classicus* of his substitutivity requirement distracts from the main point of the passage: his emphasis on the relationship between cause and explanation.

#### A.1. Substitutivity

There is no doubt that whatever the argument Socrates offers at 9B-11B, it is complicated. That's why I think that we can see the structure of the argument more clearly in the following proof. Socrates does not make all these steps implicit, but if we refer to (2a) and (4a) above, we can see how Socrates might generate the argument below, if all the steps were explicit. And because of the substitution instances, it is

supposed, he is able to conclude, as he does, that the pious and the god-loved are not the same, but different from one another. Thus, the reconstruction I offer below is one possible reconstruction of an argument that relies on substitution. This argument is, of course, underdetermined by what Socrates actually says, but this is a likely rendering of the argument if it depends on substitution.<sup>13</sup>

Recall that the important part of claims of the form “p because q” is that they are asymmetric; it follows from (p because q) that  $\sim$  (q because p). Note also that there are actually two disjoint sub-arguments in the following proof, each of which result in a contradiction.

- |      |   |   |
|------|---|---|
| (1)  | $P =_{df} G$  | (Euthyphro’s definition at 9E1-3)       |
| (2)  | $L \text{ bec } P$                                  | (Premise accepted at 10D5)              |
| (3)  | $G \text{ bec } L$                                  | (Premise accepted at 10D9-10)           |
|      |   |   |
| (2a) | $L \text{ bec } G$                                  | [(1), (2) Substitution]                 |
| (2b) | $\sim (G \text{ bec } L)$                           | [Priority from (3)]                     |
| (2c) | $(G \text{ bec } L) \ \& \ \sim (G \text{ bec } L)$ | [(3), (2b) &I]                          |
|      |   |   |
| (3a) | $P \text{ bec } L$                                  | [(1), (3) Substitution]                 |
| (3b) | $\sim (P \text{ bec } L)$                           | [Priority from (2)]                     |
| (3c) | $(P \text{ bec } L) \ \& \ \sim (P \text{ bec } L)$ | [(3a), (3b) &I]                         |
|      |   |   |
| (4)  | $\sim (P =_{df} G)$                                 | [(1)-(3c) <i>Reductio Ad Absurdum</i> ] |

Now, this is perhaps a more formal way to illustrate the substitution instances that take place. Notice that there are actually two substitution instances. In the first subargument, Socrates substitutes “god-loved” for “the pious” in premise (2). In the second

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<sup>13</sup> My apologies to interpreters, who would disagree with my formulation, but I think that they would agree with the spirit in which it is reconstructed.

subargument, he substitutes “the pious” for “god-loved” in premise (3). Commentators have thought that these moves from (2) to (2a) and (3) to (3a) are instances of a substitution principle; they just can’t agree on what, exactly that principle is. Some have called it, “the Leibnizian principle that two expressions for the same thing are mutually replaceable *salva veritate*.”<sup>14</sup> Others have refined the principle, limiting the principle’s scope to merely definitional equivalents so that two expressions where one is the definition of the other must be mutually replaceable *salva veritate*.<sup>15</sup> In this vein, others have followed the tradition, but changing the names slightly, referring to a version of this principle as the “substitutivity requirement” in which the *definiens* and the *definiendum* must be substitutable *salva veritate*.<sup>16</sup> Some even recognize the unpalatable consequences they attribute to Socrates by saddling him with this principle.<sup>17</sup> For in attributing to Socrates some kind of substitutivity principle, these commentators also recognize that

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<sup>14</sup> See Geach (1966: 346). Leibniz’s Law is a principle concerning the identity of things, and there are two principles to it: (1) if  $a=b$ , then any property (a) has, (b) must have as well (Indiscernibility of Identicals) and (2) if (b) has every property (a) has, then  $a=b$  (Identity of Indiscernibles). These are identity conditions on things; they do not express a relation among names.

The indiscernibility of identicals is sometimes confused with a metalinguistic principle such that if ‘a’ and ‘b’ are names of the same object, then each may be substituted for the other in any sentence without a change in the truth value of the expression. Moreover, the identity of indiscernibles is confused with another metalinguistic principle such that if ‘a’ and ‘b’ can be exchanged in all sentential contexts without affecting the truth-value of the expressions, then they name the same object. In any case, to call these metalinguistic principles, “Leibnizian,” is perhaps to recognize a similarity in an analogous principle about identity, but it also leads to confusion about the principle itself. Commentators who attribute a substitution principle to Socrates are attributing to him a principle about names and expressions, not about the identity of things. Only the principle about identity can be plausibly called, “Leibnizian,” even though there is some controversy about that.

<sup>15</sup> See Cohen (1971: 10).

<sup>16</sup> See Dancy 2004; note also that this formulation requires the *definiens* to be an expression.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid, 147

such a principle breaks down in some contexts.<sup>18</sup> But the context in which Socrates supposedly introduces this requirement is in one of these contexts: an explanatory context! This solution forces us to realize that Socrates didn't recognize intensional contexts, and perhaps he didn't. But in attributing to him this substitution principle, which is invoked only at this passage, they seem to attribute to Socrates a cure worse than the disease. In the next section, I discuss one of the consequences of attributing to him the substitutivity principle of definitional equivalents.

#### A.1.a. Consequences of Substitutivity

Were Socrates to hold the substitution principle for definitional equivalents, he would be committed to the following implication: Suppose an adequate definition of a mother is that she is a female parent. So,  $\text{mother} =_{\text{df}} \text{female parent}$ . In a typical explanatory context, we might ask, "Why is Dusty a mother?" and the answer: "Because she is a female parent." Now, according to the principles explicitly maintained in *Euthyphro*, if Dusty is a mother because she is a female parent, it follows that it is not the case that Dusty is a female parent because she is a mother. In other contexts, however, another problem arises. The problem is that this substitution principle would allow a substitution where it should be restricted.

If  $\text{mother} =_{\text{df}} \text{female parent}$ , then if  $x$  is a mother because she is a female parent, then  $x$  is a mother because she's a mother. The first part of the claim is acceptable, but

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<sup>18</sup> An intensional context is one in which substituting expressions for the same thing does not preserve truth value of the expression as a whole. For example, Oedipus believes he's married to Jocasta, and Jocasta is his mother. It does not follow that he believes he's married to his mother. On the other hand, when he discovers that he is married to his mother, and "mother" means "female parent." It follows that he also discovers that he is married to his female parent.

the second isn't. The substitutivity of definitional equivalents allows us to substitute for definitional equivalents in places where we shouldn't allow it: where it clearly does not follow. In other words, the substitution principle allows us to infer, where there are definitional equivalents, that

- (1) Dusty is a mother because she is a female parent
- (2) Dusty is a female parent because she is a female parent.

The first claim is informative; the second is not. But Socrates wouldn't think that (2) is false, just not helpful. In fact, in other dialogues, Socrates makes the point that F things are F because of F-ness.<sup>19</sup> But this is not to say that such answers would satisfy Socrates' explanation condition; we assume that Socrates wants an answer that is more informative.<sup>20</sup> And that's what's behind his argument here at *Euthyphro* 9B-11B. The question is: should we commit Socrates to such an egregious error as to believe that substitution instances of the sort explained above are acceptable? That's what his proposed acceptance of such a principle implies.

I suggest that if we are able, then we should try to explain Socrates' argument at *Euthyphro* 9B-11B without attributing to him a substitution principle of the sort mentioned above. I believe that this last passage at 10E9-11A3, the location of an instance of Socrates' infamous substitutivity requirement, can be obviated all together. And if it is obviated all together, then the substitution instance that has caused so much consternation will recede into the background. I suggest, instead, that if we supply a different principle underlying Socrates' argument, then he can conclude that Euthyphro's

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<sup>19</sup> This is the implication of the claim that cowardly people are cowardly because of cowardice, which is true, perhaps, but uninformative (*Prt.* 360C-D).

<sup>20</sup> See Woodruff (1982: 153).

definition of piety as what all the gods love fails without relying on the substitutivity requirement. The grounds for the alternative principle, which is just the explanation condition, can be recognized from the way in which he asks for what he expects.

## A.2. Transitivity and Explanation

Going back to the beginning, we have Euthyphro's definition of piety as what all the gods love, abbreviated to what is god-loved:  $P =_{df} G$ . Then, Socrates establishes the priority such that something is being loved by the gods because it is loved by the gods, but not the case that something is loved by the gods because it is being loved by the gods. At 10D5, Euthyphro agrees that the gods love piety because it is pious. At 10D9-10, he accepts that what is being loved by the gods, or god-loved, is so because it is loved by the gods. Now, with these two premises in place, and with their explanatory implications explicit, we have the following:

- (1)  $(L \text{ bec } P) \rightarrow \sim (P \text{ bec } L)$
- (2)  $(G \text{ bec } L) \rightarrow \sim (L \text{ bec } G)$

In the course of his argument, Socrates has introduced three things: piety (the pious), god-loved (or being loved by the gods) and is being loved by the gods (is loved by the gods). With principles (1) and (2) in place, and assuming transitivity, we can conclude:

- (3)  $(G \text{ bec } P) \rightarrow \sim (P \text{ bec } G)$

Socrates doesn't make claim (3) explicit; we the readers are supposed to recognize that this is how he comes to his conclusion. In order to draw this conclusion, we only have to suppose a principle of transitivity between the following hierarchy in these "because" contexts:  $G \text{ bec } L \text{ bec } P$ . It's important to notice that though he doesn't

make it explicit, it is likely that Socrates draws this conclusion (3) before he explains to Euthyphro what would happen if the god-loved and the pious were “the same.” In other words, he already signals that he has completed the argument before we get to the passage that illustrates a supposed substitution instance. That is, he has completed his argument against Euthyphro’s definition before the famous “substitution passage” arises. This suggests, therefore, that he has already drawn the conclusion that Euthyphro has failed to define the pious without relying on substitution instances of any kind. Supposing that he sees the transitive relationship from (1)  $(L \text{ bec } P) \rightarrow \sim (P \text{ bec } L)$  and (2)  $(G \text{ bec } L) \rightarrow \sim (L \text{ bec } G)$  to (3)  $(G \text{ bec } P) \rightarrow \sim (P \text{ bec } G)$  makes sense of how he realizes that the pious and the god-loved are different from one another (10D12-13).

The principle Socrates invokes in the following recreation of the argument is just the explanatory condition:

(4) If  $F\text{-ness} =_{df} G\text{-ness}$ , then for anything that is  $F$ , it is because it is  $G$ .

Now, what I’m supposing is that something like (4) is at work when Socrates requests that what he wants for an answer to “what is  $F\text{-ness}$ ?” is an explanation of what *makes*  $F$  things  $F$ . But the argument for this view is that by supplying this principle, we can explain how Socrates’ argument goes through without any reliance on substitution of the sort suggested by commentators. So, in order to make the structure of the argument clearer, I use a proof structure like the one I articulated above with the first argument. The proof is different in that it doesn’t rely on a substitutivity requirement for definitional equivalents:

- (1)  $P =_{df} G$  (Euthyphro's definition at 9E1-3)
- (2)  $L \text{ bec } P$  (Premise accepted at 10D5)
- (3)  $G \text{ bec } L$  (Premise accepted at 10D9-10)
  - (3a)  $G \text{ bec } P$  [(2), (3) Transitivity]
  - (3b)  $(F\text{-ness} =_{df} G\text{-ness}) \rightarrow (F \text{ bec } G)$  [Explanation Condition]
  - (3c)  $(P \text{ bec } G)$  [(1), (3b) *Modus Ponens*]
  - (3d)  $\sim (G \text{ bec } P)$  [Priority from (3c)]
  - (3e)  $(G \text{ bec } P) \ \& \ \sim (G \text{ bec } P)$  [(3a), (3d) &I]
- (4)  $\sim (P =_{df} G)$  [(1)-(3e) *Reductio Ad Absurdum*]

If we suppose that Socrates is committed to the explanation condition, then we have the resources to explain how the argument at *Euthyphro* 9B-11B goes through without attributing to Socrates a substitution principle of definitional equivalents. Thus, we needn't rely on such a principle to explain this argument. But it should be noted that premise (7) is not explicit. But it can be made explicit only by supposing transitivity in because contexts. And that does not seem to be a big leap.

To summarize then: I have presented an alternative argument to one commonly associated with the passage at *Euthyphro* 9B-11B. Instead of supplying Socrates with a substitution principle, one which is bound to break down even in explanatory contexts, I supply him with the explanation condition. If we assume transitivity in the "because" contexts Socrates discusses, we get a satisfactory argument. But that leaves the next question, are there other reasons for thinking that Socrates is committed to the explanation condition, other than that it provides the grounds for an alternative reading of *Euthyphro* 9B-11B? Yes, there are: (1) the basis for Socrates' explanation condition comes from his expectation that an answer to "what is F-ness?" must be some kind of

cause, and that (2) this kind of cause must be like Aristotle's formal cause. With these considerations, supplying Socrates with the explanation condition for this argument makes sense.

## B. Causes and Explanations

The first place to look for an explicit expression of the relationship between cause and explanation is in Aristotle. Though he inherited an interest in causation from earlier thinkers, he was the first to articulate a complete theory of causality.

In at least two different places, Aristotle maintains that to have the proper knowledge of something is to get a grasp on its cause.<sup>21</sup> Or, in other words, when we have answered a question about why something exists, it is because we have ascertained its cause.<sup>22</sup> An investigation into the nature of the cause, for Aristotle, is an attempt to answer a "why" question. When we see Socrates at *Euthyphro* 10A2-3, he presents the two alternatives; in presenting these alternatives between whether the gods love the pious because it is pious, or that it is pious because it is loved by the gods, he can be viewed as asking a "why" question. The subsequent argument, then, is an investigation in the cause of what makes pious things pious. Also, when we look at the passages where Socrates expresses what he wants for answers to F-ness, and he uses such locutions as "that by which,"<sup>23</sup> or "because of which,"<sup>24</sup> or simply "because"<sup>25</sup>, he can plausibly be viewed as

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<sup>21</sup> See *APo.* 71B9-11 and *Ph.* 194B17-20.

<sup>22</sup> Woodruff makes the nice point that what Socrates primarily wants is a certain sort of knowledge, and a definition is the means for conveying that knowledge (1982:151).

<sup>23</sup> See *Euthyphr.* 6D11.

asking why F things are F. Thus, he is searching for a cause. And an explanation is simply an account of that cause. But if Aristotle is the background to this discussion, the natural question, then is just what kind of cause is he after?

For Aristotle, the causes are four: material, formal, efficient, and final.<sup>26</sup> His illustrations for each are helpful. For example, the material cause of a bronze statue is the bronze out of which it is made. The formal cause of the statue is its shape. The efficient cause is the artisan who casts the bronze. The final cause is the sake for which something is done. In this case, perhaps the statue is made in order to honor whoever is its likeness. An adequate answer to a “why” question will explain each of these in turn.

For Socrates, however, opinion over what kind of cause from among these Socrates expects is divided: some commentators believe Socrates presumes an efficient cause;<sup>27</sup> others believe he presumes a formal cause.<sup>28</sup> While perhaps Socrates doesn’t distinguish the kind of cause he expects as carefully as we’d like, with respect to *Euthyphro*, his language suggests that he presumes more of a formal cause. And since this is the dialogue in which he relies on the explanation condition, the burden of evidence is in favor of attributing to him the expectation of a formal, rather than efficient, cause in answers to “what is F-ness?” First, I give a clarification and then a discussion of why one might think Socrates presumes that an answer to a “what is F-ness?” question is an account of the efficient cause of F things.

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<sup>24</sup> See *Men.* 72C8.

<sup>25</sup> See *Euthyphr.* 10A2-3.

<sup>26</sup> See *Ph.* II 3 and *Metaph.* V 2.

<sup>27</sup> See Penner 1973.

<sup>28</sup> See Vlastos 1976.

It is important to realize that Aristotle's example of an efficient cause-the artisan who makes the bronze statue-doesn't emphasize clearly, as I state it so crudely, the respect in which the artisan is the efficient cause of the statue. The true efficient cause of the statue is not the artisan, but the art of bronze-casting, which the artisan, who is responsible for the production of the statue, possesses. So, really the specific knowledge that the artisan possesses is the relevant explanatory factor, not, as is sometimes supposed, the beliefs and desires of the particular artisan.<sup>29</sup> Now that this clarification is in place, we can see why some commentators have believed in the efficient cause reading of Socratic expectations for F-ness.

The question in Plato's *Laches* is "what is courage?" Penner argues that this question will be answered adequately only if Laches and Nicias provide a psychological account of courage.<sup>30</sup> This is not a psychological account in terms of beliefs and desires, but rather an account of what makes people act courageously. In other words, Socrates expects an answer to tell him what it is in men's psyches that makes them brave.<sup>31</sup> What Socrates is seeking is some kind of knowledge, through which, those who possess it are able to act accordingly. The skill possessed by the sculptor is the efficient cause makes the statue in the same way that a courageous person's courage-state results in courageous

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<sup>29</sup> This is not to say that the beliefs and desires of a particular artisan don't enter into the explanation when we're discussing the particular realization of an artifact.

