On Two Socratic Questions
Alex Priou

> What pointless images come up on account of a single word. Take the word *something*, for example. For me this is a dense cloud of steam that has the color of smoke. When I hear the word *nothing*, I also see a cloud, but one that is thinner, completely transparent. And when I try to seize a particle of this *nothing*, I get the most minute particles of *nothing*.[1]

The most famous Socratic question—*ti esti touto?*—is often preceded by a far less famous, but more fundamental question—*esti touto ti?* Thus we read, for example, in Plato's *Hippias Major*:

> *Socrates*: So, then, are not also all the beautiful things beautiful by the beautiful?
> *Hippias*: Yes, by the beautiful.
> *Soc.*: By this thing that is something *(tini)*?
> *Hipp.*: That is something, for what *(ti)* [else] is it going [to be]?
> *Soc.*: Say, then . . . what is this thing *(ti esti touto)*, the beautiful? (287c8-d3)[2]

Or, in the *Symposium*, where Socrates asks Agathon, "Is love love of nothing or of something?" (199e6-7) Aristotle implicitly affirms the priority of this question to its more famous counterpart by only claiming that there is a science of being after having confronted the "most difficult and necessary *aporia* of all to look into," namely, whether or not "there is something

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1. Luria 1968, 132.

2. All citations are to Plato and his *Euthyphro,* unless otherwise noted. All translations are my own.

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(esti ti) aside from the particulars," "something one and the same *(hen ti kai tauton)*" that would make such knowledge possible (cf. Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 999a24-9, 1003a21-2). Though this question is posed in many dialogues with respect to myriad topics,[3] in every instance it receives but one answer: it is something, namely something that is. The dialogue devoted to why this question always meets with an affirmative answer would appear to be the *Parmenides*, for there Parmenides throws into question whether the *eidē* are, only to establish that, if we have opinions that there is some unity in being, such unity must be.[4] Nevertheless, the dramatic setting of the *Parmenides* is the quarrelling of the Pre-Socratic schools, and the popular dismissal of philosophy that their quarrelling engendered. For a dialogue that establishes that the object of inquiry *is* simply because we have

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3. Some examples (by no means exhaustive): *Charmides* 161d1-5 and 168b2-4, *Parmenides* 132b7-c2, *Phaedo* 64c2-3, and *Theaetetus* 160a9-b4 and 163e4-7. Of course, Socrates often doesn't ask this preliminary question, perhaps with some reason for his silence in mind, the most obvious and necessary example being *Minos* 313a1.

4. This claim condenses the respective thrusts of the first and second parts of the *Parmenides.* Let the following suffice to establish the above claim. The second part's inquiry into the one that is preserves the intelligibility of unity without addressing the skepticism raised at the peak of the first part, i.e., the view that there is no access to the one that is or that the one simply is not (cf. 133a ff.). Parmenides addresses that skepticism in the final five deductions, which function as a reductio ad absurdum. This reductio culminates in a denial of unity not just in being—for being could nevertheless still always *appear* to be, without being—but in appearance and opinion, as well. This conclusion proves untenable, since as a matter of fact unity is opined to be—indeed, at many points during that very conversation. Thus the dialogue pushes us to the conclusion that is enough that unity is opined to be for it simply to be, i.e. for the claim that one is to be true, at least so far as human beings may recognize. It's on this point that the *Parmenides* and *Euthyphro* converge.

opinions about it, we must, as I hope to show, turn to the *Euthyphro*.[5]

