

My research focuses mostly on Socratic ethics and the Socratic dialogues of Plato. My main projects currently center on *Euthyphro*. I have developed a new reading of the end of the dialogue that (i) helps us better grasp how cooperative philosophical enquiry as modeled in *Apology* can be the virtuous antidote to Euthyphro's voluntaristic understanding of piety; (ii) highlights norms of reciprocity, which were central to popular Greek religious and ethical thought, but have often been overlooked as relevant interpretive data in this dialogue.

I am also interested in understanding the social or communal aspect of eudaimonic ethics. Eudaimonic ethics explains moral goodness in terms of its tendency to promote the flourishing of the individual moral agent, and thus the motivation for promoting social or cooperative virtues is ultimately egoistic. I am interested in whether or not there is an alternative way to explain the value of social virtues within a eudaimonic framework. My starting point for thinking about this comes from the view on piety I want to attribute to Socrates.

In my research, I contend that Socratic piety involves a commitment not just to *individual* self-improvement through rational inquiry, but to creating a community of reciprocally-improving inquirers. I follow constructivists in reading *Euthyphro* in a way that attributes to Socrates a positive view on piety, that piety is service to the gods.¹ This service finds its expression in philosophical inquiry of the sort that Socrates models in *Apology* and *Meno*, and aims to achieve a *kalon ergon* (noble goal), good human souls. I argue that it is not merely individual good souls that is the aim of this activity, but a community of good souls, achieved by reciprocally participating in teaching and learning roles, by turns.

My current projects include:

1. A paper arguing that the end of Plato's *Euthyphro* has been serially misinterpreted (14a11-15c10). I offer a new reading that allows us to see greater doctrinal unity in the dialogue as a whole. My focus in this paper is on explaining the logical structure of the last elenchos, and especially showing how the comparison of Euthyphro's last definition to commerce does not refute it, but is instead a necessary prerequisite for the eventual refutation. The refutation itself comes when Socrates reduces the definition to an earlier, already rejected one. I close the paper by showing how this reduction is meant to constitute an important philosophical thesis that many traditional readings miss.
2. A paper arguing offering my own understanding of Socratic piety. Some scholars have argued that one of Euthyphro's proposed definitions has the potential to succeed, and that Socrates himself endorses it. This definition, that piety is service to the gods, is introduced near the end of the dialogue, but is discussed only incompletely. Despite Socrates' interest in it, Euthyphro moves the discussion away from the service definition before a crucial question can be answered. In this paper, I argue that the service definition is not abandoned completely by the discussion that overtakes it. The elenchos that concludes the dialogue in fact helps us better understand how to answer the crucial question that caused Euthyphro to demur.
3. A paper analyzing the logical structure of Socrates' argument in *Protagoras* that virtue is not teachable (319b-e). I argue that the no valid reading of the argument can be given without attributing to Socrates assumptions he would not have held. I then try to show what he might have been trying to accomplish, if he was not trying to give a valid argument. This involves thinking about Socrates' purpose near the end of the dialogue, when he more famously employs an argument using premises he probably does not endorse (in his discussion of *akrasia* or weakness of will) (352b-358d).
4. A paper arguing that judging someone to have done something estimable should not involve the performance of some additional act commemorating or honoring that person. I argue that in fact typical cases of commemoration will distort our moral assessment of the person by encouraging us to esteem the whole person (including their misdeeds) rather than the particular respects in which they are estimable. I conclude by suggesting that there are more fitting ways to express esteem for a meritorious act than traditional forms of honor, ways that are more directly connected to the virtues or excellences the act instantiates.

Projects in the near future will develop the implications of my thinking on *Euthyphro* for other dialogues of Plato. A broad theme of my work on *Euthyphro* is that Socratic piety has been misunderstood

¹E.g., Gregory Vlastos. *Socrates: Ironist and Moral Philosopher*. Cornell University Press, Ithaca, NY, 1991, Ch. 6.

because scholars have omitted an important dimension from its analysis: reciprocity. Norms of reciprocal exchange were central to popular Greek moral thinking, and it would be surprising if they were not equally central to Greek moral philosophy. And yet, it has been easy for us to miss this in our analysis of at least one dialogue, *Euthyphro*. I expect that re-examining other dialogues with this in mind will yield new insights; dialogues like *Lysis*, which explores virtuous friendship, and *Republic*, with its important discussions of justice.

Planned future projects include:

1. A paper developing an ethics of reciprocity within the framework of eudaimonic ethics, building on the work of Christopher Gill²
2. A paper attempting to apply an ethics of reciprocity to contemporary thinking about love and friendship. I am interested in the issue of how I can do something for another person, intending to encourage requital from them, without my initial deed devolving into an act of selfishness.
3. A book-length study of *Euthyphro*, building on my current work and developing several parts of my doctoral dissertation that do not naturally fit into other current projects.

²E.g. "Altruism or Reciprocity in Greek Ethical Philosophy?" In Christopher Gill, Norman Postlethwaite, and Richard Seaford, editors. *Reciprocity in Ancient Greece*. Oxford University Press, 1998, pages 303–328.