<sup>30</sup> See Penner 1973.

<sup>31</sup> In more recent work, Penner observes that his speaking about virtues as causal entities, whose use he adopted only under pressure from the editors at *Philosophical Review*, obscures the main controversy: whether Socrates seeks the meaning or reference of "courage." Talk of virtues as causal entities does no harm, however, if one realizes that in the case of virtue-terms their references just happen to be causal entities. That's why Vlastos' argument against Penner misses the point. The observation that Socrates' own model of virtue, shape, doesn't name a causal entity is not a *reductio ad absurdum* of Penner's view. Rather according to Penner, it is an *ignoratio elenchi* (1992: 153).

action. It is the motive force, or soul-state, and that's why it can be explained via Aristotle's efficient cause.

Against this, Vlastos argues that Socrates expects a constitutive<sup>32</sup> answer, rather than a straightforward causal answer. For example, his two definitions of shape in Plato's *Meno*, that shape is the only thing that always follows color, and that shape is a limit of a solid, tell more about the respect in which these *definientes* constitute the property of figure. They do not show what causes things to have this property, as the "efficient cause" view would have it. Moreover, when Socrates is seeking an account of the beautiful in *Hippias Major*, he is seeking the "because of which"-like the way in which all big things are big, i.e. through the exceeding (294A8-B4). This, Vlastos argues, is prime evidence for his constitutive view of what Socrates expects. For we can only think of the way in which an ant's exceeding the dimensions of other ants in the same way that a figure's three-sidedness "makes" it a triangle.<sup>33</sup> And this is to suggest that Socrates wants what is constitutive, or the formal cause, of F-ness, according to Aristotle's terminology.

The Vlastos-Penner debate is not simply limited to the nature of cause. Ultimately, the discussion is about whether Socrates seeks identity of meaning conditions or identity of reference conditions for virtue-terms. And that would take us too far

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<sup>32</sup> He also calls it the "semantical" answer. I think that his comments contribute to the "formal cause" reading of Socratic expectations.

<sup>33</sup> See Vlastos (1976: 416).

afield.<sup>34</sup> I can point to some evidence that should lead us to think about Socrates' expectations in terms of formal causes.

We can offer, I think, an argument from language similarity that Socrates expects something like a formal cause. This, of course, doesn't guarantee that Socrates' expectations can be assimilated to Aristotle's theory of definitions, but it is at least reasonable to think that he started what Aristotle developed. And this will at least give us a more specific understanding of what Socrates means by his "because" contexts. Recall that the formal cause of the bronze statue is its shape; it is in this respect that the formal cause "makes" it what it is: it explains what distinguishes it from other lumps of bronze.<sup>35</sup>

In *Euthyphro* and elsewhere<sup>36</sup> Socrates explicitly asks for an εἶδος (6D10-11). When Euthyphro fails to give him what he wants, Socrates points out that he has failed to provide the οὐσία of piety (11A6-8). So, now why should Socrates' use of these words in particular suggest that he is after the formal cause of F things being F? Aristotle uses the same terminology to suggest that a definition is an account of what it is to be something, which is just to say, an explanation of the formal cause.

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<sup>34</sup> See Penner 1973 and Vlastos 1981.

<sup>35</sup> Another example of Aristotle's formal cause is what "makes" the octave: the ratio 2:1 (Ross 1951: 72).

<sup>36</sup> See *Chrm.* 154D5, *Prt.* 338A1, and *Men.* 72C7, D8. Santas notes that Socrates doesn't always characterize what he's after as an εἶδος; in Plato's *Laches*, he characterizes what he's after as a δυνάμις. Socrates' language elsewhere seems to vacillate between what is to be defined is a property that serves to collect all things that have that attribute into a set and what serves as a paradigmatic member of that set. This observation undercuts Nakhnikian's claim that what Socrates is *always* after is an εἶδος. Sometimes, as in *Laches*, he wants a δυνάμις. For some commentators, this signals an important difference in emphasis. See Penner 1992.

In *Metaphysics* 3, 2 1013a26-30, Aristotle calls the εἶδος of the thing the definition of what-it-is-to-be (ὁ λόγος τοῦ τί ἦν εἶναι). If Socrates wants an εἶδος, and an εἶδος is a definition of what-it-is-to-be. And the what-it-is-to-be is the thing's formal cause, then Socrates wants an explanation of the formal cause of F things. Moreover, in *Metaphysics* I.3 983a25-29, Aristotle says that one of the answers to a why question leads to a definition of its οὐσία. When Socrates points out that Euthyphro fails to provide the οὐσία of piety, the implication is that if he had given the οὐσία of piety, he would have explained to him what makes pious things pious. In other words, giving the οὐσία of piety would have been sufficient for explaining what makes pious things pious. This is just to identify the cause of F things being F. This sort of cause, described by the term οὐσία, can be assimilated to Aristotle's formal cause.

The purpose of this section was to make more explicit the nature of the relationship between the explanation condition and the kind of cause Socrates expects between F-ness and F things. I offer this passage with one commentator's summary that reinforces the relationship between cause and explanation for Socrates:

- (1) Whatever the fine turns out to be, it must be something I shall call the logical cause of fineness: it is what *makes* all fine things fine (290d2). A logical cause is the ground for explanations of a certain sort.<sup>37</sup>

In conclusion, Socrates is likely committed to the explanation condition because he expects that an answer to a “what is F-ness?” question is an account of the formal cause of F things. This is because the formal or logical cause is the ground for explanations of a sort.

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<sup>37</sup> See Woodruff (1982: 150).

In the next section, I address a troubling conflict that arises in comparing Socrates' sameness condition with his explanation condition. For if the *definiens* and the *definiendum* are supposed to be the same property, how can the *definiens* also be explanatorily prior to the *definiendum*?

### C. The Compatibility of Explanatory Priority with Property Sameness

Sharvy makes the point that the relation, “=<sub>df</sub>” in a definition is not a statement of identity, rather it is a statement about analysis. He argues that Socrates could not have based his argument on a substitutivity of identity or definitional equivalents, he points out that the defining relation is asymmetric. He explains the asymmetry of the “is defined as” relation in the following way: the concept *male parent* may be the analysis of the concept *father*, the concept of *male parent* might involve further analysis of the individual concepts of *male* and *parent* such that a definition of *male parent* would involve something about the gender that carries out the fertilizing function of procreation, and something about having living offspring, perhaps.<sup>38</sup> The point seems to be that if the defining relation is an analysis, it does not entail identity. Thus, Socratic definitions do not assert identity of properties. The next question should be whether the defining relation is compatible with identity.

One commentator in particular has noted though the defining relation doesn't entail identity, it can nevertheless, be compatible with it.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> See Sharvy (1972: 128).

<sup>39</sup> See Santas (1979: 112-115).

- (1) To say what a thing is, or to define a thing by analysis, is to say what the constituent parts of that thing are or that the constituent parts are related in a certain way. (1979: 112)

For a similar comparison, Santas relies on how G.E. Moore's conceived of seeking a definition for goodness. An adequate definition of goodness for Moore would be an account that specified the constituent parts of the property of goodness. This is compatible, with supposing that the complex of properties that define goodness is also identical to it. Santas uses Socrates' own definition of shape-that shape is the limit of a solid<sup>40</sup>-as a case in point.

Suppose, then, that the property *shape* is identical with the complex property *limit of a solid*. It could still be the case that the definition,  $\text{Shape} =_{\text{df}} \text{limit of a solid}$  is also asymmetric, in the way that Sharvy supposes. That is, in answer to the question, "why is this a shape?" the following answer could be given: "Because it is the limit of a solid." Now, of course, per Socratic requirements, the converse wouldn't be true: we couldn't ask the question, "Why is this limit of a solid?" and answer, "Because it is shape." It isn't clear to Santas, in other words, why we couldn't recognize the explanatory asymmetry in definitions like,  $\text{Shape} =_{\text{df}} \text{limit of a solid}$ , and still maintain that shape is somehow identical to the limit of a solid. The limit of a solid is what makes something a shape, but is also identical to it.

So, in citing Socrates' definition of shape as the limit of a solid, Santas attempts to undermine the following claim: (1) the *definiens* cannot be explanatorily prior to the *definiendum* and still be identical with it. The obvious problem with this proposal is that

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<sup>40</sup> Thus, we have: ὅπερ ἂν συλλαβὼν εἵποισι στερεοῦ πέρας σχῆμα εἶναι (76A6-7).

there isn't an obvious connection between explanatory priority and definitional priority. Of course, this must be assumed in the discussion of Socrates' argument at *Euthyphro* 9B-11B. In fact, my interpretation of the argument depends on it.

On the other hand, Santas' example fits nicely with Vlastos' argument that what Socrates wants is the constitutive answer to "what is F-ness?"<sup>41</sup> The formal cause of something can also be somehow constitutive of (or identical to it). The examples from geometry and mathematics are well-suited to this. For example, a definition of a triangle is a three-sided figure whose interior angles are the sum of two right angles. Being such a three-sided figure would constitute something's being a triangle, and somehow constitutes what a triangle is. Or using Aristotle's example that a definition of the octave as the ratio 2:1 seems to say both what causes and constitutes something's being an octave, even if something being the ratio 2:1 is explanatorily prior to something's being an octave. So, perhaps such examples are adequate responses to the claim that something cannot be both causally prior and identical to itself.

In the last chapter, I suggested that Socrates' commitment to property identity between *definiens* and *definiendum* be read as a commitment to property sameness instead. This is to accommodate a peculiar feature of Plato's texts: that there are four ways to read ταὐτόν in Socrates' request for what is "the same" in F things: (a) same in number, (b) same in genus or (c) same in species, or (d) same in being two constituents of the same thing, as described by Aristotle. If we are to read ταὐτόν as "same in number," then it could be read as "identical to." I suggested, therefore, that "sameness" be used for ταὐτόν in order to acknowledge that we are not necessarily forced to read it as

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<sup>41</sup> See Vlastos 1976.

“identical to.” But I don’t think that Socrates’ commitment to property sameness is any more in harmony with explanatory priority than a commitment to property identity would have been.

In closing, I would like to recall that Socrates himself must think that property sameness and explanatory priority can be harmonized. At least we can conclude this on the basis of his “limit” definition of shape. But also in Plato’s *Euthyphro*, when he cites the “transitivity” passage (also called the “substitutivity” passage), he observes that this is a consequence of the pious being the same as the god-loved:

- (2) *Euthyphr.* 10E9-11A3: For if the god-loved and the pious were the same, dear Euthyphro, (a) if through being pious, the pious were loved, and (b) through being god-loved, the god-loved were loved, then (c) if through being loved by the gods the god-loved were god-loved and (d) the pious through being loved would be pious. Now you see that the opposite holds, as they are altogether different from one another.

Perhaps Socrates solution to the conflict between sameness and explanatory priority isn’t obvious, but that would only be to recognize that he is one of the sources of a perennial philosophical problem, which surely his legacy would embrace.

#### D. Conclusion

This chapter constitutes a more direct argument for Socrates’ commitment to the explanation condition, which is that if  $F\text{-ness} =_{df} G\text{-ness}$ , then for anything that is  $F$ , it is so because it is  $G$ . I argued that Socrates’ argument against Euthyphro’s definition of the pious as what all the gods love can be understood by reconstructing it to rely on the explanation condition. I argued that such a reconstruction of this argument is preferable given that the alternate reconstruction relies on a substitutivity requirement, which we

should be reluctant to attribute to Socrates mainly because of its negative consequences. I also offered some additional reasons for thinking that Socrates has the explanation condition at his disposal: he expects that a definition is like Aristotle's formal cause, and an adequate account of F-ness explains the cause of F things in just this way. Finally, I discussed one commentators attempt to show that even if the " $=_{df}$ " relation is asymmetric, it can still be compatible with identity between *definiens* and *definiendum*. While this is a valiant attempt, I doubt that such resolution is possible. This is in keeping with one aspect of the Socratic legacy of identifying problems without solving them.

## Chapter VI

### The Semantic Conditions

In chapter two, I distinguished a family of semantic conditions attributed to Socrates. In this chapter, I articulate and present them more fully. Recall that the first semantic condition is the following: (1) If F-ness= $\text{df}$  G-ness, then any G is generally called F and anything generally called F is G.<sup>1</sup> This formulation is an effort to capture the semantic feature sometimes attributed to Socrates: an adequate answer to “what is F-ness?” will support all and only those people or activities generally called F.<sup>2</sup>

Alternatively, the set of genuine F things, whether they are virtuous or courageous people or activities, is identical with the set of things actually called F. In other words, Socrates seeks an account that systematizes the pre-analytic<sup>3</sup> judgments he and his interlocutors have about whatever is called F. So, why think of this as a semantic condition at all? Isn't it just reducible to the beliefs of an interlocutor? And isn't that is what's important? A fine question, but I think that the semantic adequacy of Socratic definitions has not been discussed in a perspicuous way. To do so, I must separate the

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<sup>1</sup> A recent formulation of two of Socrates' commitments include: “x belongs to all things called F” and “x is what is called F-ness in all F things” (Benson 2000: 110). It will become clear in the course of my discussion in this chapter that whether we assume the qualifier “genuinely” in these formulations will make a great difference in how we understand Socratic semantic commitments.

<sup>2</sup> It should go without saying that nowhere does the character Socrates say anything like the Greek equivalent of F. See Robinson's view in chapter one. The point is to emphasize that in Plato's dialogues, Socrates and his interlocutors call people and actions by the Greek equivalent for “courageous.” The controversy in this chapter is over whether such pre-analytic beliefs about what to call things must be supported in an adequate account of F-ness.

<sup>3</sup> These are considered, but perhaps naïve or commonsensical judgments. Some have noted that we prefer theories that accord with pre-analytic judgments, all things considered.

semantics from the belief-states of the interlocutors, even if Socrates recognizes a strong connection between the two.<sup>4</sup>

The second semantic condition is that statements of the form, “F-ness is F” and “F-ness is G” where “G” is an evaluative predicate are semantically complete. This formulation is a generalization of some of the premises crucial to Socrates’ arguments, but they are usually justified by nothing more than the agreement of the interlocutors. The virtues are something good, or beneficial, or fine or admirable. So, whether the inquiry is into justice, virtue, courage, or temperance, one claim that cannot be revised is that these are good. This is because goodness is an inseparable feature of the concept of virtue. So, the evaluative predicates are necessarily attached to it in such statements. This is not the case with other kinds of inquiry, like an inquiry into swans, for example.

Let’s say that an unquestioned premise in our argument is “All swans are white.” An experienced ornithologist might show us how we went wrong in thinking that all swans are white because there are black swans as well. Such premises are therefore vulnerable to revision, depending on how the world is. An analogous situation is to suppose that we have an unquestioned premise in our argument like, “Courage is admirable” (*La.* 192C-D). If our investigations into the nature of courage were like our investigations into the nature of swans, it would be possible to discover that courage is bad in some way; we could be wrong in thinking that courage is always good. But that is not possible for Socrates and his interlocutors. This formulation of the Socratic semantic commitment recognizes that such judgments about virtue cannot be overturned and thus,

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<sup>4</sup> Two obvious passages are at *Men.* 82B4, where Socrates’ examination of Meno’s attendant begins by his asking if he is a Greek and speaks Greek and at *Chrm.* 159A6-7 where Socrates supposes that Charmides could express in Greek what temperance is, if he possesses it. See also Dancy (2004) on the “principle of expressibility” or Benson (2000) on the “verbalization requirement.”

virtues cannot be correctly called “bad” (κακό) if they are virtues. They are necessarily good or fine.

Moreover, the subject-predicate core of a sentence is complete semantically if and only if it keeps its truth value regardless of the context. Any qualifiers that are added to the sentence come in the form of nonrestrictive clauses, rather than restrictive clauses, so that such statements aren’t context-sensitive. In other words, if temperance is good for people, it is good without qualification. The “for people” part of the expression is nonrestrictive, and doesn’t change the truth value of the expression. As Woodruff points out, this is how the answers Hippias gives to “what is the fine?” fail. At best, the kinds of answers he offers have certain restrictions: gold is fine, but not when it is used as a spoon for stirring stew (*Hi. Ma.* 290D5-E1). This commitment to semantic completeness is something that Socrates and his interlocutors point out in advance; it outlines one of the contours of an adequate answer. But if he does require that G in “F-ness is G” be a term of approbation, he seems to allow exceptions to this, at least for the purposes of discussion, as his exchange with Thrasymachus at the end of *Republic* Book I shows.

The examination of Socrates’ semantic commitments proceeds in two steps, by first examining statements about F’s, and second by examining statements about F-nesses. This chapter is divided into three main sections: in the first, I discuss the motivation for attributing the ordinary usage view to Socrates; I then argue against this view, citing counterexamples. In the second section, I discuss the evaluative view, which is supposed as a limit to semantic revision. The limit is that claims like “F-ness is G” are restricted in the following way: G is a term of approbation, and such statements are semantically complete. I argue for this view as a reasonable hypothesis in explaining the

premises Socrates employs in a number of arguments. Finally, I conclude with a discussion of the difference between the ordinary usage view and another semantic view to which it sometimes is assimilated.