From the very beginning of the dialogue, Socrates's whole way of life is in question. For an indictment has brought him to the stoa of the king, thus compelling him to leave his usual haunts in the Lyceum, where we find him in dialogues as early in his career as in the *Charmides* and as late as in the *Euthydemus* and *Lysis*.[6] To some extent, then, we share in Euthyphro's surprise at finding Socrates in such a place. Euthyphro expresses his surprise by asking Socrates, "Has something new *(ti neōteron)* come to be?" (2a1) Euthyphro's phrasing, quite unintentionally prescient, shows that more than Socrates's way of life is in question. For when Euthyphro later asks Socrates what Meletus claims Socrates does *(ti poiounta)*, Socrates will respond that Meletus claims that he makes new gods *(kainous poiounta tous theous)* (2a8-b4). Socrates appears to have made a new *ti,* a new something or what, and so to have radically revised how we think about nouns.[7] Not (just) Socrates, but his question is on trial (cf. *Apology* 22e6-3b4). Euthyphro, however, understands Meletus to mean by these "new gods" Socrates's *daimonion,* and thus takes Socrates to be his fellow religious innovator, to be something of an ally.[8] But they are in many ways quite different. Whereas Euthyphro expresses the utmost pride in his wisdom,

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5. "The theoretical or methodological assumption (that to ask about piety is to ask about an idea or form), if it is to be something more than an assumption, requires a non-methodological—a conversational or dialectical—justification" (Bruell 1999, 127).

6. Cf. Bruell 1999, 118.

7. Cf. Davis 2011, 217.

8. Religious innovators, of course, could hardly ever be allies.—Geach 1966, 369 follows Euthyphro's interpretation of the accusation. Burger 2015, 25-7 and Strauss 1996, 15 suggest that these gods may be Socrates's *eidē*. Meletus's use of the plural in every version of the accusation we have suffices to dismiss Geach's proposal (cf. *Apology* 24b8-c1; Xenophon, *Memorabilia*, I.1.1; Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of the Eminent Philosophers,* II.40). Cf. Bruell 1999, 118-20.

Socrates expresses shock when he first hears about Euthyphro's unorthodoxy and closes by cautioning him against deviating from orthodoxy.[9] To be sure, Socrates seems unique in his (however ironic) respect, if not reverence, for Euthyphro, even going so far as to say he is a desirer of Euthyphro's wisdom, though others laugh at him (14d4, 3b9-c2). Nevertheless, the situation is not one of two religious innovators, but of two men with some inclination toward unorthodoxy. The one succumbs; the other resists. If Socrates is not so unorthodox as he initially appears, then to what extent is his allegedly new "what," his *ti,* in reality new? To what extent is Socratic philosophy latent in orthodoxy itself?[10]

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9. Euthyphro twice affirms his wisdom with an oath by Zeus (cf. 4a12-b3, 5b8-c3). The first oath comes after Socrates expresses shock with an oath of his own at Euthyphro's innovation (4a11-12). A little later, Euthyphro momentarily slides into the third person while speaking of his precise knowledge. That is, he speaks of himself as spoken of by others. Socrates exploits Euthyphro's vanity in his response by imagining a conversation, in which he speaks of him as wise before another (cf. 5a3-b7, esp. 5a9-b1). Socrates is successful, for upon hearing this imagined conversation Euthyphro swears his second oath. Socrates's closing caution against innovation occurs at 15c11-e2.

10. In this way, the question of the *Euthyphro* is much broader than much of the literature assumes. For what is at stake is not just "the relation between religion and *ethical* knowledge" (Hall 1968, 1 [emphasis added]), with the dialogue presenting "a powerful argument against any attempt to base moral judgments on religious foundations" (Mann 1998, 123), but the relation between religion and knowledge as such. (For a helpful list of secondary literature on this question, see Mann 1998, 123 n. 1.) The principal difficulty with this view is that the argument in question has a much broader range than the ethical or moral. No form of *dikaion* or its cognates occurs in the argument in question (cf. 9d1-11e1). The argument thus abstracts completely from what the basis of the gods' love is. Indeed, the whole purpose of the argument is to raise the question of whether there even is such a basis. Thus the fundamental dilemma of this crucial passage, and so of the dialogue as a whole, is not between a knowledge-based and religion-based ethics, but between passive obedience to divine whim or wisdom and the active search for wisdom by human beings, between reason and revelation.

