Introduction

In Plato's dialogue, *Euthyphro*, various definitions of "piety" are offered by the pious Euthyphro, at the prompting of the ironic Socrates, who proceeds to attack each of these definitions, in turn. Socratic irony is not spared in the process as the master tries to learn from his reluctant pupil.

There is one particular definition which Socrates argues against which is of great logical, as well as ethical interest, namely, the following: "the pious is what all the gods love, and the opposite, which all the gods hate, is the impious". On my count, this is Euthyphro's third attempt (out of five) to give an adequate definition of "piety" (see 9e of *Euthyphro*). Socrates' criticism of this definition contains an implicit *ethical* principle, the principle of the Autonomy of Morals, as well as an implicit *logical* principle, a substitutivity or indiscernibility principle, whose exact nature is currently in dispute.

There has been substantial disagreement in recent philosophical literature as to just what this logical principle is. Some philosophers have held that the logical principle involved is simply Leibniz' Law. However, Leibniz' Law has two primary formulations, one in the metalanguage, formulated as the Substitutivity of Identity, and the other in the object language, formulated as the Indiscernibility of Identicals. This distinction turns out to be crucial. Contrarywise, other philosophers have held that Leibniz' Law as such won't do and that the logical principle involved is a variation of Leibniz' Law (formulated in the metalanguage), for example, the Substitutivity of Synonymous Expressions (Geach), or the Substitutivity of Defini-

* I have used G.M.A. Grube's translation of the *Euthyphro*, which according to Grube, follows Burnet's Oxford text. See Grube's, *The Trial and Death of Socrates* (Indianapolis, 1975).
tional Equivalents (S.M. Cohen). Still another philospher has argued that only derivative substitutivity principles are involved, different from Leibniz’ Law and its variations, and derivable from a proper analysis of the “because” context (Sharvy)\(^1\).

The literature on Plato’s *Euthyphro* seems to have neglected object-language formulations of Leibniz’ Law, leaving an “object-language gap”, so to speak. Yet, Socrates’ central argument is cast in object-language form and seems to use implicitly a higher-order, object-language version of Leibniz’ Law. Therefore, at the very least, we should try to formally reconstruct this argument in the object-language. Even if such a reconstruction ultimately fails, as I believe it does, the attempt is still worthwhile.

Given the considerations of this paper, as well as Sharvy’s metalinguistic treatment of Socrates’ argument, I conclude that there is probably no acceptable reconstruction of that argument, using Leibniz’ Law, or its variations, in any form whatever. This leaves Sharvy’s metalinguistic reconstruction (not using Leibniz’ Law) as perhaps the only plausible reconstruction left. However, even this reconstruction is marred by a residual first-order quantification into a referentially opaque context, though it avoids the genuinely harmful second-order quantifying in, characteristic of object-language reconstructions. The fault, I believe, lies with Socrates’ argument itself. (see Conclusion).

1. **Socrates’ Critique of Euthyphro**

Socrates first attacks the above-stated definition (9e) by asking one of the most profound questions in all of Plato’s dialogues: “Is the pious loved by the gods because it is pious, or is it pious because it is loved by the gods?” (10a). Socrates holds, more precisely, that a pious act is loved by all the gods because it is pious; it is not pious because it is loved by all the gods. This is one of his fundamental ideas.

Consider the more modern analogue: is a right act right because it is commanded by God, or is it commanded by God because it is right? I think most philosphers and theologians, no doubt under the influence of Socrates and Plato, would hold that a right act is commanded by God because it is right; it is not right merely because it is commanded by God (given the assumption, of course, that God exists). I would say there is only a minority of thinkers who have held that a right act is right because God commands it\(^2\). In any case, this question is beyond the scope of the paper.