#### A. The Ordinary Usage View (OUV)

Now, why would anyone think that Socrates is committed to the ordinary usage view?<sup>5</sup> He demonstrates, in a number of places, his distrust of the opinion of the many.<sup>6</sup> Shouldn't we suppose that this extends to distrust about their linguistic practices as well? As Vlastos has observed, in *Laches*, Socrates revises the ordinary concept of courage, which is stretched beyond the class-bound, sex-bound virtue as it is traditionally viewed.<sup>7</sup> This is what led Vlastos to suppose that the Socratic analysis of F-ness might ultimately result in a radical revision of ordinary usage. But Socrates, at other places, goes out of his way to try and dismiss the fuss about specific terminology. For example, in *Charmides*, Critias makes a distinction between “making” (τὸ ἐργάζεσθαι) and “doing” (τὸ ποιεῖν) in order to respond to Socrates' criticism. When something is made unaccompanied by the admirable, it can be a disgrace whereas work is never a disgrace, Critias says, citing Hesiod as evidence (163B4-5). Socrates therefore gives Critias permission to define words in any way he likes; his only requirement is that Critias make

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<sup>5</sup> “We need to explain why Plato applies the SC rule as he does, why he assumes in advance that ordinary usage is correct, and tries to discover a single character to account for all uses of a word” (1978: 457). The SC rule is the following: Whatever is correctly called “F” has some one character (the F) the same in all cases, and is F in virtue of having that character.

<sup>6</sup> This is especially true when Socrates extends his inquiry into the nature of courage in *Laches* well beyond a military context (Irwin 1977: 43).

<sup>7</sup> See Vlastos (1976: 411).

clear to what the word applies.<sup>8</sup> Finally, Socrates also recognizes a distinction between what people say and how things actually are. In *Hippias Major*, the mysterious questioner prefers an account for what actually is fine, not what ordinary people think is fine, and so call “fine.”<sup>9</sup> So, why think that Socrates is committed to the truth in ordinary usage?

One reason is that there are indeed passages that suggest Socrates’ commitment to some kind of semantic commitment in answers to “what is F-ness?” In *Laches*, Socrates provides a model to follow for answers to “what is courage?” The model is quickness. Socrates speculates on what he would say were someone to ask him what he calls quickness in all actions-appropriately called “quick.”<sup>10</sup> He supposes that it would be the power of accomplishing much in a short amount of time (*La.* 192A10-B3). The emphasis here is on what is *called* (ὀνομάζεις)<sup>11</sup> quickness, which suggests that what Socrates calls “quick” is the phenomenon he must explain with his account of quickness. A little further on, he returns to the topic of courage, having explained what he wants. He asks Laches to ask him what that thing is *called* (κέκληται)<sup>12</sup> which is in all those situations, involving pleasure, or pain, and in the situations they were describing.<sup>13</sup> The

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<sup>8</sup> See *Chrm.* 163D5-7: ἀλλ’ ἐγώ σοι τίθεσθαι μὲν τῶν ὀνομάτων δίδωμι ὅπῃ ἂν βούλῃ ἕκαστον. δῆλου δὲ μόνον ἐφ’ ὅτι ἂν φέρῃς τοῦνομα ὅτι ἂν λέγῃς.

<sup>9</sup> See *Hi. Ma.* 299B1-2: ἀλλ’ ἐγὼ οὐ τοῦτο ἡρώτων, ὃ δοκεῖ τοῖς πολλοῖς καλὸν εἶναι, ἀλλ’ ὅτι ἔστιν.

<sup>10</sup> See *La.* 192A9-10: ὦ Σώκρατες, τί λέγεις τοῦτο ὃ ἐν πᾶσιν ὀνομάζεις ταχυτῆτα εἶναι;

<sup>11</sup> This is sometimes translated as “named,” though ὄνομα does double duty for “word” and “name.” See Liddell and Scott.

<sup>12</sup> This is the third person perfect for καλέω, to call.

<sup>13</sup> See *La.* 192B5-8: Πειρῶ δὴ καὶ σύ, ὦ Λάχης, τὴν ἀνδρείαν οὕτως εἰπεῖν

point is that this is called “courage” for a reason: he and Socrates were just saying that courage is a part of all the descriptions of courageous people. But what they call “courageous” informs the kind of account Laches will end up giving, for he is trying to accommodate all and only those people called courageous, whether at sea, or in poverty, or stricken with illness, or in affairs of state. For they’ve agreed that there are such people.

In the last section of this chapter, I return to these passages in order to argue that they needn’t be read as evidence of a commitment to ordinary usage. I compare these passages in *Laches* with others in *Protagoras*, where Socrates seems to say the same sorts of things, but in the context it is clear that he’s not committed to a semantic condition like the ordinary usage view.

Another reason Socrates might hold the ordinary usage view is that he thinks it is a criterion for an adequate theory. By comparison with a similar requirement in theories of welfare, we can see why he might be so motivated. In theories of welfare, descriptive adequacy is a necessary desideratum for an adequate theory. Descriptive adequacy is the requirement that our ordinary intuitive judgments about whether things are going well or badly for us must be systematized and supported. A theory of welfare that isn’t faithful to our ordinary experience is inadequate. We can see how Socrates might think that ordinary semantic intuitions about what to call “pious” or “just” or “courageous” must be systematized and supported.

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τίς οὖσα δύναμις ἡ αὐτὴ ἐν ἡδονῇ καὶ ἐν λύπῃ καὶ ἐν ἅπασιν οἷς νῦνδὴ ἐλέγομεν αὐτὴν εἶναι, ἔπειτα ἀνδρεία κέκληται.

### A.1. Descriptive Adequacy

With theories of welfare, or well-being, in general, one of the prime requirements is that it is faithful to our ordinary experience.<sup>14</sup> We have lots of convictions about what kind of policy we can adopt for our benefit, and whether adopting those policies are going to be good or bad for us. For theories of welfare in particular, they give us the truth-conditions under which our convictions about our welfare are in fact, true. Thus, a theory of welfare systematizes our pre-analytic convictions and justifies them. In other words, a theory of welfare interprets our intuitive judgments, and makes the best sense of those judgments. Such a theory stands or falls by these judgments. If a theory fails to systematize these judgments, it is so much the worse for the theory. In this respect, our strong convictions about how our lives are going cannot be overridden by any theoretical considerations. We must hold on to those pre-analytic views: they are the data the theory must explain.

The connection between Socrates' semantic commitments and descriptive adequacy is this: We should wonder if Socrates expects that an adequate account of what courage is would systematize and support what his interlocutors pre-analytically call "courageous." If he does, then he expects that an account of "what is F-ness?" will support all and only those things pre-analytically called F. This is just to attribute to him the ordinary usage view.

This is not to say that the ordinary language usage view wouldn't allow for any revision. This is why I've added the qualifier "generally" to the commitment. We wouldn't want to stick Socrates with the view that ordinary linguistic practice is so rigid

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<sup>14</sup> See Sumner (1996:10-20).

that it cannot be overridden. Moreover, if ordinary usage were true, i.e. informed by the way things are, the urgency with which Socrates demands an answer for F-ness is reduced. For then, if our claims about F's are pre-analytically true, then we can already be certain they will be supported by an adequate theory.

With respect to the theory of welfare, some of our intuitions will be more central and others more peripheral. Thus, a more adequate account of welfare will distinguish the core from the periphery. It is likely, then, that the periphery will be where most of the revision is taking place. Applying this to linguistic practice in the Socratic dialogues, Socrates and his interlocutors may disagree whether something is appropriately called F or not. This will lead to our first test case. The ordinary usage view is actually two claims together, better illustrated by distinguishing the set of things *called* F and the set of things that are *genuinely* F. The ordinary language usage view maintains that these sets are coextensive. So, one claim is (1) for any x if it is F, then it is called F; the other claim is (2) for any x, if it's called F, then it is F. Both of these together constitute the ordinary usage view.<sup>15</sup>

The first test case is an argument against (1) that relies on an interpretation of Plato's *Euthyphro*. In order to be a counterexample to (1), we have to identify a situation in which something that is *possibly* F, but generally not *called* F. This is Euthyphro's prosecuting his father for murder. Socrates allows that this could be a pious action, as Euthyphro maintains, regardless of whether nearly all Athenians disagree, it is suggested. In other words, I argue that Euthyphro's prosecuting his father for murder is something

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<sup>15</sup> I am assuming in subsequent discussion bivalence for predicates: either Euthyphro's prosecuting his father for murder is pious or it is impious.

which is generally, given the context of the dialogue, called “impious” (ἀνόσιον).

Nevertheless, Socrates allows the possibility that it could be a pious action. So, the question is, how do we recognize the possibility that Euthyphro’s prosecuting his father for murder could be genuinely pious? To recognize the possibility, I maintain, first we have to accommodate Socratic irony, and recognize that Socrates sometimes doesn’t mean what he says. Once we’ve done that, however, we can still see our way clear to the possibility that Euthyphro’s action could be the pious thing to do.

A.2. Part One of OUV: If F-ness= $\text{df}$  G-ness, then any G is generally called F.

In Plato’s *Euthyphro*, Socrates is surprised when Euthyphro tells him that he is at the law court in order to prosecute his own father for murder (4A7-B2). Euthyphro himself admits that he appears crazy to do this (4A1). Socrates notes further that the majority of Athenians-the many-would disagree with him (4A11-12). So, Euthyphro stands alone in his opinion that prosecuting his father for murder is pious. Thus, his prosecuting his father for murder is uncontroversial as an example of an impious action. Should we take Socrates’ surprise here to reveal his skepticism about the piety of Euthyphro’s action? Does Socrates, at the outset, think that Euthyphro couldn’t possibly be right about this?

If he were, then we, as readers, should be surprised at his reaction. Instead of dismissing Euthyphro, he says, in effect, that Euthyphro must really know what he’s talking about if he’s going to prosecute his own father for murder. He must really understand the nature of piety to go through with his suit against his own father:

- (1) *Euthyphr.* 4A11-B2: Heracles! Euthyphro, it is not known by the many how this can be right. For I do not believe that this is an action of just someone ordinary, but of one far advanced in wisdom. ( Ἡράκλεις. ἦ που, ὦ Εὐθύφρων, ἀγνοεῖται ὑπὸ τῶν πολλῶν ὅπῃ ποτὲ ὀρθῶς ἔχει. οὐ γὰρ οἶμαί γε τοῦ ἐπιτυχόντος αὐτὸ πράξαι ἀλλὰ πόρρω που ἤδη σοφίας ἐλαύνοντος.)

Socrates response is not to deny that Euthyphro is right. His response is just to say that since Euthyphro's view is so at odds with the rest of the Athenians, he must be very wise indeed. Since Euthyphro's case is so complicated that it would be hard to see clearly any judgment about it.

Euthyphro's father had hired a farmhand to work their land in Naxos. One night, this hired hand got drunk and killed one of their household slaves. Not knowing what to do with this miscreant, Euthyphro's father bound him and left him in a ditch. Then, he sent a message to the local authorities to find out what he should do with this man. While he waited for a reply, the hired man died of exposure (4B7-E3).

Perhaps because the situation is so complicated, Socrates betrays some fear that if he were in Euthyphro's place, he'd be worried about making a mistake. For his part, he couldn't be sure, if he were the one prosecuting his father for murder that he would be acting piously in this particular situation. Socrates' concern is reflected in the following passage.

- (3) *Euthyphr.* 4E4-8: By Zeus, Euthyphro, you believe that your knowledge of the divine, and of piety and impiety, is so precise that, when those things happened as you say, you do not fear of having done an impious thing in bringing your father to trial? (Σὺ δὲ δὴ πρὸς Διός, ὦ Εὐθύφρων, οὕτωςι ἀκριβῶς οἶει ἐπίστασθαι περὶ τῶν θείων ὅπῃ ἔχει, καὶ τῶν ὀσίων τε καὶ ἀνοσίων, ὥστε τούτων οὕτω πραχθέντων ὥς σὺ λέγεις, οὐ φοβῇ διακζομενος τῷ πατρὶ ὅπως μὴ αὖ σὺ ἀνόσιον πρᾶγμα τυγχάνῃς πράττων;)

As a response to Euthyphro's claim that his prosecution of his father for murder is pious, Socrates (a) supposes that Euthyphro must be really wise, as it disagrees with what everyone else thinks, and (b) would be worried about acting impiously in Euthyphro's place. What's going on?

In a study of Socratic irony, Vlastos argues that the conception of irony with which Socrates is attributed is inaccurate because some consider irony as a means of deceit and trickery. Quite simply, irony (εἰρωνεία) for Socrates retains its most primitive significance: saying the opposite of what is intended. With this clarified understanding of irony, could that be what Socrates is doing here at (1)? If he's being ironic, then he isn't really flattering Euthyphro for being "far advanced in wisdom." He's saying that he is unwise to take up this suit with his father. To suppose that Socrates is being ironic at this passage can be easily justified by comparing this passage with another. At the end of this same dialogue, we should hear, unless we are fitted with tin ears, a refrain of Socratic irony.

After several attempts at defining piety, Socrates is presuming that Euthyphro must know the nature of piety, or he wouldn't be so careless as to prosecute his own father on behalf of a servant and risk reprisals from the gods (15D4-6). Euthyphro shuffles away, trying to extricate himself from the conversation with Socrates. This is what Socrates says in response:

- (3) *Euthyphr.* 15E5-16A4: What a thing to do, friend! By leaving, you are sending me away me down from the great hope I had: that I would learn from you about the pious and the impious and freeing me from Meletus' indictment by showing him that I had become wise in divine matters from Euthyphro, and my ignorance would no longer cause me to be careless and inventive about such things, and I would be better for the rest of my life. (οἷα ποιεῖς, ὦ ἑταῖρε.

ἀπ' ἐλπίδος με καταβαλὼν μεγάλης ἀπέρχῃ ἦν εἶχον, ὥς παρὰ σοῦ μαθὼν τὰ τε ὅσια καὶ μὴ καὶ τῆς πρὸς Μέλητον γραφῆς ἀπαλλάξομαι, ἐνδειξαμενός ἐκείνῳ ὅτι σοφὸς ἤδη παρ' Εὐθύφρονος τὰ θεία γέγονα καὶ ὅτι οὐκέτι ὑπ' ἀγνοίας αὐτοσχεδιάζω οὐδὲ καινοτομῶ περὶ αὐτά, καὶ δὴ καὶ τὸν ἄλλον βίον ὅτι ἄμεινον βιοσοίμην.)

No doubt some of what fuels an ironic reading of this passage is the fact that Euthyphro has tried several times to tell Socrates what piety is and failed every time. So, we wouldn't be surprised if Socrates were, at the end of this inquiry, to conclude that Euthyphro doesn't know what he's talking about. His irony is a vehicle for mockery. Perhaps he will shame Euthyphro into giving up his suit.

Returning to 4E4-8, we can take Socrates' comment that Euthyphro is "far advanced in wisdom" because there is clearly another instance of Socrates' irony at the end of the dialogue. Should we suppose that he is also mocking Euthyphro when he says that he must be far advanced in wisdom if he's prosecuting his own father for murder? The problem with the irony interpretation is that it is an interpretation of last resort: it cannot give any principled way of distinguishing the ironic passages from the non-ironic. If one claims to have one's ear tuned to detect irony, it appears as an *ad hoc* solution to interpretive difficulties. In any case, let's suppose that Socrates is being ironic at the "far advanced in wisdom" passage. If he's being ironic, then he's saying that Euthyphro is not far advanced in wisdom, and probably a moron, because it cannot be, under any adequate account of piety, that prosecuting one's father for murder could be correctly called "pious", or "ὅσιον."

There are two things going on here: if we think Socrates is committed to the ordinary usage view, and if we grant Socratic irony at the "far advanced in wisdom"

passage, then we wouldn't find any passages where Socrates would allow Euthyphro's suit to be accommodated. But there is such a passage. Moreover, whether or not we read the "far advanced in wisdom" passage ironically it still appears as though Socrates allows the possibility that what Euthyphro is doing *could* be pious. This is how the following passage is a counterexample to the first claim of the ordinary usage view: it is an example of something that could be pious, but is not called "pious."

(4) *Euthyphr.* 6C9-D7:

Socrates: Now try to say more clearly what I was asking just now, for, my friend, you did not teach me sufficiently when earlier I asked you what the pious was; rather you told me what you are doing now, prosecuting your father for murder, is pious. (νυνὶ δὲ ὅπερ ἄρτι σε ἡρόμην πειρῶ σαφέστερον εἰπεῖν. οὐ γάρ με, ὃ ἐταῖρε, τὸ πρότερον ἱκανῶς ἐδίδαξας ἐρωτήσαντα τὸ ὅσιον ὅτι ποτ' εἶη, ἀλλὰ μοι εἶπες ὅτι τοῦτο τυγχάνει ὅσιον ὃν ὃ σὺ νῦν ποιεῖς, φόνου ἐπεξιὼν τῷ πατρί.)