It is necessary to begin from the position of orthodoxy, as represented by the reaction Euthyphro's father has to the murder of one of his servants. Euthyphro relates that his "father, binding together his"—i.e., the murderer's—"feet and hands, sent to here"—i.e., Athens—"to hear from an interpreter *(exēgētēs)* what *(hoti)* it's necessary to do *(poiein)*" (4c6-d1). In certain circumstances, the position of orthodoxy makes clear precisely what we are to do. Suspected criminals are to be bound. But in those circumstances where we don't know clearly and precisely what we are to do, the position of orthodoxy compensates for this lack by having us defer to an interpreter. Such interpreters answer our questions about what is to be done—in this case, say, regarding what punishment is fitting for a hired servant who has killed a household slave. Within the position of orthodoxy, then, there is some reason for questioning—of what sort, though, we are as yet unclear. Despite his apparent orthodoxy, Euthyphro's father clearly believes the fitting punishment to be death, for, when the hired servant dies in his bonds, he is untroubled.[11] Indeed, everyone except Euthyphro seems to agree with his father—the rest of his family, the Athenians generally, and even Socrates. And though this gives Euthyphro's decision to proceed against his father a foolish air, it at least minimally redeems his efforts at religious innovation, since everyone, as it turns out, has arrived at what orthodoxy demands on their own.[12] That is, everyone plays the interpreter. The ubiquity of interpretation comes to the surface

11. Edwards 2000, 218, following Allen 1970, 21, points out that Euthyphro's father assumes he has "a right of summary justice which dispensed him from any duties to the man accused of murder," a right that, Edwards adds, Euthyphro implicitly denies. Both Euthyphro and his father appear more ambivalent than Edwards's characterization allows. After all, his father does send for an exegete, and Euthyphro does wait some time before bringing the accusation to court.

12. Though Euthyphro questions the justice of the punishment his father inadvertently visited upon the hired servant, not even Euthyphro questions that such a punishment is what the interpreter would have advised. Indeed, Euthyphro is speciously silent on what the messenger said the interpreter proscribed.

when Socrates, in an attempt to explain his line of questioning about what piety is, mentions his confusion about the words of a poet. In attempting to clarify his confusion, Socrates begins to speak of parts (though not of wholes)—that is, to use the onto-logical language more familiar from the *Parmenides*.[13] Accord-ingly, if Socrates's apparently unorthodox question lies latent in the position of orthodoxy, it is in the role of interpreters (whether ourselves or officials) and the phenomena that make them nec-essary to the position of orthodoxy.[14]

It is clear that Euthyphro considers himself a sort of inter-preter, inasmuch as he bases his religious innovations on the tra-ditional stories told about the gods. Socrates is surprised to learn that Euthyphro has such an orthodox view. He goes so far as to have Euthyphro swear before Zeus that *he* truly holds these things to have come to be thus (6b3-4: *su hōs alēthōs hēgēi*). Socrates's second invocation of a god suggests that he is perhaps as sur-prised here at Euthyphro's extreme orthodoxy as he was earlier, when he learned of the extent of his unorthodoxy. Indeed, so sur-prised is Socrates that he interrupts a particularly simple argu-ment, familiar from the *Meno* and *Theaetetus*—about what constitutes an adequate answer to the *ti esti touto* question—to affirm Euthyphro's orthodoxy. Socrates's interest in Euthyphro thus stems from the fact that his religious innovations have one

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13. Once Euthyphro says Socrates speaks correctly in claiming that the pious is a *morion* of the just (12d4), Socrates (with Euthyphro following suit) only refers to it as a *meros* (cf. 12c6, d2, 5, 6, 8, e1, 7, 9). In so doing, Socrates throws into question (immediately after Euthyphro has deemed it beyond question) the agreement that the pious is a proper part, in the sense of having a natural joint, rather than just a piece or fragment of justice.

