

## SOCRATES AND KNOWLEDGE

How does the wise man discover true knowledge?

Stage 1. Strip away prejudices/prejudgement.

Stage 2. Reduce interlocutor to state of confusion/doubt > realisation that he does not know what he thought he knew.

Stage 3. Build up premise again by means of:  
question and answer/discussions/argument  
definitions  
examples  
until a final definition of the "essence" of moral quality  
under discussion is reached (or not, as the case may be)

Example 1. Cross-examination of Meletus in the Apology.

This is not the "full treatment" - rather the destruction of Meletus:

Socrates traps Meletus:

- (a) into making universal assumptions (p.46)
- (b) into declaring him an atheist (not part of the charge) (p.49)
- (c) into equating "supernatural beings" with gods  
(without drawing any distinction > universalising again?)

All this interspersed with jibes and rhetoric >  
obscuring the weakness of the arguments.

Example 2. The Euthyphro

A complete example of the process.

Starting point: prosecution of father.

Question: is this an unholy/impious action?

The issue: what is holiness/piety?

Stage 1.

Socrates seeks definition:

What is the "essential" of piety, which makes an action pious?

First response: by present example of prosecuting father

Socrates' reaction: unacceptable- example not universal.

Second response: by universal application

"what is agreeable to gods is holy/pious"

Socrates' reactions: demand for proof >

For since gods dispute among selves,  
not ALL gods will find same things agreeable >  
hence definition fails as a universal definition

Third response: a new universal definition:

"what all gods approve of is holy/pious"

Socrates' reaction: initiates debate on  
difference between state and performance  
of any god-approved action.

At end of this no nearer finding the "essential"

Stage 2 Euthyphro admits his confusion.

Stage 3.

Socrates now leads with his definition:

introduces the idea of holiness as aspect of justice  
via analogy of shame and fear:

"what is holy is also just; what is just is not necessarily holy"

ie. holiness is sub-division/off-shoot/by-product of justice.