Euthyphro: And I was telling you the truth, Socrates. (Καὶ ἀληθῆ γε ἔλεγον, ὦ Σώκρατες.)

Socrates: **Perhaps.** But you also say, Euthyphro, that many other things are pious. (Ἴσως. Ἀλλὰ γάρ, ὦ Εὐθύφρων, καὶ ἄλλα πολλὰ φῆς εἶναι ὅσια.)

This may be a lot of work for one word (Ἴσως) to do. But if Socrates really didn't think Euthyphro's prosecuting his father for murder could be accommodated, he wouldn't have allowed the possibility that it belongs in the class of pious things. Yet the natural next question is, couldn't this passage at 6C9-D7 also be an ironic passage?

This particular passage might be read ironically, but then we are clearly in the *ad hoc* here. It's permissible to read some passages ironically when there's little dispute about it, as at the end of the dialogue. But to apply the ironic reading in a more systematic

way would require a more principled way of distinguishing the ironic from the non-ironic. And that is extremely difficult to do. This stretches to the limit what the irony interpretation can do.

Note also that this passage at 6C9-D7 (above) doesn't depend on the passage at 4A11-B2, the "far advanced in wisdom" passage, being read ironically. If we read Socrates straightforwardly at the "far advanced in wisdom" passage, then he's supposing that Euthyphro really must be far advanced in wisdom to call his action pious. If we read this passage straightforwardly, it counts as evidence against the first claim of the ordinary usage view: for any  $x$ , if it is  $F$ , then it is generally called  $F$ . With respect to the dialogue *Euthyphro*, I've identified a passage where something could be  $F$  and generally not called  $F$ . This is Euthyphro's prosecuting his father for murder: Socrates allows the possibility that it is genuinely pious, though it is not generally called pious. Hence, allowing the possibility that Euthyphro's prosecuting his father for murder is pious undermines the first claim of the ordinary usage view.

A.3. Part Two of OUV: If  $F\text{-ness} =_{df} G\text{-ness}$ , then anything generally called  $F$  is  $G$ .

In this section, I focus more on what is generally an uncontroversial case. The uncontroversial cases, naturally, are generally called  $F$ . So, in order to undermine the second claim of the ordinary usage view, which is (2) for any  $x$  if it is called  $F$ , then it is  $F$ . We need an example of something generally called  $F$ , but which Socrates believes is genuinely not  $F$ . That example will be uncontroversial cases of courage in animals from Plato's *Laches*. It is supposed –uncontroversially– that animals can be courageous. Socrates doesn't allow this possibility. In so doing, he denies a paradigmatic example,

something generally called “courageous” but which isn’t genuinely courageous. This example should also shake the faith of anyone who believes Socrates is committed to paradigm examples of F’s.

In Plato’s *Laches*, the discussion centers on the nature of courage. One of the main interlocutors, Laches, has a go at answering “what is courage?” but hasn’t had much success. At one point the argument is turned over to the other main interlocutor, Nicias. In an effort to give the answer that Socrates wants, Nicias reports what he’s heard Socrates say on many occasions, that wisdom and goodness are necessarily tied together whereas ignorance and badness are linked up.

- (1) *La.* 194D1-3: I have heard you say many times that each of us is good with respect to that in which he is wise and bad in respect to that in which he is ignorant. (Πολλάκις ἀκήκοά σου λέγοντος ὅτι ταῦτα ἀγαθὸς ἕκαστος ἡμῶν ἅπερ σοφός, ἃ δὲ ἀμαθής, ταῦτα δὲ κακός.)

Socrates agrees that he has said this often (194D3). Ultimately, this Socratic claim becomes the basis of Nicias’ attempt to answer “what is courage?” Courage is the knowledge of the fearful and the hopeful in war and every other situation (195A1).

When Socrates turns to question Nicias on this account, he shows him the dilemma of this view: either he must admit that wild beasts are all equally courageous, in fact more courageous than most men since knowledge of the fearful and hopeful is denied even to the doctor and the prophet, or that deny that wild beasts of any sort have this knowledge. Laches, irritated by Nicias’ responses, thinks that Socrates has at last cornered him:

- (2) *La.* 197A1-5: Answer this for us truthfully, Nicias, whether you say that these wild beasts whom we all admit are courageous, are wiser than we are, or whether you dare to oppose everyone and do not call them courageous? (καὶ ἡμῖν ὥς ἀληθῶς τοῦτο ἀπόκριναι, ὦ Νικία, πότερον σοφώτερα φῆς ἡμῶν ταῦτα εἶναι τὰ θηρία, ἃ πάντες ὁμολογοῦμεν ἀνδρείᾳ εἶναι, ἢ πᾶσιν ἐναντιούμενος τολμαῶς μηδὲ ἀνδρεία αὐτὰ καλεῖν;)

Nicias bites the bullet and denies that wild animals are courageous. In fact, he goes on to point out that even children cannot be considered courageous since they have no sense (197A7-B1). So, despite that the many call the Crommyon<sup>16</sup> sow courageous, Nicias must disagree with them; his answer to “what is courage?” requires it. Laches again points out that Nicias is just acting like a sophist, twisting and turning to avoid contradiction. But it’s important to note that he’s just disagreeing with everyone else on this point. That needn’t necessarily be a defect in his account, though Laches thinks it is. It is suggested at this passage that Laches believes that if the many are in uniform agreement on what is called “courageous,” that in itself provides an argument against a definition of courage that is at odds. Laches is committed, at least for uncontroversial examples of courage, to a semantic commitment analogous to the descriptive adequacy found in theories of welfare. The semantics are such that if the many call something courageous, the definition of courage must accommodate it.

- (3) *La.* 197C2-4: Behold, Socrates, how well, in his own opinion, this one decks himself out in words. Those whom everyone agrees to be courageous he attempts to deprive of that distinction. (Θέασαι, ὦ Σώκρατες, ὥς εἶ ὁδε ἐαυτὸν δῆ, ὥς οἶεται, κοσμεῖ τῷ λόγῳ οὓς δὲ πάντες ὁμολογοῦσιν ἀνδρείους εἶναι, τούτους ἀποστερεῖν ἐπιχειρεῖ ταύτης τῆς τιμῆς.)

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<sup>16</sup> This is the legendary sow Theseus killed. See Cooper (1997: 681).

But what we may have failed to notice is that Nicias has derived his account from Socrates' own claim that courage reduces to some kind of knowledge. And if it is knowledge, then wild animals who have no understanding of what is to be feared and hoped cannot be correctly called "courageous." This flies in the face of convention because as Laches points out, everyone calls animals like the Crommyon sow "courageous." This just shows us that this argument has developed in a way to express Socrates' views. Socrates is not committed to an adequate account of courage picking out all those examples of what people commonly call "courageous."

#### A.4. Summary

We've discussed some efforts to appreciate whether Socrates is committed to pre-analytic statements about what is F. We've seen that he's not committed to such statements by identifying counterexamples to both claims of what I call the ordinary usage view. By citing counterexamples to each of the claims of the ordinary usage view, I have demonstrated that Socrates is not committed to any necessary overlap between the set of F things and the set of things called F. This should strike us as disanalogous to a primary desideratum in theories of welfare: descriptive adequacy. Though even a theory of welfare is not committed to supporting all pre-analytic convictions, an acceptable interpretation will support those core convictions, i.e. the paradigmatic intuitions to which everyone agrees. Yet, as far as Socrates is concerned, even those paradigmatic examples of things called F are subject to revision. Nothing is safe from revision, and this is a way in which Socrates' semantic commitment is not analogous to contemporary theorists' commitment to descriptive adequacy.

The next step is to ask whether Socrates is committed to any restrictions regarding statements about F-nesses themselves. In the next section, I address one effort to establish the upper limit on Socrates' semantic revision: Socrates stops at claims about F-nesses that are virtues; any evaluative predicate of F-ness must be semantically complete. *Republic* Book I is an example that violates this condition. It is indeterminate from the text, however, whether this counts as a counterexample to the evaluative view.

### B. The Evaluative Predicate View

Statements of the form, "F-ness is F" and "F-ness is G" necessarily involve discussion about self-predication, strict predication and semantic completeness. So, that's a good place to start. It is difficult to separate semantics from ontology because predication for Socrates involves statements as well as what statements are about. This is because whether statements about F-nesses are true or false depends on what their natures are. Socrates and his interlocutors assume about F-nesses that certain properties attach to them necessarily. That's why statements about F-nesses, provided that the predicate adjective is a term of approbation, are supposed to be interpreted as "F-ness is (always) G." I'll return to the connection between semantics and ontology later. For right now, it's important to understand the connections between self-predication, strict predication and semantic completeness.

### B.1. Self-predication, strict predication and semantic completeness

Self-predication, at its most basic, describes sentences about F-nesses whose subject term is followed by a copula with an adjective cognate with the abstract noun.

Typical examples that occur in Plato's dialogues are the following:

- (1) *Prt.* 330C: Then Justice is such as to be just? (Ἔστιν ἄρα τοιοῦτον ἡ δικαιοσύνη οἷον δίκαιον εἶναι;)
- (2) *Hi. Ma.* 288C1-2: How could we dare deny that the fine is a fine thing? (πῶς γὰρ ἂν τολμῶμεν ἔξαρτοι εἶναι τὸ καλὸν μὴ καλὸν εἶναι;)
- (3) *Hi. Ma.* 292E2-3: I suppose the fine is always fine. (ὥσπερ σὺ ἐμέ, ὃ πᾶσι καλὸν καὶ ἀεί ἐστι.)

Such statements have generated a great deal of controversy over how they are supposed to be taken.<sup>17</sup> Statements that are self-predicative can be just a subset of statements that are strictly predicated. Strict predication characterizes such sentences in that they are unqualified. It is assumed by Socrates and his interlocutors *ex hypothesi*<sup>18</sup> that such sentences-whether the subject-term is cognate with the predicate adjective or not-preserve their truth-value in all contexts. This is just to say that the subject-predicate core of the statement is semantically complete. Any clause added to such sentences is nonrestrictive: it doesn't change the truth-value of the core of the statement. Here are some examples:<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> On Vlastos' view, "self-predicative" readings of such sentences imply that an individual named by the subject-term is a member of the class who possess the characteristic expressed by the predicate-term. This is what led him to his "Pauline Predication" view. See Ross (1958) for the straightforward "self-predicative" reading.

<sup>18</sup> See Nehamas 1979 for more justification of strictly predicated statements about F-nesses being uncontroversial premises.

<sup>19</sup> These are adapted from Woodruff 1982.

- (4) The snow (on the ground) is cold.
- (5) David Lewis is a human being (in Princeton borough).

These qualifying phrases don't make a difference to the semantic core of the statement. Whether snow is on the ground or not, it is always cold. Whether David Lewis is in Princeton borough or somewhere else, he is a human being.

When Socrates asks, "What is the fine?" in *Hippias Major*, he expects an adequate answer will be semantically complete. If the answer isn't semantically complete, then it fails. This is because any sentence about the fine will have its predicate strictly applied: we needn't bother with qualifications in order to preserve the truth-value of the statement.

Compare this to other statements like, "Brushing one's teeth is good" where the core of the statement is not semantically complete. "Good" cannot be predicated strictly of "brushing one's teeth" because there are circumstances in which "Brushing one's teeth is good" would be false. If, for example, I were brushing my teeth merrily along, but I ignored the man choking to death in the next room. I'd ignore him because of the fastidious attention I pay to my oral hygiene. Clearly, this is a circumstance in which the statement, "Brushing one's teeth is good," would be false.

The hypothesis concerning Socrates is that both self-predicative statements and other predicative statements about F-nesses are semantically complete. Socrates and his interlocutors assume in advance that statements of the form, "F-ness is G" where F=G or G is an adjective of approbation preserve their truth-value regardless of context. This hypothesis is supported by a number of arguments, but two in particular require that their main premises about F-ness be interpreted as being semantically complete.

The argument at *Laches* 192C5-6 has as its main premise, “Courage is praiseworthy,” (σχεδὸν γάρ τι οἶδα, ὦ Λάχης, ὅτι τῶν πάντων καλῶν πραγμάτων ἡγῆ σὺ ἀνδρείαν εἶναι). This is, in the course of the argument, supposed to be interpreted as “courage is *always* praiseworthy.”<sup>20</sup> The proposed *definiens* for courage is that it is a kind of endurance (Δοκεῖ τοίνυν μοι καρτερία τις εἶναι τῆς ψυχῆς). The way Socrates criticizes this answer, however, is that he identifies a situation in which endurance *simpliciter* is not praiseworthy: when it is foolish. So, the claim, “endurance of the soul is praiseworthy” is not semantically complete: it doesn’t preserve its truth-value regardless of context. We would need to add a restrictive clause in order to preserve the truth-value of the statement. Thus, “Endurance of the soul is praiseworthy in some circumstances,” is likely to be true.

Another argument in *Hippias Major* depends-though they all depend, but one example will suffice-on a statement about the fine (τὸ καλὸν) that is strictly predicated. I cite this example to show that self-predicative statements about F-nesses in the Socratic dialogues are just versions of strict predications. The adjective καλὸν can be interpreted as “fine,” “admirable,” “praiseworthy,” or simply, “beautiful.”<sup>21</sup> As the potential possible translations increase, the line between self-predicative and strictly predicated statements becomes less easily discernible. “Τὸ καλὸν καλὸν” is a self-

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<sup>20</sup> Socrates rephrases at 192D8 that courage is (always) praiseworthy.

<sup>21</sup> Dancy notes that all the translations of this word fall short. They are misleading because they build in an implicit reference to an agent potentially admiring or praising. But “beautiful” as a translation is especially lousy (2004: 33).

predicative statement because “καλὸν” is strictly predicated of “τὸ καλὸν,” but perhaps any of the following translations *could* be allowed:

- (6) The fine is beautiful.
- (7) The fine is admirable.
- (8) The beautiful is admirable.
- (9) The beautiful is fine.

It’s important to understand that the subject-predicate cores of the statements are semantically complete. This is how Socrates is able to show Hippias that his answer to “what is the fine?” fails when Hippias says that it is gold.

The statement, “Gold is praiseworthy” is not semantically complete because it is false in contexts where gold is used as a material for cooking implements (*Hi. Ma.* 290D7-E1). It is likely that the statement, “gold is praiseworthy” requires a restrictive clause: “gold is praiseworthy *as a medium of exchange*” or something like that to preserve its truth-value in all contexts, though even this may be doubtful.

I now return to the relation between semantics and ontology, which is not easily distinguishable with respect to Plato’s dialogues. In chapter four, I argued that *Chrm.* 160E-161B provides evidence of Socrates’ property sameness condition.<sup>22</sup> Here’s the argument:

- (1) Temperance=<sub>df</sub> Modesty
- (2) Temperance is (always) good.
- (3) Modesty is not (always) good.
- (4) So, Temperance ≠ Modesty.

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<sup>22</sup> If F-ness=<sub>df</sub> G-ness, then F-ness is the same as (is a property identical to) G-ness.

Modesty fails as the *definiens* of temperance because modesty fails to have the property of being unqualifiedly good.<sup>23</sup> We see also in this argument that “temperance is good” (ἀλλὰ καὶ ἀγαθόν ἐστιν) is to be interpreted as “temperance is *always* good.” Thus, the claim “temperance is good” is semantically complete whereas the claim “modesty is good” is not semantically complete. Socrates quotes Homer at this passage, who writes, “Modesty is not a good match for a needy man.”<sup>24</sup> So, modesty is not good in all circumstances. So, “modesty is good *when one isn’t needy*” suitably qualified, is perhaps true in all contexts.

The nature of predication for Socrates clearly involves both statements and what the statements are about. I think it’s important to understand that the ontological is distinct from the semantic but it is likely that Socrates and his interlocutors hold the semantic view that statements of the form, “F-ness is G” where G=F or is an evaluative term, because of the kind of natures they believe F-nesses to possess. Statements about F-nesses are semantically complete because of the kind of entities they are.

## B.2. An Exception?

There appears to be one possible exception to this semantic commitment but only in the sense that if Socrates and his interlocutors assume that statements about F-nesses are semantically complete, then there shouldn’t be counterexamples. But there does seem to be one counterexample. That is, one interlocutor in particular doesn’t accept that

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<sup>23</sup> How we individuate properties is a matter of considerable debate. There are no wholly uncontroversial examples of properties, but likely candidates are colors and rest masses.

<sup>24</sup> See *Chrm.* 161A4: αἰδῶς δ’ οὐκ ἀγαθὴ κεχρημένῳ ἀνδρὶ παρεῖναι.

statements of the form, “F-ness is G” are restricted to “G” being a term of approbation. In *Republic* Book I, Thrasymachus, a particularly ornery interlocutor turns a traditional belief about justice on its head:

- (1) *R.* 348E1-349A2: Well, this is amazing if you include injustice with virtue and wisdom, and justice with their opposites. (ἀλλὰ τόδε ἐθαύμασα, εἰ ἐν ἀρετῆς καὶ σοφίας τιθεῖς μέρος τὴν ἀδικίαν, τὴν δὲ δικαιοσύνην ἐν τοῖς ἐναντίοις.)