14. In other words, the basic issue of the dialogue is this: "How can [Socrates] make his ignorance prevail . . . over [Euthyphro's] knowl-edge?" (Bruell 1999, 125) In order to so prevail, we must understand why Socrates's ignorance "permitted or compelled him to draw positive (or negative) conclusions about the most important matters" (Bruell 1999, 124).

foot in orthodoxy and one foot out. His case shows how the or-
thodox requirement for interpreters allows for such unorthodoxy
as we see in Euthyphro, an unorthodoxy that Euthyphro, Meletus,
and many others identify—whether rightly or wrongly—with
Socrates's peculiar mode of questioning. Additionally, by asking
Euthyphro to say what the pious is, Socrates draws on Euthy-
phro's desire to play the interpreter *(exēgētēs),* thus exploiting
Euthyphro's offer to explain *(diēgeomai)* many things concerning
the divine (6c5-d2). Euthyphro's offer comes on the heels of
Socrates's surprise that Euthyphro believes or holds *(hēgeomai)*
such an extremely orthodox view (6b2-c4). Socrates uses *hēge-
omai* for believing or holding some view in place of Euthyphro's
earlier use of *nomizō* (5e6). In this context, Euthyphro offers to
show how what "human beings themselves happen to believe
(nomizontes)" gives "a proof that the law *(nomou)* is such" as
Euthyphro interprets it (5e2-6a3). Socrates's substitution of *hē-
geomai* for *nomizō* thus aims to arrive at certain phenomena pres-
ent within law, the phenomena of believing, interpreting, and
explaining. By posing his idiosyncratic question in this context,
Socrates tests the extent to which the *ti* of the *ti esti touto* lies latent
in such phenomena, and thus in the view of orthodoxy itself.[15]

Socrates touches on the relationship between the *ti* of *ti esti
touto* and the phenomena within law most pointedly during an
argument famous for articulating the so-called "Euthyphro
problem."[16] In this argument, Socrates attempts to show Euthy-
phro that the love of all the gods is not a sufficient criterion for
determining what particular acts are pious—that is, that the god-
loved is an inadequate definition of the pious. Toward this end,
Socrates distinguishes between active and passive participles,
between the loving and the loved (10a10-11). The passive par-
ticiple, i.e., the verb reified as a substantivized verbal adjec-

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15. After Euthyphro's proof, no forms of *nomos* and *nomizō* occur, an
especially surprising fact in a dialogue concerned with the rules or opin-
ions that guide correct action with respect to the gods.

16. See note 10.

tive,[17] is then argued to be the consequence of the finite, passive verb form, rather than the other way around. That is, Socrates intends to show that something is a loved thing because it is loved, but not that something is loved because it is a loved thing (10c10-12). When brought to bear on the claim that the pious is the god-loved, the priority of the finite verb to the substantivized form shows that the gods' activity of loving is but an affect or experience of the pious, and not what it is. Socrates thus argues that the *ti* of *ti esti touto is*, independent of how anyone—god or man—is disposed to it intentionally. What something is is not dependent on our inclinations, then, but our inclinations on what it is. Yet Socrates's argument is flawed principally because there are some who love something simply because it is a thing loved, i.e., a thing loved by another or others. Certainly some such phenomenon is what makes the Athenians laugh at Euthyphro or grow angry with Socrates, what makes the Athenians inclined to view such acts of interpretation as unorthodoxy. The position of orthodoxy thus seems to exclude the *ti* of Socrates's *ti esti touto*. For from the perspective of orthodoxy, the fact that something has been said provides sufficient justification that it has been said well (7a11-b1).[18] No appeal to being is necessary, just to opinion.

Nevertheless, orthodoxy's manner of justification is not so exclusive as it first appears. In his presentation of the aforementioned "Euthyphro problem," Socrates expresses this manner of justification in rather confusing language. His language poses a significant problem for understanding his argument, not simply because the logic is unclear or the use of "because" *(hoti)* is

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17. Because rendering the passive verb forms in Greek into English requires using the verb "to be" with the participial form, the distinction is somewhat elusive, as many notice (see, for example, Geach 1966, 378). The distinction turns, I maintain, on the reification of an experience or affect as a quality—and an essential one, at that—of what they seek to define. Thus I have chosen to render *philoumenon* as "a loved thing."

