

Ethics 24.231 Paper Topics – First Short Paper – **DUE OCT. 5TH at the BEGINNING of class.**

Please write a short (~1200 word) paper addressing **one** of the following topics:

- (1) In Plato's dialogue, "Euthyphro," Socrates offers a refutation of Euthyphro's definition of piety as what all the gods love. The argument appears midway through the dialogue following Euthyphro's claim "I would certainly say that the pious is what all the gods love, and the opposite, which all the gods hate, is the impious" (top of p. 173). It culminates in Socrates' speech that begins with "But if the god-beloved and the pious were the same, my dear Euthyphro..." (middle of p. 174). In your own words, explain Socrates' argument. Begin by explaining the question Socrates is trying to get Euthyphro to answer (you might want to contrast it to the questions Euthyphro at first mistakenly answers). Be sure to account for all of the necessary premises, and explain the strategy Socrates employs in showing that Euthyphro must abandon his definition.
- (2) Plato asks Euthyphro: "Is the pious loved by the gods because it is pious, or is it pious because it is loved by the gods?" (p. 173) We talked in class about difficulties this question might create for a class of philosophical views called Divine Command Theory (DCT). According to DCT, God's will determines which actions/people/states of affairs are right or good. How should a divine command theorist answer the question Socrates poses to Euthyphro? What worries does each possible answer raise for DCT? Does the divine command theorist have an adequate response to these worries?
- (3) Why does Moore think that *good* cannot be identical to any natural property (such as, for example, *pleasurable*, or *desirable to desire*)? Consider his argument that "good" cannot *mean* the same thing as, for example, "desirable to desire," because we can intelligibly ask the question "is that which it is desirable to desire good?" (This argument has been called the "Open Question Argument.") Why does Moore conclude that "good" and "desirable to desire" must pick out different properties? Are there objections to Moore's argument? How might a non-naturalist like Moore respond to them?
- (4) In "The Emotive Theory of Ethics," Ayer distinguishes his own view, emotivism, from subjectivism. What's the difference between the two kinds of metaethical theories? Use some examples to illustrate the difference. Ayer contends that emotivism is more tenable than subjectivism. Critically evaluate Ayer's arguments. Does emotivism avoid the objection that Ayer thinks defeats subjectivism? And can the theory properly account for apparent moral disagreements? More generally, can the theory adequately account for our practice of moral judgment? (You may want to consider some of Brink's worries in your paper.)
- (5) Harman argues that moral facts do not seem relevant to the explanation of any of our observations and beliefs. Sturgeon disagrees. Describe the reasons that Harman and Sturgeon offer for their differing positions. Whose position do you find more persuasive, and why?

Before writing your paper, you should read Jim Pryor's "Guidelines on Writing a Philosophy Paper."

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