I certainly do. ( Ἴ Αλλὰ πάνυ οὕτω τίθημι.)

That’s harder, and it isn’t easy to say anything about this. If you had declared that injustice is more profitable, on the one hand, but on the other agreed that it is a vice or shameful, as others do, we could have discussed the matter according to customary beliefs. Now clearly you’ll say that injustice is fine and strong and apply to it all the attributes we used to apply to justice, since you have dared include it with virtue and wisdom. (Τοῦτο, ἦν δ’ ἐγώ, ἤδη στερεώτερον, ὧ ἐταῖρε, καὶ οὐκέτι ῥάδιον ἔχειν ὅτι τις εἴπῃ. εἰ γὰρ λυσιτελεῖν μὲν τὴν ἀδικίαν ἐτίθεσο, κακίαν μὲντοι ἢ αἰσχρὸν αὐτὸ ὁμολόγεις εἶναι ὥσπερ ἄλλοι τινές, εἵχομεν ἄν τι λέγειν κατὰ τὰ νομιζόμενα λέγοντες. νῦν δὲ δῆλος εἰ ὅτι φήσεις αὐτὸ καὶ καλὸν καὶ ἰσχυρὸν εἶναι καὶ τᾶλλα αὐτῷ πάντα προσθήσεις ἃ ἡμεῖς τῷ δικαίῳ προσετίθεμεν, ἐπειδὴ γε καὶ ἐν ἀρετῇ αὐτὸ καὶ σοφία ἐτόλμησας θεῖναι.)

Irwin suggests that claims about F-nesses that are virtues are limited to evaluative predicates as a way to establish the upper limit on belief revision.<sup>25</sup> His suggestion is that this is an inviolable assumption because to permit any G to be predicated of the virtues is to make the virtue unrecognizable. Notice that Socrates’ response at this passage is not to deny Thrasymachus’ claim, or to say that Thrasymachus is not talking about justice, but something else all together. Rather, he accepts the premise that justice is among vice and ignorance and that injustice is with the class of virtues. It’s worthwhile to note that Socrates does say that this is a challenge: he cannot argue, according to customary

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<sup>25</sup> See Irwin (1977: 64).

beliefs. So, such a claim about virtue is not inviolable in the sense that it cannot be entertained.

This passage, however, does not show that Socrates isn't committed to the semantic commitment as Irwin believes. It only shows that one of his interlocutors isn't committed to a customary belief about justice. But this shows also, in addition, that that the customary belief is that the virtues are consummately good. As a result, it strengthens the semantic commitment in being uncontroversial among Socrates and his interlocutors. What he says here is an indication of that. Moreover, Socrates' willingness to entertain such claims as "Justice is simple-minded foolishness" or "Injustice is prudent" might suggest that the "G" predicate in "F-ness is G" needn't be an evaluative term. But we should be reluctant to attribute beliefs to Socrates simply on the basis of an interlocutor's claim.<sup>26</sup>

I now return to some of the passages cited on behalf of a Socratic semantic commitment in order to clarify to what Socrates might be committed in regard to things that are F.

### C. Socratic Semantics Reprise

I argued in the first part of the chapter that Socrates is a radical semantic revisionist in the respect that an adequate answer to "what is F-ness?" needn't support all and only those things he and the interlocutors pre-analytically call F. But there is another side to this: there's a further question whether in a true and adequate account of F-ness whether all and only genuine F's will be called F. I think that this is the account to which

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<sup>26</sup> See Benson 2000.

some think Socrates is committed, but it is sometimes difficult to distinguish this view from the ordinary usage view. That's why this section is here: to clarify a distinction often overlooked in studies of Socrates' semantic commitments. Still an adequate account of what courage is could be a far remove from what people call "courageous." I've argued that an account of courage doesn't depend what people call "courageous" as its data. There isn't this sort of descriptive adequacy built into the truth about the nature of courage. Woodruff compliments this view with the following passage:

- (1) A Socratic definition would be based not on word usage, but on the truth about the subject of definition. It has, however, *this connection with meaning*: once found, a Socratic definition would give to the word for what was to be defined an ideal meaning, the meaning the word would have in discourse informed by a true theory about the way things are.<sup>27</sup>

Having distinguished between (a) what people call F and (b) the semantic relation between F-ness and F things, we can see some passages in a different light: they can be read complementarily to what Woodruff says. For example, in *Laches*:

- (2) *La.* 192B5-8: You, too, Laches, try then to identify courage in the same way, what is the same capacity in pleasure and in pain and in all the things which just now we were saying are the same, thereby called courageous. (Πειρῶ δὴ καὶ σύ, ὦ Λάχης, τὴν ἀνδρείαν οὕτως εἰπεῖν τίς οὐσα δύνამεις ἡ αὐτὴ ἐν ἡδονῇ καὶ ἐν λύπῃ καὶ ἐν ἅπασιν οἷς νυνδὴ ἐλέγομεν αὐτὴν εἶναι, ἔπειτα ἀνδρεία κέλεται.)

My point is this: this passage cannot be read as a commitment to supporting ordinary claims about courageous things. The passage cannot be read in such a way because that would be a commitment to the support of all and only things pre-analytically called "courageous", or at least paradigmatic examples, which I have argued, is false. Read in another way, however, it might be true, if Woodruff is correct. In other words, *bona fide*

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<sup>27</sup> See Woodruff (1982: 149).

courageous people could be correctly called, “courageous,” but this may have nothing to do with what Laches and others call “courageous.” Socrates allows the possibility that an entire linguistic community could be wrong about what they generally call things. But in another respect, there is still another component in adequate answers to “what is F-ness?” Commentators tend to run two views together: (1) a semantic commitment among genuine F things and that (2) those things are generally called F. We see now that the two may not have anything to do with one another.

#### D. Conclusion

In this chapter, I discussed two of Socrates’ semantic commitments: (1) a supposed commitment to supporting ordinary linguistic usage among his interlocutors, (2) a commitment to statements like, “F-ness is F” or “F-ness is G” where “G” is an evaluative predicate and semantically complete. In the first section, I discussed the formal features of view (1), which consists of two different claims: for any x if it is F, then it is called F, and for any x, if it’s called F, then it is F. I argued against each of these claims in turn, citing counterexamples against them. Then, I argued for Socrates’ second semantic commitment: statements of the form “F-ness is G” are semantically complete and “G” is a term of approbation. Socrates must be committed to this because of how a number of his arguments develop, relying on this semantic commitment without arguing for it. This commitment is supported by general agreement among his interlocutors, except one. But that, I point out, doesn’t constitute a counterexample to this claim from Socrates’ perspective. Finally, I discussed a passage that could be interpreted as a commitment to ordinary usage, but for the argument I present, must not be. Socrates’

semantic commitment regarding F things must be an ideal such that what his interlocutors customarily call F may have no necessary overlap at all with *bona fide* F's.

## Chapter VII

### The Paradigm Condition

In chapter two, I articulated the paradigm condition in accordance with a recent interpretation of it.<sup>1</sup> The paradigm condition is that if  $F\text{-ness} =_{df} G\text{-ness}$ , then  $G\text{-ness}$  is a paradigm for determining  $F$ 's. In this chapter, I argue against attributing this view to Socrates. In order to understand how I argue against this view, it is important first to understand what a paradigm is and how it differs from merely a way of distinguishing  $F$ 's from not  $F$ 's. These are not the same. And I don't deny that Socrates expects that an adequate answer to "what is courage?" will discriminate courageous from cowardly people, I just think that he needn't have a paradigm to do it. In the second part of this chapter, I discuss other ways of establishing criteria for distinguishing  $F$ 's from not  $F$ 's.

Being a paradigm requires two features: (1) it distinguishes  $F$ 's from not  $F$ 's and (2) it is  $F$  itself. The supposition is that being  $F$  itself allows it to act as a standard for determining  $F$ 's from not  $F$ 's. Being completely  $F$  and in no respect not  $F$  allows a paradigm to perform its function for determining  $F$ 's from not  $F$ 's. Each case is measured against this paradigm and if it matches, so to speak, it must be  $F$ . A typical example of a paradigm that functions in this way is the standard meter-stick: it can distinguish meters from non-meters, and it is itself a meter long. A number of commentators explain Socrates' paradigm commitment in the same way.<sup>2</sup> Notice, however, that there could be another way of distinguishing  $F$ 's from not  $F$ 's that is not  $F$  itself. For example, the litmus test distinguishes basic solutions from acidic ones but the strip itself is neither basic nor

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<sup>1</sup> "The *definiens* must give a paradigm or standard by which cases of the *definiendum* may be determined" (Dancy 2004: 115-133).

<sup>2</sup> See Dancy 2004 and Kraut 1984.

acidic. A geometer's definition of a rhombus as a quadrilateral figure whose sides are all equal in length is a way of distinguishing rhombuses from non-rhombuses, but the definition is not a rhombus itself. And so, when we attribute to Socrates the paradigm condition, we assume that he is committed to a way of telling F's from not F's that is itself F because that is the way in which a paradigm functions. The point of identifying other examples of ways of telling, however, is to point out that there are two features to paradigms. While Socrates may be committed to one of these, he is not committed to the other. An adequate answer to "what is F-ness?" will provide him with a way of distinguishing F's from not F's, but he is not thereby committed to a way of distinguishing F's that is itself F.

I argue in this chapter against including this second feature of the paradigm condition to Socrates' definitional commitments; he is committed to the paradigm condition only if he is committed to a way of telling F's from not F's and this way is itself F. He is not committed to the standard being F itself. So, he's not committed to the paradigm condition. It is likely that the work of determining F's will be taken over by some feature of Socratic epistemology, and I'll discuss this at the end of the chapter.

I separate this chapter into two parts. In first part, I discuss two passages from *Euthyphro*: 6E3-6 and 6E10-8A8. The first passage is thought to express the paradigm commitment mainly because the word translated as "paradigm," παραδείγματι, appears at this passage. The second passage at *Euthyphro* 6E10-7A1 is thought to employ the paradigm commitment in its refutation of Euthyphro's definition of the pious as what the gods love, and the impious as what they hate (Ἔστι τοίνυν τὸ μὲν τοῖς

θεοῖς προσφιλὲς ὄσιον, τὸ δὲ μὴ προσφιλὲς ἄνοσιον). I argue that the first passage needn't be read as expressing the paradigm commitment and the second passage can be read as a *reductio ad absurdum* that doesn't rely on the paradigm condition.

The second part of this chapter develops the view that Socrates is making a deeper point about the criteria for determining cases of F's at *Euthyphro* 6E3-6, which if we read it as an expression of the paradigm commitment, we neglect. This difference becomes relevant once we turn to another passage, *Laches* 198A-199E. This argument is such that there are three premises in conflict: (1) Courage is the knowledge of the fearful and the hopeful; (2) Courage is a part of virtue; (3) Virtue is the knowledge of good and evil. The argument's conclusion becomes that courage is the knowledge of good and evil, which conflicts with (2) because the knowledge of good and evil is virtue as a whole. So, one of the premises has to be given up. One commentator suggests that (3) should be given up because this definition doesn't satisfy the paradigm requirement. I argue that instead of viewing such a definition as failing to provide a usable standard, which Socrates is certainly after, we ought to perhaps revise our understanding of how a usable standard works. If we read *Euthyphro* 6E6-9 in this light, then we will grasp that the kind of criteria Socrates is after in answers to "what is F-ness?" might fairly stretch our ordinary understanding of criteria. But that shouldn't *ex hypothesi* count against his view.

With this consideration, we return to *Euthyphro* to examine the kinds of standards Socrates cites. One of these standards, the method of counting, emphasizes a deeper point about criteria: applying them may be a feature of Socrates' epistemology, even as the other examples, the methods of measuring and weighing, fit well the paradigm condition.

My point is only that Socrates doesn't *require* a paradigm. His examples promote a wider understanding of the means to distinguish beyond paradigms.

### A. The Paradigm View

The main passage where some have thought Socrates to express his commitment to the paradigm condition in isolation comes in Plato's *Euthyphro* 6E3-6. With an adequate definition of the pious, which Euthyphro will ostensibly provide, Socrates gives an indication to which he will put that adequate account: to be able to discern whether any action Euthyphro or anyone else undertakes is pious:

- (1) *Euthyphr.* 6E3-6: Then *teach* me what this form itself is, so that I *may look upon* it and using it as a *model* I may say that if anything either you or some other does is such as this, it is pious, and if it isn't such as this, say that it isn't pious.  
(Ταύτην τοίνυν με αὐτὴν δίδαξον τὴν ἰδέαν τίς ποτέ ἐστιν, ἵνα εἰς ἐκείνην ἀποβλέπων καὶ χρώμενος αὐτῇ παραδείγματι, ὃ μὲν ἂν τοιοῦτον ἦ ὧν ἂν ἢ σὺ ἢ ἄλλος τις πράττει φῶ ὅσιον εἶναι, ὃ δ' ἂν μὴ τοιοῦτον, μὴ φῶ.)

It is clear from this passage that Socrates' hope to be able to discern pious from impious actions with the account Euthyphro gives him, but he doesn't say *how* he expects to do that. He includes the phrase "looking upon it" as a suggestion, but this is not specific enough. We want to know how in looking upon it he will be able to discern pious from impious actions. Pointing at the word *παραδείγματι* certainly suggests that Socrates expects a paradigm, but the word *παραδείγματι* can't give that much help. After all, the word isn't necessarily translated as "paradigm": there are other contexts in which it is translated as "standard" or "exemplar."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> See *Ap.* 23B1 and *Men.* 79A10.

In fact, in *Meno*, Socrates himself refers to his own model answers for virtue as *παραδείγματα*. In this context, he seems to mean something different, like “examples.” Definition (1) is hard to classify, but definitions (2) and (3) might plausibly be classified as definitions by genus and differentia.

- (2) *Men.* 75B10-11: Shape=<sub>df</sub> the only thing that always accompanies color (ὃ μόνον τῶν ὄντων τυγχάνει χρώματι ἀεὶ ἐπόμενον).
- (3) *Men.* 76A7: Shape=<sub>df</sub> the limit of a solid (στερεοῦ πέρας σχῆμα εἶναι).
- (4) *Men.* 76D4-5: Color=<sub>df</sub> effluvium from shapes which is commensurate with sight and perceived (ἔστιν γὰρ χροῶ ἀπορροή σχημάτων ὅψει σύμμετρος καὶ αἰσθητός).

The point is that these models are certainly not paradigms in the way that the meter stick is a paradigm. These model definitions function like a geometer’s definition of rhombus, which does not distinguish rhombuses by being itself a rhombus. These model definitions provide ways for determining whether anything is shaped or colored, but they are not shapes or colors themselves. So, the meter-stick reading is only one way of satisfying Socrates’ request at *Euthyphro* 6E3-6, if we were to argue that since he uses the word *παραδείγματι* at this passage, he must want a paradigm. Other uses of the same word don’t guarantee that he expects a paradigm. So, let’s turn to the next concern: why would someone read *παραδείγματι* in *Euthyphro* as a request for a paradigm and not simply a way of telling F’s from not F’s? The answer, according to some, lay in how Socrates argues against the definition of the pious as what the gods love and the impious as what they hate.

### A.1. *Euthyphro* 6E10-8A8

In my recreation of the argument below, I have omitted many important details, which will become relevant as the discussion progresses. For right now, it's important to get a sense of the argument without stumbling over some of its intricacies. The intricacies will come later. I explain a recent interpretation of this argument that is at odds with mine, and then I add my response.

- (1) What is loved by the gods is pious and what is not loved by the gods is impious. (6E10-7A1)
- (2) The god-loved action and man dear to the gods are pious, and the god hated action and the god-hated man are impious; the pious and the impious are not the same; they are completely opposite one another. (7A6-9)
- (3) The gods quarrel over the just and the unjust, the beautiful and ugly, the good and bad. (7B2-D9)<sup>4</sup>
- (4) So, some things are thought by some gods to be good, others to be bad. [from (3); (7E1-4)]
- (5) Each loves what he thinks is good, and hates what he thinks is bad. (7E6-7)
- (6) So, the same things hated by the gods and god-hated will be loved by the gods and god-loved. [from (4) and (5); (8A4-5)]
- (7) So, the same things will be pious and impious. [from (1) and (6); (8A7-8)]

A recent interpretation of this argument denies that it follows the structure of a *reductio ad absurdum*.<sup>5</sup> First, this interpretation addresses textual concerns: the fact that

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<sup>4</sup> This premise is justified by a long discussion of the causes of disagreement among people: situations where the lack uncontroversial ways of distinguishing the just from the unjust, the beautiful from the ugly and the good from the bad. Since the gods argue, they must be at odds about the same things. Socrates doesn't justify this comparison. In the traditional Greek pantheon, however, the gods are wiser and stronger than people, even if they are not perfect. See Burkert (1985: 182-189). It would be silly if the gods argued about the things for which humans already have standards.