18. Reading *eirētai gar* at b1 with all the manuscripts and against their seclusion by Burnet and others.

equivocal,[19] but rather because it is difficult to know which sense Socrates intends *hoti* to have in this or that clause. More than once, Socrates uses *hoti* to mean both "because" and "that," i.e. to indicate a fact and a justification, in a single sentence. Further, in his summary of his argument, Socrates clarifies that Euthyphro has failed to say what *(hoti)* the pious is, using *hoti* in the sense of *ousia,* i.e., in the sense familiar from *ti esti touto* (11a6-8). Socrates thus uses *hoti* in its three primary senses—what we could call its justificatory, factual, and essential senses—and in a way that appears unnecessarily confusing. Thus in an argument meant to delineate a causal relationship between particulars and universals, Socrates uses a word that mixes all three into one. As we read, then, we must determine in each instance which sense Socrates means *hoti* to have. In the process, however, we cannot help but note that, as separate as these senses may be syntactically, they are also quite inextricably linked. In accordance with proper usage, Socrates uses *hoti* in the justificatory sense interchangeably with *dioti.* But *dioti* is itself a contracted form of another phrase Socrates uses, *dia touto hoti,* which employs *hoti* in its factual sense. If *hoti* in the justificatory sense is equivalent to *dia touto hoti,* then *hoti* in the justificatory sense contains within it *hoti* in the factual sense.[20] Reasons rely on facts. But this still excludes *hoti* in the essential sense, the sense interchangeable with the *ti* of Socrates's question, *ti esti touto.* Is the factual sense of *hoti* completely separable from its essential sense? How could essential *hoti* be excluded, but factual and justificatory *hoti* main-

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19. On the difficulty of understanding the sense of "because," see Geach 1966, 379; Hall 1968, 6-9; and Cohen 1971, 6-8.

20. In reality, the justificatory language is far more complex: *hoti* is used at 10a2, 3, c2 (twice), 3 (twice), 10 (twice), e5; *dioti* at 10b1, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9 (twice), 10, 11, d6, 9, e3; *dia* at 10b2, 3, 7, 8, 9, 10, d4, 5; *dia touto hoti* at 10d4, 6-7, e2-3, 6-7; and the substantivized infinitive as an instrumental dative at 10e5-6. Of the forty-three occurrences of *dioti* in Plato, twelve are in the *Euthyphro* alone, i.e., just over a quarter of the occurrences in just fifteen Stephanus pages—really, on one page alone.

tained? Doesn't the lexical intimacy of these three senses suggest a necessary connection between them? And if so, what is it?

This question amounts to whether the particular acts piety dictates we perform are wholly particular, or rather must be viewed in light of some general understanding of what piety is.[21] Euthyphro seems reluctant to venture beyond these particulars. When knowledge of piety first comes up, Euthyphro seems interested in teaching Socrates the pious and impious things, and not the pious as such (4e4-5a2). Likewise, when Socrates first asks Euthyphro about the pious as such, Euthyphro understands the neuter singular *to hosion* to indicate a single pious thing, and not the *idea* common to all particular, pious things (5c8-e2). And much later, when Euthyphro begins to pull away from Socrates, he is clear that what he would have to teach Socrates is not some one thing, but a number of things (14a11-b1). Nevertheless, even in his first definition, Euthyphro does come up with a somewhat general rule that applies not just to his case, but to many others. Likewise, when Socrates gives voice to the objection he and the Athenians raise against Euthyphro's innovation, his formulation is rightly general (cf. 4b4-6). Indeed, the disagreement between Euthyphro and the Athenians regards which general rule (or example become rule, e.g., Zeus's "prosecution" of his father) applies to the particular case of Euthyphro's father, his hired servant, and the household slave.[22] Justificatory *hoti* thus entails

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21. It is an old question as to whether the *Euthyphro* "is meant to imply a full-blown theory of Forms" (Geach 1966, 371). For a thorough discussion, see Allen 1970.

22. At one point, Socrates shows Euthyphro that those disputing in courts don't dispute whether one should pay the penalty for injustice, but whether an injustice was committed (8b7-d3). Shortly after this, Socrates expresses the general rule guiding Euthyphro's prosecution of his father in as particular a form as he can, indeed to quite comic effect (cf. 9a1-8). Euthyphro's initial (and nearly absurd) inability to put himself in the shoes of the accused amounts to an inability to see the ambiguity of how this or that law applies to a particular deed, i.e., it amounts to the mistake of restricting the general entirely to the particular. As Euthyphro's quick retreat shows, this mistake is untenable, even to those most devoted to the precision of the laws. Cf. Benardete 2001, 201.

not just factual *hoti,* but essential *hoti,* as well. For which particular act is pious depends on the general rules that collectively constitute what piety is. Consequently, it is not the case, as earlier surmised, that, from the perspective of orthodoxy, the fact that something has been said provides sufficient justification that it has been said well (7a11-b1). As Socrates observes, other things are said that don't quite jibe with what has been said, thus necessitating further interpretation or conversation from us (7b2-5). Indeed, without the question of which rule to apply to this or that particular situation, there would be no need for interpreters.[23] At least in the present circumstances, then, the altogether orthodox question of which rule or law applies to these or those circumstances provides sufficient grounds for Socrates to ask his apparently unorthodox question, *ti esti touto?*

But are these grounds sufficient in all circumstances? Socrates suggests so when he compares his question about the relationship between piety and justice to an account of fear *(deos)* and reverence or shame *(aidōs)* in a pair of epic verses (12a6-b1). When introducing these verses, Socrates speaks of the poet as making two things, one of these being the verses, the other being something he wishes to compare to what he and Euthyphro were just discussing (12a7-8: *epoiēsen, poiēsas.*) But what the poet made that is comparable to what they were just discussing lies on an entirely abstract level. Thus, the poets don't just make verses; they make ideas, or rather determine their relationship.[24] Socrates thus compares his inquiry into the *ti* of *ti esti touto* to his interpretation of the poet's verses (cf. *Republic* 515d2-7). But

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23. "Euthyphro," and, I would add, everyone else, "is unwilling . . . to leave matters at the merely factual relation of a pious deed to the approval the gods confer on it by loving it, to let the piety of the deed be determined by that love alone" (Bruell 1999, 129).

24. Burger 2015, 83-5 points out that grammatically the object of *poiēsas* is Zeus himself, an allusion back to Meletus's charge that suggests that not Socrates, but the city's poets are the makers of (new) gods. On the complex way in which the poet's genetic account relies on an eidetic account, see Bruell 1999, 131-2 and Burger 2015, 83 ff. (esp. n. 44).

in his interpretation, Socrates criticizes the poet on the basis of his and Euthyphro's experience of *deos* and *aidōs* (cf. 12b2-c9). Though Euthyphro happily goes along with Socrates, Meletus would be unlikely—to put it mildly—to take Socrates's criticism of a fellow poet so lightly (cf. *Apology* 23e5). Nevertheless, Meletus's claim that Socrates is "a maker *(poiētēn)* of gods," namely "one who makes *(poiounta)* new gods while not believing *(nomizonta)* in the archaic or original ones" (3b1-3), seems at best a half-truth.[25] In a certain respect, Meletus appears to be right. As Socrates argues, action requires discerning *(diakrinō)* what is good or bad, noble or shameful, and just or unjust, so as to reach a sufficient judgment *(krisis)* about what to do (7c3-d7). But in his mode of questioning, Socrates exposes the insufficiency of all judgments by exposing his interlocutors' inability to answer *(apokrinō).* Meletus is therefore correct that Socrates doesn't believe *(hēgeomai, nomizō)* in the archaic or original gods, since his investigation of the phenomena within law *(nomos)* exposes that answers are not forthcoming. Meletus is wrong, however, to conclude from this that Socrates seeks to replace the archaic or original gods with new ones. For at the core of Socratic refutation is the same issue that plagued Euthyphro and his father, that makes interpreters necessary and court cases unavoidable: the ambivalence or multivalence of particular deeds as to which *vomos* they fall under, and thus whether the deed is pious or impious, or, should the particular deed already be agreed to be pious, which *nomos* makes it so or is implicit in it and thus renders like deeds pious.[26] These altogether pious questions invoke the factual, justificatory, and essential uses of *hoti* that pro-

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25. It is only "at best" a half-truth because, as Burger 2015, 35 notes, Socrates is the (perhaps inadvertent) cause of both the dangerous liberation from generally accepted opinion and the subsequent return to that opinion.