<sup>5</sup> See Dancy (2004: 123-133).

the same things are both pious and impious is not a contradiction. In other passages, i.e. *Chrm.* 160E4-161B2, an argument well-familiar from chapter four of this dissertation, Socrates argues against the definition of temperance as modesty because modesty is both good and not good (161A6). Socrates can only be interpreted as saying that modesty is good in some circumstances, but not good in others. This is how he summarizes the quote from Homer that modesty is not a good match for a needy man (αἰδῶς δ' οὐκ ἄγαθὴ κεχρημένῳ ἀνδρὶ παρεῖναι). Moreover, Socrates accepts that things can be both fine and not fine: as gold is fine in some circumstances, but not fine when it is made into a soup spoon (*Hi. Ma.* 290D7-10). Finally, Socrates' conclusion to this argument is not to recognize a contradiction, but to point out that Euthyphro has not answered the question he has asked, but some other question (8A10): what sorts of things are both pious and impious? The best bet from textual evidence, so Dancy argues, is to view *Euthyphro* 6E10-8A8 as different kind of argument from a *reductio ad absurdum* since Socrates doesn't give any indication that this is the structure of the argument.

It might be fairly described that Socrates reduces Euthyphro's definition at 6E10-7A1 to absurdity. It's a matter of interpretation just where the absurdity arises. On Dancy's view, Socrates conclusion to the argument is:

(7\*) All the same things are both pious and impious

which, according to Socrates, entails:

(8) The pious is both pious and impious

And this is in conflict with the following principle:

(9) The pious is through and through pious and under no circumstances impious.

The principle (9) is just an instance of a more general principle attributed to Socrates, the self-predication requirement: (SP)  $F\text{-ness} =_{df} G\text{-ness}$ , then  $G\text{-ness}$  is under all circumstances  $F$  and under no circumstances not  $F$ .<sup>6</sup> This is the crucial part of Dancy's argument in that this is where it differs most obviously from my interpretation. The natural next move is to examine why Dancy thinks that Socrates holds this self-predication principle and that it is employed at *Euthyphro* 6E10-8A8.

#### A.1.a. Paradigms and Self-Predication<sup>7</sup>

Let us begin with a passage from Dancy that summarizes the relationship between paradigms and self-predication:

- (1) ...where we look for a paradigm for  $F$ s, we look for something, possibly repeatable, that possesses in a *paradigmatic* way, indefeasibly, the features that make something an  $F$ . So, the work of PR [the paradigm requirement] can be taken over by the Self-Predication Requirement.<sup>8</sup>

The logic works like this: the self-predication requirement must be a sufficient condition for the paradigm requirement. That's why the self-predication requirement is in the background to the argument at *Euthyphro* 6E10-8A8. The way the dialogue develops, we can make sense of why Socrates uses the word sometimes translated as "paradigm"

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<sup>6</sup> See (2004: 120). I have changed his formulation from "the  $F$ " and "the  $G$ " to " $F\text{-ness}$ " and " $G\text{-ness}$ ". For discussion, see chapter one.

<sup>7</sup> It's important to understand that with respect to Plato's Theory of Forms, the nature of self-predication is hotly debated. Three general views are these: the relation of form to itself is like particular to form; the form is the perfect instance of the property it stands for (approximationist); the form has a primitive ontological relation between itself and its essence. But we needn't attribute any of these views to the Socrates of the early dialogues. My assumption here is that for Socrates, self-predicative statements sound a lot like tautologies, which is why they are accepted by all of his interlocutors.

<sup>8</sup> See Dancy (2004: 120). These are my italics.

(παράδειγματι) at 6E3-6: he thinks that the pious must be everywhere pious and under no circumstances not pious. And such an assumption is supposed to be obvious.

In fact, we find this sort of assumption in other dialogues, concerning other F-nesses: Socrates asks Protagoras whether Justice is such as to be just (*Prt.* 330C). He asks Hippias how on earth they could deny the fine is a fine thing (*Hippias Major* 288C). How to interpret these passages is given in the *Hippias Major* where Socrates supposes that the fine is always fine (*Hippias Major* 292E). In sum, these and other passages typical of Socrates' conversations with his interlocutors suggest the self-predication requirement:

(SP) F-ness<sub>df</sub> G-ness, then G-ness is under all circumstances F and under no circumstances not F.

With respect to *Euthyphro* in particular, the paradigm requirement Dancy suggests that Socrates can satisfy the paradigm requirement by holding the Self-predication Requirement. In addition, we see the self-predication requirement at work in the argument against Euthyphro's attempt to define the pious. This argument invokes a standard and that's where self-predication sets in: whatever Euthyphro supplies in his definition of the pious has to be pious in every circumstance and under no circumstance impious. Since he fails to do this, he revises his definition. Moreover, we can see the request for a standard at work in passages where Socrates never mentions a standard. So, Dancy supposes that Socrates' implicit reliance on the self-predication requirement satisfies his requirement for a paradigm.

So, the question is, can we explain the argument at *Euthyphro* 6E10-8A8 in a faithful way that doesn't depend on the self-predication requirement? I argue that we can. The argument is better conceived as a *reductio ad absurdum*. It is a separate question

whether Socrates is committed to self-predication at other passages; here I attempt to show that *Euthyphro* 6E10-8A8 can't be relied on unequivocally as support for the self-predication requirement.

## A.2. *Euthyphro* 6E10-8A8 Reprise

As I said, it is fairly certain that Socrates makes an absurdity out of Euthyphro's definition, but if there's supposed to be a contradiction, where does the contradiction occur? I maintain that the contradiction occurs between premises (2) and the conclusion (7) of my earlier reconstruction. Let's review those now.

Premise (2) is the following:

- (2) *Euthyphr.* 7A6-9: (a) The god-loved action and man dear to the gods are pious, and the god hated action and the god-hated man are impious; (b) the pious and the impious are not the same; they are completely opposite one another. (τὸ μὲν θεοφιλέες τε καὶ θεοφιλῆς ἄνθρωπος ὅσιος, τὸ δὲ θεωμισῆς καὶ ὁ θεομισῆς ἀνόσιος. οὐ ταὐτὸν δ' ἔστιν, ἀλλὰ τὸ ἐναντιώτατον, τὸ ὅσιον τῷ ἀνοσίῳ.)

And the conclusion (7) is the following:

- (7) *Euthyphr.* 8A7-8: So, the same things will be pious and impious. (Καὶ ὅσια ἄρα καὶ ἀνόσια τὰ αὐτὰ ἃ εἶη, ὧ Εὐθύφρων, τούτῳ τῷ λόγῳ.)

I start with the second part of premise (2), part (b). Socrates says that the pious and the impious are not the same; they are completely the opposite of one another. Now what could he mean by that? I maintain that here he means to say that the set of pious things and the set of impious things are disjoint: there is no overlap between them. Such an interpretation is available to us because the phrases τὸ ὅσιον and τῷ ἀνοσίῳ can

have at least two distinct uses or meanings: (1) piety and (2) the pious.<sup>9</sup> Piety is the property while the pious is the collection of pious things, whether people or actions or whatever. We use such phrases when we discuss “the poor,” for example. Here, we’re talking about the class of poor people. But if either of these interpretations is available for interpreting τὸ ὅσιον, what determines that Socrates is indeed referring to the class of pious things, and not the property of piety? After all, someone might object that on that same page, Socrates clearly refers to the property, when he uses the word εἶδος, which it is customary for him to do in the dialogues:

- (1) *Euthphr.* 6D9-E1: Do you remember that I did not ask for you to teach me one or two of the many pious things, but that form itself by which all pious things are pious? For you were saying that the impious are impious and the pious are pious by one form, or do you not remember? (Μέμνησαι οὖν ὅτι οὐ τοῦτό σοι διεκελευόμην, ἐν τι ἢ δύο με διδάξαι τῶν πολλῶν ὁσίων, ἀλλ’ ἐκείνο ταῦτό τὸ εἶδος ᾧ πάντα τὰ ὅσια ὅσια ἐστίν; ἔφησθα γάρ που μιᾷ ἰδέᾳ τὰ τε ἀνόσια ἀνόσια εἶναι καὶ τὰ ὅσια ὅσια. ἢ οὐ μνημονεύεις;)

So, if Socrates is asking for the form, or property or attribute by which the pious are pious on the same page, why would we expect him to be referring to the class of pious things in premise (2)? In order to understand this, we need to take a closer look at part (a) of premise (2):

- (2) *Euthyphr.* 7A6-9: (a) The god-loved action and man dear to the gods are pious, and the god hated action and the god-hated man are impious.

On some interpretations, what Socrates says at (a) is just a restatement of Euthyphro’s definition.<sup>10</sup> Dancy in particular acknowledges that this is not a restatement, but cannot

<sup>9</sup> See Sharvy (1972: 121). See also τὸ εὐσεβὲς and τὸ ἀσεβὲς at *Euthyphr.* 5C9.

<sup>10</sup> See Dancy (2004: 125).

see that the revision Socrates makes here is of any importance. For my interpretation, however, the revision Socrates makes here is crucial: it shows us why at this passage we should take τὸ ὅσιον and τῷ ἀνοσίῳ as “the class of pious things” and “the class of impious things,” respectively. He identifies specifically god-loved actions and people as pious and the god-hated actions and people as impious. This revision of Euthyphro’s initial definition emphasizes that he means to discuss the set of pious and impious things. In his very next statement, we should take him to identify the relationship between the pious actions and people and the impious actions and people, i.e. that they have nothing in common. What else could he mean by saying that the pious is “completely opposite” (ἐναντιώτατον) to the impious?

So, the collection of god-loved things is also pious, and the collection of god-hated things is also impious and there is nothing between these sets. As a restatement of Euthyphro’s definition, Socrates adds that the collection of pious things is completely opposite to the impious things. We can safely infer from this that there is nothing both pious and impious. This is the crucial premise because it is the contradictory of what the conclusion of this argument implies. That conclusion is that the same things are both pious and impious, which entails that there is at least one thing that is both pious and impious. So, premise (2) entails:

(2\*) There is no x such that x is both pious and impious.

Once this is established, the rest of the argument develops to produce the contradictory of (2\*). So, I turn to explaining how that happens.

The next crucial premise is that the gods quarrel with one another (7B2-4). This is crucial both because it will generate the conflict needed for the conclusion, and Socrates has already said that he finds such stories about the gods warring with one another hard to believe (6A7-8).

The upshot of the discussion about the quarrelling of the gods is that some things are considered good by some of the gods but bad by others. Since the gods disagree, some things are considered good and other things are considered bad, depending on the god. With this summary, Socrates introduces another premise: (5) Each loves what he thinks is good, and hates what he thinks is bad (7E6-7).

Socrates makes an important qualification: with respect to the matters on which the gods disagree (because it is not assumed in the argument that they disagree on everything, so that everything is a source of contention among them), they are at odds with one another. Some things will be loved by some gods and hated by others *because* some think them good while others think them bad. So, the same things *that are in dispute* are both loved by the gods and hated by them. So, we have:

- (6) The same things hated by the gods and god-hated will be loved by the gods and god-loved. (8A4-5)

Now we are in a position to see how the argument winds up. Euthyphro's initial definition of the pious is that if x is loved by the gods, then it is pious and if x is hated by the gods, then it is impious. Socrates reminds Euthyphro that he wouldn't be surprised if his prosecuting his father for murder were something Zeus would love, but Cronus would hate (8B2-3). And since what is god-loved is pious and what is god-hated is impious, the same thing could be both pious and impious. So, we have the conclusion to the argument:

(7) The same things will be pious and impious (8A7-8).

Here's where the contradiction comes in: the conclusion (7) entails that there is at least one thing that is both pious and impious. We then formulate it in the following way: (7\*)

There is some x such that x is pious and impious.

When we put (7\*) together with the implication of the second premise, we get our contradiction. Thus:

(2\*) & (7\*): There is no x such that x is both pious and impious **AND** there is an x such that x is pious and impious.

And this is how *Euthyphro* 6E10-8A8 is explained as a *reductio ad absurdum*.

#### A.2.a. Response to Criticism

Recall that Dancy's view of this argument takes the conclusion that all the same things are pious and impious to entail that the pious is both pious and impious, which is in conflict with the self-predication requirement for the pious: The pious is through and through pious and under no circumstances impious. So, in this respect, his interpretation is no better than mine: we both require Socrates to see an implication from the conclusion that conflicts with another premise. The difference is that Dancy imports this premise from elsewhere whereas I supply the conflicting premise through a plausible interpretation of a premise in the same argument. All things considered, if one can find the resources within the argument itself, why not rely on those premises without looking elsewhere? I maintain that my argument is a more economical recreation of what Socrates says in that I needn't bring in a principle not implied by the argument itself.

One of the better points made in Dancy's interpretation, however, is that Socrates doesn't indicate that the argument is a *reductio ad absurdum*. If he did, he would recognize some kind of contradiction. Instead, he says that Euthyphro doesn't answer the question he asked.

- (1) *Euthyphr.* 8A10-13: Then you did not answer what I asked, surprising man. For I did not ask you what happens to be same in being pious and impious, what is god-loved and god-hated, so it seems. (Οὐκ ἄρα ὁ ἡρόμην ἀπεκρίνω, ὃ θαυμάσιε. οὐ γὰρ τοῦτό γε ἡρώτων, ὃ τυγχάνει ταῦτόν ὄν ὁσιόν τε καὶ ἀνόσιον. ὃ δ' ἂν θεοφιλὲς ἦ καὶ θεομισὲς ἐστίν, ὥς ἔοικεν.)

Thus, the conclusion to this argument shouldn't be read as a contradiction because Socrates recognizes that some things can be both pious and impious in the same way that modesty can be good and not good, as he does in *Charmides*. So, we needn't attribute to Socrates that there's a contradiction in some x being both pious and impious. After all, he even says in *Hippias Major* that some things are beautiful and not beautiful. So, surely these are not contradictions either.

Yet we should be clear that Socrates derives the conclusion of *Euthyphro* 6E10-8A8 from a number of premises he doesn't believe. Euthyphro claims that the gods quarrel and Socrates comes close to denying it. So, if Socrates thinks that some things can be both pious and impious, this is not a problem. The problem comes in when in summarizing Euthyphro's claim, Socrates gets his assent that the set of pious things has no overlap with the set of impious things. As the pious and the impious are completely opposed to one another for the purposes of this argument, then the set of pious things and the set of impious things are disjoint sets. So, the contradiction with the conclusion comes out in this premise.

So, now we leave the passage at *Euthyphro* 6E3-6, with its supposed request for a paradigm, and its attendant argument that supposedly relies on the self-predication condition. The argument may be read easily without relying on the self-predication requirement and thus obviating the need to commit Socrates to the paradigm condition. But this is not to say that Socrates is not interested in standards of some kind. I do not deny that he is interested in distinguishing F's from not F's.

In the next section, I introduce a deeper point in connection with Socrates search for standards. I believe that it is a mistake to suppose that the definition Socrates procures should automatically provide a way of distinguishing F's from not F's. The mistake comes from viewing an account of Socratic definition in too contemporary of a way. Even if an answer to "what is F-ness?" provides a usable standard for determining cases of F, it may not be like what we'd expect. And I think that this has been overlooked in some of the work on Socratic definition.

## B. Criteria and Standards

It would be worthwhile here to refresh our memories of the main passage thought of as expressing the paradigm condition:

- (1) *Euthyphr.* 6E3-6: Then *teach* me what this form itself is, so that I *may look upon* it and using it as a *model* I may say that if anything either you or some other does is such as this, it is pious, and if it isn't such as this, say that it isn't pious.  
(Ταύτην τοίνυν με αὐτὴν δίδασσον τὴν ἰδέαν τίς ποτέ ἐστιν, ἢν α εἰς ἐκείνην ἀποβλέπων καὶ χρώμενος αὐτῇ παραδείγματι, ὃ μὲν ἂν τοιοῦτον ἦ ὧν ἂν ἢ σὺ ἢ ἄλλος τις πράττει φῶ ὅσιον εἶναι, ὃ δ' ἂν μὴ τοιοῦτον, μὴ φῶ.)

We should notice first that Socrates expects Euthyphro to teach (δίδασσον) him what the pious is. This suggests perhaps that there is much more involved in fulfilling his

request.<sup>11</sup> I expect that the work in distinguishing F's from not F's will require something more substantial than the mere possession of a definition.

I now turn to *Laches* in order to illustrate how a different way of distinguishing F's from not F's is relevant to Socrates' search for a standard. Some commentators have mistakenly identified Socrates' search for ways of distinguishing F's with possessing the criteria, e.g. an adequate definition. In fact, *Laches* is the perfect dialogue for this discussion since one commentator at least thinks Socrates would reject Nicias' answer to "what is courage?" as the knowledge of good and evil because it does not provide a usable standard for the solution of practical problems. But that is to identify the discriminating capacity with the mere possession of criteria for distinguishing. Or so I argue. Once we take this epistemological point seriously, we can see its relationship when we return to Socrates' examples of standards in *Euthyphro*.

B.1. *Laches* 196D-199E: The conflict in Nicias' account of courage.