26. Socrates gives two competing formulations of the subject of his question. The first—*tou hosiou te peri kai tou anosiou* (4e2-3)—suggests a clear and precise separation of the pious from the impious, while the second—*peri . . . tōn hosiōn te kai anosiōn* (e5-6)—suggests that the same things can be both pious and impious. On the connection between this issue and polytheism, see Bruell 1999, 130-1 and Burger 2015, 59-61.

vide the necessary and sufficient conditions for Socratic philosophy.

What is at bottom unorthodox about Socrates, then, is not the introduction of new gods *per se*, but the willingness to confess ignorance about which laws apply to which particulars, and the attempt to articulate the recalcitrance of the opinions contained in law to clear and easy application to particulars. For in his mythical self-presentation, Socrates says that Daedalus is both his *and* Euthyphro's progenitor—that is, that the circular character of Socratic refutation is not exclusively Socrates's, but human (11b9-c6). Man is somehow fundamentally Socratic, and it is Socrates's exposure of this fact that arouses the Athenians's ire (cf. 3c9-d2). They simply kill the messenger. Under this interpretation, what Socrates does may be an unorthodox failure of piety, but it is the humble failure to *rise* to piety, rather than an attempt to go above and beyond it. What is missing from this interpretation, however, and unfortunately takes us beyond the *Euthyphro*, is Socrates's anticipation in the *Sophist* that a stranger from Elea may be a *theos elenktikos* (216a1-b6). This substantial revision of Homeric theology appears to guide Socrates's reaction to the god's assertion of his wisdom, which assertion Socrates attempts to refute as though that were unproblematically pious (*Apology* 21b9-c2). In this revision, Socrates implicitly claims that not just human beings are beholden to the above ambivalence or multivalence of particulars with respect to generals, but gods as well. Let it suffice to conclude that this deeper implication of what Socrates uncovers in the *Euthyphro* amounts, paradoxically, to an accusation against orthodoxy of impiety: not Socrates, but the city has made new gods in place of the *theoi*

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27. Compare the alternative of Strauss 1996, 16-17. The present understanding of Socratic piety falls outside of the debate that McPherran 1985, 283-4 frames as between the constructivists, who take there to be a view of piety latent in what follows the "aporetic interlude" of 11b-e, and the anticonstructivists, who deny the same. For that debate presupposes considerable agreement, namely that what is referred to as "Socratic piety" relies on a *definition* of what the pious as such is, whose reconstruction they respectively claim to be possi-

archaioi.[27] For not just man is Socratic, but his god as well.[28]

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ble and not. If there is anything like "Socratic piety," it cannot be based on a static definition, but rather only on the awareness that no sufficient definition is forthcoming.

28. The deeper implication of Socrates's substitution of *hēgeomai* for *nomizō* lies in the former's secondary, original sense of "to lead," which suggests that believing is the active attempt to guide oneself (and others), and not the passive acceptance of laws (on Plato's use of voice—middle, active and passive—see Davis 2011, 205-21). That is, the laws present themselves as the answer to some desire for guidance. But that desire, in posing the question the laws purport to answer, proves not just prior to (and thus of higher status than) the laws, but more general than the laws, which are always these particular laws. The primary or principal phenomenon within law would thus be man's longing for such wisdom as would allow him to live well. On this phenomenon as that of soul, see Burger 2015, 73-5 (with 69 n. 36), as well as Davis 2011, 217-18 and passim.

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