Like the argument at *Euthyphro* 6E10-8A8, this argument, too, has the structure of a *reductio ad absurdum*. The argument has the following structure:<sup>12</sup>

- (1) Courage is the knowledge of the fearful and the hopeful.\* (196D1)
- (2) Courage is a part of virtue.\* (198A1)
- (3) The fearful and the hopeful are future evils and future goods or non-evils. (198C3-4)

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<sup>11</sup> Benson makes this point with regard to this passage in particular: it is likely that it reveals a deeper epistemological point (2000: 145).

<sup>12</sup> This is adapted from Penner (1992).

- (4) So, Courage is the knowledge of future evils and future goods or non-evils. [from (1) and (3); (198C6-7)]
- (5) Knowledge with respect to future things of a particular kind just is knowledge with respect to all things of a particular kind. (199A6-8)
- (6) So, Courage is the knowledge of all goods and evils. (199C6-7)
- (7) Virtue as a whole is the knowledge of all goods and evils.\* [from (4) and (5); (199E3-4)]
- (8) So, if courage is the same as virtue, then it cannot be a part of it. So, courage both is and is not a part of virtue. [from (2) and (6) and suggested by (199E9)]

As one commentator puts it, most scholars agree that this is how the argument goes, where they disagree is on which premise should be rejected. In the reconstruction above, I've starred the premises that are the typical candidates for rejection: (1) Courage is the knowledge of the fearful and the hopeful, (2) Courage is a part of virtue, and (7) virtue is the knowledge of all goods and evils.

Penner, for example, argues that (1) cannot be rejected for two reasons: it is introduced by Nicias as something he has often heard Socrates say, to which Socrates agrees, (194D1-E1) and it complements a passage in *Protagoras* where Socrates argues for just this account of courage (360C-D). In the end, Penner argues that (2) courage is a part of virtue is the culprit, which should be rejected and that is indeed what Socrates means for us to see. I'm not going to appeal to Penner's argument, though I think he is right. Nor will I take up the relative merits and disadvantages of his view about why we should see that (2) is the questionable premise. Adapting his reconstruction of the argument serves my main purpose: to illustrate that according to another commentator,

Socrates means for us to see that (7), virtue is knowledge of good and evil, is the offending premise.<sup>13</sup>

One of the definitional conditions Kraut attributes to Socrates is that a definition of virtue must provide a usable standard for deciding which acts are virtuous.<sup>14</sup> Rejecting (2) is unlikely for the fact that Socrates introduces the premise himself. Socrates' commitment to the "standard condition" as we may put it, reveals why (7) should be the offending premise: virtue as the knowledge of good and evil fails to provide a usable standard for determining virtuous instances. Kraut's opinion on the Socratic search for standards is worth quoting in its entirety:

- (1) What he [Socrates] is searching for is a particular piece of knowledge that he can always look to as a definitive guide to the solution of practical problems. That is a standard of definition that "knowledge of good and evil" does not come close to satisfying.<sup>15</sup>

I think that it's easy to consider why Kraut might suppose that "knowledge of good and evil" couldn't provide a usable standard: How would someone in the possession of a definition of virtue as the knowledge of good and evil apply such a definition in order to determine whether a particular action is virtuous or not? Some of Socrates' other sample definitions exemplify-presumably in most cases- the kind of definition he wants. These definitions that are aimed at guiding interlocutors into answering how he wishes bear some likeness to the definitions of geometers, especially in the respect that they provide a usable standard. Simple possession of these sorts of definitions suggests that one can tell

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<sup>13</sup> There is some suggestion that the ἀπορία at the end of this dialogue is genuine, no less for Socrates than for his interlocutors. See Kraut (1984: 254-262).

<sup>14</sup> Ibid, 254

<sup>15</sup> Ibid, 256

immediately whether something falls under the definition, just by applying it. One example in particular is worth mentioning in this regard:

- (2) *Men.* 76A7: Shape=<sub>df</sub>the limit of a solid (στερεοῦ πέρας σχῆμα εἶναι).

With respect to this definition in particular, Santas argues that such a definition would enhance someone's capacity to defend a judgment that something is of this particular kind.<sup>16</sup> Relative to defending judgments, this definition fulfills that purpose better than others, according to Santas. This purpose of defending judgments can be connected to Socrates' search for standards by which to judge F's.

On the other hand, it isn't clear to me why "knowledge of good and evil" couldn't be as a workable standard once we consider Socrates' other sample definitions; we are assuming, in advance, that his sample definitions would satisfy this way of telling F's from not F's. But take a look at his sample definition for quickness:

- (3) *La.* 192A9-B3: Quickness=<sub>df</sub>the capacity of accomplishing much in a short time (εἵτοιμ' ἂν αὐτῷ ὅτι τὴν ἐν ὀλίγῳ χρόνῳ πολλὰ διαπραττομένην δύναμιν ταχυτήτα).

This example of a model definition supplied by Socrates himself doesn't provide a usable standard, either, at least not in the way that his "limit of a solid" definition of shape does. So, if Socrates' own sample definitions do not fulfill the expectations of a *paradigmatic* standard, according to Kraut, should we then persist in denying that "knowledge of good and evil" comes nowhere near being a usable standard, or should we adjust our notion of what we think Socrates might mean as a way of distinguishing? I believe that we can

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<sup>16</sup> See Santas (1979: 133-134).

answer this question affirmatively once we return to Plato's *Euthyphro*. Socrates' own types of standards are much wider than some commentators suppose.

## B.2. *Euthyphro* 7B6-C8 Reprise

We return to *Euthyphro*, and to the passage that I skimmed over earlier where Socrates justifies the sorts of things that the gods are likely to argue about.<sup>17</sup> In this passage, Socrates offers ways of distinguishing that are akin perhaps to what Kraut expects, but one of these ways of distinguishing isn't readily amenable to the others. This suggests that Socrates' notion of a standard may be much wider than Kraut expects, and much wider than the notion of a paradigm. My suggestion is that an adequate definition *could* function like a geometer's definition or as a paradigm, but together with the considerations noted above, it needn't *necessarily* be a paradigm.

Socrates discussion of quarreling comes into parts: he first establishes the subjects of difference among people, then he diagnoses why these subjects in particular are the matters of dispute.

- (1) *Euthyphr.* 7C10-D5: Concerning what matters for dispute are we angry and irritated with one another when we are unable to come to a decision? Perhaps you do not have a ready answer, but examine as I tell you whether the matters are the just and the unjust, the beautiful and the ugly, the good and the bad. Are these not the matters for dispute about which, when we are unable to come to a satisfactory decision, you and I and all other men become angry with one another whenever we do? (Περὶ τίνος δὲ δὴ διενεχθέντες καὶ ἐπὶ τίνα κρίσιν οὐ δυνάμενοι ἀφικέσθαι ἐχθροὶ γε ἂν ἀλλήλοις εἶμεν καὶ ὀργιζοίμεθα; ἴσως οὐ πρόχειρόν σοί ἐστιν, ἀλλ' ἔμοῦ λέγοντος σκόπει εἰ τάδε ἐστὶ τό τε δίκαιον καὶ τὸ ἄδικον καὶ καλὸν καὶ αἰσχρὸν καὶ ἀγαθὸν καὶ κακόν. ἄρα οὐ ταῦτά ἐστιν περὶ ὧν διενεχθέντες καὶ οὐ δυνάμενοι ἐπὶ ἱκανὴν κρίσιν αὐτῶν

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<sup>17</sup> See pg. 173, premise (3).

ἐλθεῖν ἐχθροὶ ἀλλήλοις γιγνώμεθα, ὅταν γιγνώμεθα, καὶ ἐγὼ καὶ σὺ καὶ οἱ ἄλλοι ἄνθρωποι πάντες;)

The purpose of this passage is to get Euthyphro to recognize the sorts of things we argue about, i.e. the same sorts of things that the dialogues are about. So, it shouldn't be surprising either to us or to Socrates' interlocutor that these are the subjects of disagreement.

In distinguishing the matters of dispute from the matters that are easily resolved, Socrates puts mathematical matters among those about which we do not argue: (1) measuring two objects to determine which is larger; (2) weighing two objects to determine which is heavier; (2) counting numbers to determine which of two numbers is greater. In so doing, Socrates also explains why anything would be a matter of dispute: a lack of a standard.

- (2) *Euthyphr.* 7B7-C8: Look at it this way. If you and I were to differ about the greater of two numbers, would this difference make us enemies and angry with one another, or would we proceed to count and soon dismiss the matter?...Again, if we differed about the larger and the smaller, we would turn to measurement and soon cease to differ...And if we stood likewise about the heavier and the lighter, we would resort to weighing and be reconciled. (ὧδε δὲ σκοπῶμεν. ἂρ' ἂν εἰ διαφεροίμεθα ἐγὼ τε καὶ σὺ περὶ ἀριθμοῦ ὁπότερα πλείω, ἢ περὶ τούτων διαφορὰ ἐχθροὺς ἂν ἡμᾶς ποιοῖ καὶ ὀργίζεσθαι ἀλλήλοις, ἢ ἐπὶ λογισμὸν ἐλθόντες περὶ γε τῶν τοιούτων ταχὺ ἂν ἀπαλλαγείμεν; Οὐκοῦν καὶ περὶ τοῦ μείζονος καὶ ἐλάττονος εἰ διαφεροίμεθα, ἐπὶ τὸ μετρεῖν ἐλθόντες ταχὺ παύσαιμεθ' ἂν τῆς διαφορᾶς; Καὶ ἐπὶ γε τὸ ἰστάναι ἐλθόντες, ὥς ἐγῶμαι, περὶ τοῦ βαρυτέρου τε καὶ κουφοτέρου διακριθεῖμεν ἂν;)

Since Euthyphro claims that the gods quarrel among one another, Socrates goes some way to explain that it is likely that they quarrel about the same things people do

(*Euthyphr.* 7C10-D9). The sources of enmity among people are the same as the sources

of enmity among the gods. We disagree only when we lack a usable standard, or method for determining cases falling under the *definiendum*. And so it is the case with the gods, if indeed they argue at all.

With these examples of standards in hand, we can see why one would attribute the paradigm commitment to Socrates: two of the methods Socrates identifies as standards, measuring and weighing, fit nicely with the paradigm model: they are both ways of telling that are self-predicative. The meter-stick analogy is tailor-made for the method of measurement: how does one know if something is a meter long? By measuring it with a meter, or something else that's a meter long. How else? Even weighing one item against another fits the paradigm model nicely. In a typical ancient system of weights, objects called *παραδείγματα* acted as standards on one side of the scale, whereas the object to be weighed stood on the other side.<sup>18</sup> These *παραδείγματα* had certain specified weights themselves, which is how they were able to function as standards in the first place.

The word translated as “counting” in most translations is accurate in that in the Greek, *ἐπὶ λογισμὸν*, often had a wider scope, encompassing all sorts of practical calculation.<sup>19</sup> This is to be distinguished of course from arithmetic proper, which is the theory of numbers. Logistic, which is a more cognate translation with the Greek, included all the customary arithmetic operations like addition and subtraction, et al. But it also included operations that we would normally place under elementary algebra, where they

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<sup>18</sup> See Heath (1963: 1-10).

<sup>19</sup> Ibid

would solve simple equations with one unknown, as well as more sophisticated, indeterminate equations.<sup>20</sup>

The point of this discussion is that counting as a usable standard involves much more than simply applying a definition. It involves internalizing the art of reckoning in order to be able to determine which of two numbers is greater. Counting is not something that one does haphazardly, perhaps starting at 1 and then moving to 5 and then back to 2. One must understand *how* to count, and further, if a dispute arises about which of two numbers is greater, and then in order to resolve this dispute, both you and your companion must know how to count. The example of counting as a method for determining F's from not F's should make us suspicious that the criteria Socrates expects and an answer to "what is F-ness?" for determining F's from not F's is being stretched beyond a conventional understanding of usable standard. But that shouldn't be surprising since Socrates regularly stretches the ordinary understanding of just about everything.<sup>21</sup>

### C. Conclusion

The main focus of this chapter is an argument against attributing to Socrates the paradigm condition: if F-ness=<sub>df</sub> G-ness, then G-ness is a paradigm for determining F's. But in arguing against this condition, I do not wish to imply that Socrates does not expect an adequate definition will be a way of telling F's from not F's. There are other ways to do that beyond having paradigms, as I explained. How the paradigm commitment arises is from two sources: Socrates' statement that he wants an answer that he can use as a

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<sup>20</sup> See Heath (1963: 6).

<sup>21</sup> See Vlastos' comment on Socrates' stretching of the ordinary concept of courage far beyond military contexts (1976: 412).

model (παράδειγματι) and his commitment to self-predication. The commitment to self-predication is this: if  $F\text{-ness} =_{df} G\text{-ness}$ , then  $G\text{-ness}$  is in every circumstance  $F$  and in no circumstances not  $F$ . His commitment to self-predication is the grounds for the paradigm condition. The evidence for the self-predication condition comes from two sources: numerous passages where he states that  $F\text{-ness}$  is  $F$ , and his reliance on the self-predication condition at *Euthyphro* 6E10-8A8 against Euthyphro's definition of the pious as what the gods love. I argue that *Euthyphro* 6E10-8A8 can be read as a *reductio ad absurdum*. As such, it doesn't rely on the self-predication requirement. As far as the numerous uncontroversial passages where Socrates states that  $F\text{-ness}$  is  $F$ , this is better read as a commitment to statements of this sort being semantically complete.

My thesis of this chapter is not that Socrates wouldn't allow definitions as paradigms as ways of telling, only that he's not committed to them. This is because his own sample definitions often do not act as paradigms, and a passage in *Laches* that is sometimes thought of evidence for Socrates' commitment to paradigms can be easily read differently. My suggestion is that Socratic criteria for determining  $F$ 's from not  $F$ 's is wider than the notion which is sometimes attributed to him.

## Chapter VIII

### Conclusions

Philosophically sophisticated texts invite new speculation over and over again. If so, Plato's dialogues are the zenith of philosophical sophistication. This project began with a question anyone might have in reading Plato's dialogues for the first time: What does this character Socrates, who needles, cajoles and sometimes shames others into answering his questions about virtue, expect? Such a simple question invites us to speculate deeply on the aim of the complicated discussions between Socrates and his interlocutors.

At the end of such a project, it is important to recount my interpretive position, to summarize the highlights of the research, and to offer new directions for development.

#### A. Interpretation

At first glance, one might get the impression that nothing particularly coherent lay behind Socrates' cajoling; his main purpose, as he says himself in *Apology*, is to examine those with a reputation for wisdom, and to eliminate their conceit if they turn out not to know what they claim to know. On the way to eliminating their conceit, he reduces them to perplexity. Socrates extols the effect of being perplexed-in *ἀπορία*-as salutary. Only then will one be inspired to find out what he does not know. This leads to a further question: having been stung by the Athenian gadfly, in what way are we better off? Socrates says in *Meno* that we will be braver and less idle if we assume that we can find out what we do not know than assume that it is impossible to find out what we do not know. He offers us here a prudential reason for continuing our search. Armed with this

rudimentary understanding, we may reflect upon the dialogues *Charmides*, *Laches*, *Euthyphro*, *Republic* Book I, *Meno*, *Hippias Major*, *Protagoras*, and *Gorgias*, whose conclusions seem so negative. We could be convinced easily that the sole purpose of Socrates' investigations is to stimulate our own intellectual curiosity by forcing us to recognize that we are ignorant in matters about which we are so certain. We needn't worry about getting clear answers because seeking the answers, and not necessarily getting them, is the important part.

This view about the purpose of Socratic inquiry persists strongly. A consequence of this view seems to be that an investigation into the presuppositions held by the character Socrates is bound to obscure the main purpose of his questions, which is to take us into perplexity where we realize our own ignorance of the most important matters. We will also realize, ideally, that in such a state, we are much better off.<sup>1</sup>

The open-ended nature of some of Plato's dialogues suggest that philosophical inquiry is beneficial for its own sake. But I was not completely convinced that this is all there is to it. I thought that on a deeper level, Socrates' presuppositions that lay behind his insistent questioning could be recovered from two sources: (1) his objections to particular answers, and (2) his explanations of his expectations, where he often supplies model answers. Thus, even if no one ever gives him the answer he wants, we can still come to know the conditions any answer would have to meet. The dialogues of search, as they are sometimes called, become the impetus and focus of this research.

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<sup>1</sup> The end of the *Laches* is the only dialogue of this group that ends optimistically. Most of the other interlocutors scurry away like Euthyphro, or threaten Socrates, like Meno. One wonders why it is so rare for one in perplexity to react as Socrates does: to seek out what he doesn't know rather than to feel shame and run away, so to speak, from his ignorance. This is a question for future research.

I could not choose at random from among Plato's dialogues for evidence. If I could have chosen passages at random, I would have concentrated on *Republic* Book IV, where Socrates gives his own answer to "what is justice?" His own answer to "what is justice?" in the individual is that it is a harmony of the soul: each part doing the work to which it is best suited, and not meddling in the work of the other parts. I couldn't use his account of the soul as a model for his expectations in the more aporetic dialogues because according to a well-entrenched and developed tradition, there are actually two Socrateses in the dialogues: one who represents the views of early Plato, which more or less correspond to the views of Socrates the man, and another whose interests develop well beyond the interests of historical Socrates. It seemed plausible to me that Plato changed his mind over the course of what must have been a long period of composition in the dialogues. It also seemed plausible to me that in his early period, Plato articulated the views of his teacher, which sparked him to develop his own. Since I chose not to argue against this tradition, I had to locate my work within it. In any case, the arguments I have made do not depend on this chronology. Rather they are accommodated by it. This is why this project is called "Socratic" rather than "Platonic," though Plato, and not Socrates, is the author of the dialogues.

Among the dialogues included as background to my discussion, the *Laches*, *Charmides*, and *Euthyphro* have often been called, "definitional" dialogues. They are so-called because their structure typically suggests that Socrates and his interlocutor are trying to answer the questions, "what is courage?" "what is temperance?" and "what is the pious?" In other words, these dialogues are wholly occupied with trying to *define* what courage, temperance and the pious are. This is why interpretations of Socratic

definitions usually rely heavily on these dialogues in particular. This brings me to my next point: Since there are many different kinds of definitions, I had to ask what sort of definition Socrates expected.

I had to accommodate that it isn't likely that there is a best definition *simpliciter*, only definitions suited to a specific purpose. So, the best definition is relative to the purpose at hand. The big debate was whether Socrates expected some kind of nominal definition or a real definition. A nominal definition gives the linguistic meaning of a noun or expression. A real definition specifies the metaphysically necessary and sufficient conditions for anything to be of a certain kind. The nominal definition of "water" would be in terms of its obvious sensible properties. "Water" means "colorless, odorless liquid found in lakes, rivers, etc. drunk by most land animals and used for bathing," or something like that. The real definition of "water" would be "H<sub>2</sub>O." It is unlikely that Socrates expects a nominal definition because of all the things he expects a definition to do. He and his interlocutors are engaged in the search for an account of the nature of virtue. This can be accurately described as a search for a real definition of virtue. But the search for a real definition covers a great deal of ground.

The search for a real definition has been associated with at least twelve different kinds of activity, including a search for the identity of meaning among expressions, a search for an essence, a search for a cause, a search for an ideal exemplar, and a search for a universal.<sup>2</sup> All of these different kinds of activities can be plausibly attributed to Socrates. So, at least at this level, "Socratic definition" acts a lot like a placeholder before more specific, precise conditions on Socratic definitions can be argued.

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<sup>2</sup> See Robinson (1954: 189).

It is not surprising the vagueness that characterizes a lot of work on Socratic definition: As with any well-discussed tradition in the secondary literature, there is little consensus on what to call Socrates' commitments and how best to describe them. This is where a more formal and abstract approach to Socrates' definitional commitments can be helpful. One of my aims in this project was to clarify the terms of debate in Socratic definition. I moved away from the metaphorical language in which Socratic definition is often discussed. Discussion about whether a definition is too wide or too narrow is not as perspicuous as discussion of whether a definition satisfies extensional equivalence. While I advocate this more precise approach to Socratic definition, others might fairly object that it is anachronistic. But I cannot see how philosophical progress can be made if we do not make use of the tools developed in order to serve the interests of clarity and exposition. We may use these tools to guide our understanding even if the texts to which they are applied were written long before such tools were developed. I don't want to give the impression that I am alone in this. A number of commentators have employed a more formal analysis of Socratic definition. I just emphasize the benefit of doing so. This is why, for example, I refer to Socrates definitional commitments as conditions on F-ness, where "F-ness" is supposed to stand for "courage" or "virtue" or "temperance" or "the fine" or "the pious." The conditions don't vary with respect to the different F-nesses.

In the next section, I reiterate the definitional conditions I've argued for attributing to Socrates in this dissertation. I also discuss some of the more interesting parts of the arguments involved in supporting these conditions, and where I argue for them. I then conclude the section by discussing a concern which I did not address, but is likely to be the subject of future research.

## B. Highlights of Research

In chapter three, I argued that Socrates is committed to extensional equivalence by pointing out that such a presupposition explains how he criticizes a number of different arguments. His interlocutors fail to provide a necessary or a sufficient condition for F-ness. The condition is the following: If  $F\text{-ness} =_{df} G\text{-ness}$ , then any F is G and any G is F. So, either the proposed definition is F but not G or G but not F. I explained that a passage where Socrates says he would be content if Meno were to give him a definition of virtue that satisfies *only* this condition can be read another way. The context of the passage suggests that he is instructing Meno to answer in this way, but he does not thereby commit himself to only this condition. This is at the end of chapter three.

I argued in chapter four for the property sameness condition. I call it “sameness” rather than “identity” which is the choice of some commentators. “Sameness” does not imply numerical identity, whereas “sameness” is more appropriate to things that are the same in genus or species. This is borrowed from Aristotle’s discussion of  $\tau\alpha\upsilon\tau\acute{o}\nu$  often translated as “same.” Socrates repeatedly uses this same word when he explains what he wants. Socrates also expects, as he does in *Laches*, that Laches will give him a definition of courage that is the same in all and only courageous people. The condition for property sameness is the following: If  $F\text{-ness} =_{df} G\text{-ness}$ , then F-ness is the same as G-ness. I argue that Socrates relies on this principle when he refutes Charmides’ definition of temperance as modesty. The argument structure shows that Socrates’ relies on Leibniz’s Law, which shows him to be committed to the identity of F-ness and G-ness, even though  $\tau\alpha\upsilon\tau\acute{o}\nu$  can be translated in a couple of different ways.

In chapter five, I address one of the toughest arguments in Plato's dialogues: *Euthyphro* 9B-11B. The salient issue here is whether Socrates relies on a substitution principle of definitional equivalents in his argument against Euthyphro's definition of the pious as what all the gods love. I argue that Socrates needn't rely on substitution of definitional equivalents for his argument. Rather, he relies on the explanation condition, which is uncontroversial, and transitivity in explanatory contexts. The explanation condition is the following: If  $F\text{-ness} =_{df} G\text{-ness}$ , then for anything that is  $F$ , it is because it is  $G$ . To serve the end of clarifying and establishing the terms of debate on this argument, I produced two proofs of how Socrates' argument might go at this passage: one relies on a substitution principle of definitional equivalents, and the other relies on transitivity. I argue that we should prefer the argument that relies on transitivity. I supply the proofs below.

### B.1. Substitutivity

- |      |   |   |
|------|---|---|
| (1)  | $P =_{df} G$  | (Euthyphro's definition at 9E1-3)       |
| (2)  | $L \text{ bec } P$                                  | (Premise accepted at 10D5)              |
| (3)  | $G \text{ bec } L$                                  | (Premise accepted at 10D9-10)           |
|      |   |   |
| (2a) | $L \text{ bec } G$                                  | [(1), (2) Substitution]                 |
| (2b) | $\sim (G \text{ bec } L)$                           | [Priority from (2a)]                    |
| (2c) | $(G \text{ bec } L) \ \& \ \sim (G \text{ bec } L)$ | [(3), (2b) &I]                          |
|      |   |   |
| (3a) | $P \text{ bec } L$                                  | [(1), (3) Substitution]                 |
| (3b) | $\sim (P \text{ bec } L)$                           | [Priority from (2)]                     |
| (3c) | $(P \text{ bec } L) \ \& \ \sim (P \text{ bec } L)$ | [(2), (3b) &I]                          |
|      |   |   |
| (4)  | $\sim (P =_{df} G)$                                 | [(1)-(3c) <i>Reductio Ad Absurdum</i> ] |

## B.2. Transitivity and Explanation

- (1)  $P =_{df} G$  (Euthyphro's definition at 9E1-3)
- (2)  $L \text{ bec } P$  (Premise accepted at 10D5)
- (3)  $G \text{ bec } L$  (Premise accepted at 10D9-10)
  - (3a)  $G \text{ bec } P$  [(2), (3) Transitivity]
  - (3b)  $(F\text{-ness} =_{df} G\text{-ness}) \rightarrow (F \text{ bec } G)$  [Explanation Condition]
  - (3c)  $(P \text{ bec } G)$  [(1), (3b) *Modus Ponens*]
  - (3d)  $\sim (G \text{ bec } P)$  [Priority from (3c)]
  - (3e)  $(G \text{ bec } P) \ \& \ \sim (G \text{ bec } P)$  [(3a), (3d) &I]
- (4)  $\sim (P =_{df} G)$  [(1)-(3e) *Reductio Ad Absurdum*]

I argue against the reading that relies on a substitution principle of definitional equivalents because of its negative consequences. For example, if “father” were a definitional equivalent of “male parent,” then they can be substituted for one another, according to this principle. The way the principle is described, however, would permit the substitution that would allow both: (1) someone is a father because he is a male parent and (2) someone is a father because he is a father. (1) is true, but (2) is false.

In chapter six, I tackle Socrates' semantic commitments, which is difficult without the distinction between what sorts of things are genuinely courageous and what sorts of things are called “courageous,” and between what is genuinely pious and what is called “pious.” Some commentators have ignored this difference, supposing that Socrates is committed to supporting ordinary linguistic practice about F things. In other words, an adequate definition should generally reflect the terminology of the interlocutors. Aside from the difficulty of supposing why Socrates should think that, I argue in this chapter that he is not committed to such a thesis about what ordinary people call things. So, I first

formalized this commitment to ordinary linguistic practice in the following way: If F-ness<sub>df</sub> G-ness, then any G is generally called F and anything generally called F is G. I then argued against both parts of this principle.

So, while Socrates is not committed to any particular claims about F's, he is committed to certain statements about F-nesses. He assumes that statements of the form, "F-ness is F" and "F-ness is G" are semantically complete. This means that such statements do not change their truth value from context to context. A number of his arguments depend on these claims.

In chapter seven, I argue against the paradigm condition: If F-ness<sub>df</sub> G-ness, then G-ness is a paradigm for determining F's. I argue against this condition because of what is assumed in the paradigm condition: it is a way of determining F's that is itself F. I argue that Socrates probably wants some kind of standard for determining F's, but the standard he has in mind is not *necessarily* a paradigm; his notion of standard, suggested by his examples, is much wider than a paradigm. One of the commentators who thinks Socrates is committed to the paradigm condition thinks that he is also committed to the self-predication condition, which is the following: F-ness<sub>df</sub> G-ness, then G-ness is under all circumstances F and under no circumstances not F. His commitment to self-predication, so it is argued, explains how he expects to meet the paradigm condition. More importantly, this commentator argues that *Euthyphro* 6E10-8A8 illustrates Socrates' reliance on self-predication. I have often thought that this argument in particular was an undisputed example of how Socrates can only show the inconsistency in the claims of his interlocutor.

### B.3. *Euthyphro* 6E10-8A8 Revisited

Socrates' method of examining his interlocutors has come to be known as the Socratic elenchus, so-called because of his use of the word ἐλέγχειν. Socrates describes his aim in testing those who have some claim to knowledge in *Apology*. This much is uncontroversial. More controversial is what his arguments against particular definitions can show, and what he takes them to show. Does Socrates demonstrate the falsity of his interlocutors' definitions, or does he show only that their definitions are inconsistent with other claims they make? The non-constructivist reading of Socrates' elenchus is that he can only show inconsistency among premises, and that's all he claims to do. Constructivist interpreters, on the other hand, claim that Socrates recognizes a difference between the interlocutors' definitions and other premises involved in the argument. These other premises, it is held, have some greater share of the truth. The non-constructivist argues that Socrates recognizes no such special status in these supplementary premises.

The argument at *Euthyphro* 6E10-8A8 has played an important role in the non-constructivist reading of the elenchus. It is a classic example of a Socratic argument with the structure of a *reductio ad absurdum*. As such, it shows only the inconsistency among the premises, and Socrates does not grant special status to the subsidiary premises; in fact, he *denies* that they are plausible. One of the premises is that the gods quarrel. Socrates makes it clear in at least two places that he finds such a view hard to believe.

Recently, viewing this argument as a *reductio ad absurdum* has come under fire. One commentator argues that the structure of the argument is not a *reductio ad absurdum* because Socrates recognizes no contradiction in what Euthyphro claims. The conflict in

the argument comes between the conclusion and another condition held by Socrates: the self-predication requirement. The self-predication requirement is the following: if F-ness= $\text{df}$  G-ness, then G-ness is in all circumstances F and in no circumstances not F. Euthyphro's definition of the pious as what the gods love does not satisfy this requirement. That's why his definition fails, it is supposed. In other words, when Socrates concludes at this argument that the same things are both pious and impious, this conflicts with a prior principle he doesn't argue for, but assumes even before the argument is developed.

I argued in chapter seven that the conflict in this argument comes not between the conclusion and the self-predication requirement, but between the conclusion and the second premise. The second premise of this argument is that the god-loved action and person is pious while the god-hated action and person is impious **AND** the pious is completely opposed to the impious. This second premise implies that there is nothing that is both pious and impious. The conclusion is that there is at least one thing that is pious and impious. And therein lay the conflict. So, there is a contradiction here, it is just implied by the premises.

I'm still uncertain that the conditions for which I have argued he is committed are jointly sufficient for an answer. There are surely to be other epistemological requirements for an adequate answer, which are not constraints on the answer *per se*. What I've discovered is that there may be much more to what Socrates expects than producing an answer that meets these conditions. This could be a direction for future research.

### C. Future Directions

To extend my work beyond the Socratic dialogues of search, I must answer three questions: What is the role of definition in the other dialogues? Does Plato modify the criteria for good definitions? Why does Plato seem committed to definitions conforming to pre-analytic claims about what is F?

In the dialogues I discuss in this dissertation, Socrates and his interlocutors are wholly engaged in the discovery of definitions, and the reader is left to wonder whether any of the definitions is adequate. These dialogues are ripe for interpretation since we cannot witness what is supposed to happen once an adequate definition is found. In other dialogues, Socrates moves away from this discovery of definitions and his careful scrutiny of them. In some cases, as in the case of *Republic* Book IV, he even produces a definition of justice. So, one might wonder how the role of definitions changes in the dialogues. Other dialogues to look at in this regard are *Theaetetus*, and *Sophist*.

If the conception of Socratic definition changes in the other dialogues, we might wonder why and in what respects. One interpreter has suggested that the Platonic conception of definition is by genus and differentia, whereas Socratic definition includes that as well, but is not exclusively that.<sup>3</sup> This isn't interesting if this is the only difference between Platonic and Socratic definitions. What would be more interesting is to try to answer why the other dialogues are not about scrutinizing definitions put forward by Socrates or the interlocutors.

It has been suggested that Plato seems committed to accounts of F-ness conforming to pre-analytic judgments about F's. At *Republic* 442E, for example, Socrates

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<sup>3</sup> See Nakhnikian (1971: 143).

asks Glaucon whether individual justice is any different from justice in the city. Glaucon agrees that it isn't. Socrates then says that if they had any doubts about whether the justice in an individual was different in kind, perhaps, from the justice in the city, they could dispel them by testing against ordinary cases. So, at least here in *Republic*, Socrates is checking this account of justice against ordinary judgments as some kind of adequacy test. It isn't clear to me that Socrates of the aporetic dialogues does the same sort of thing. I argued that he isn't committed to linguistic intuitions as a test for adequacy. Moreover, it isn't clear sometimes whether he's testing the definition, or the interlocutor himself. If he's testing the interlocutor himself, he is often testing the interlocutor's own definition against his own claims. Socrates sometimes denies these claims, and this is what gives them that *ad hominem* feel. Socrates distrust against what the many claim should also make us suspicious that he would rely on their judgments as adequacy tests *simpliciter*. So, if Plato is committed to supporting ordinary judgments, committed to descriptive adequacy, we might wonder why. We might wonder what led him to change his mind.

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## APPENDIX: LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

### Authors and Works:

#### Aristotle

*APo.* = *Analytica Posteriora*  
*APr.* = *Analytica Priora*  
*Cat.* = *Categoriae*  
*EN* = *Ethica Nicomachea*  
*Metaph.* = *Metaphysica*  
*Ph.* = *Physica*  
*Po.* = *Poetica*  
*Pol.* = *Politica*  
*SE* = *Sophistici Elenchi*  
*Top.* = *Topica*

#### Plato

*Ap.* = *Apologia*  
*Chrm.* = *Charmides*  
*Cri.* = *Crito*  
*Euthyd.* = *Euthydemus*  
*Euthyphr.* = *Euthyphro*  
*Grg.* = *Gorgias*  
*Hi. Ma., Mi.* = *Hippias Major, Minor*  
*Ion*  
*La.* = *Laches*  
*Ly.* = *Lysis*  
*Men.* = *Meno*  
*Mx.* = *Menexenus*  
*Phd.* = *Phaedo*  
*Phdr.* = *Phaedrus*  
*Prm.* = *Parmenides*  
*Prt.* = *Protagoras*  
*R.* = *Republica*  
*Smp.* = *Symposium*  
*Tht.* = *Theaetetus*  
*Ti.* = *Timaeus*