Hello, and welcome to this tutorial on introducing Plato and the analysis of concepts. Today, we will be discussing a big picture introduction to Plato's thought before learning the basics of conceptual analysis. Let's begin by considering Plato and his background.

Born around 427 BCE, Plato studied under Socrates until the latter's trial and execution. Early in his philosophical career, Plato served as something of a stenographer, transcribing many of the philosophical discussions Socrates had with various Athenians. It is through these writings of Plato that we know the philosophy of Socrates. But after the death of his mentor, Plato went on to write many philosophical discourses of his own, also in dialogue form.

In order to honor his master, and also likely in order to present his ideas to his students without biasing them, Plato's fictional dialogues also involve Socrates, but as a character, usually serving as the mouthpiece of Plato. Hence, in Plato's early dialogues, we get historical conversations that present Socrates' philosophy. In Plato's mature work, however, he uses a fictitious Socrates in order to develop and defend his own philosophy.

He also founded his own philosophical school, the Academy, one of the very first institutions of higher learning in the Western world, and where we get words like "academic" and "academia."

Plato's texts were largely written for the Academy. Plato's target audience was his students, and his philosophical texts were intended to be read and considered at the Academy. Hence, dialogues like the Euthyphro were designed first and foremost to be teaching tools, and have many important lessons for the introductory reader. One of the most useful pedagogical aspects of the Euthyphro is that it helps us begin to realize the significance of clear and precise concepts and how we might go about accurately identifying them.

In this dialogue, Socrates has a philosophical conversation with Euthyphro, an Athenian who is in the process of bringing murder charges against his father in a complex situation that is far from black and white. Socrates was particularly interested in what his understanding of the case could tell us about the essence of piety, or godliness.

In philosophy, an essence is what makes a thing what it is. As we begin to unpack this notion, we must first realize that in essence is a concept of metaphysics, not of language. Essences go far beyond mere definition.

For instance, the essence of humanity would be whatever makes a human a human. Whether or not we can sufficiently describe it in words is irrelevant to the fact that every human would need to possess the human essence in order for them to be human.

Plato was especially interested in essences, and they played a central role in his philosophy. Before we get into that, though, it is worth mentioning that there is some controversy here. Not all philosophers think that there are

genuine metaphysical entities that are essences, and many of those that believe in such entities disagree as to the details, as did Plato and Aristotle, a topic for another tutorial.

At this point, you might wonder why essences are so important in philosophy. First, again, they are not the same things as definitions. For instance, essences are unchanging, even if language changes. What makes a human a human does so for as long as there are humans, and it is irrelevant whether different people have defined human differently at different times. But as such, essences are the grounds for truth and falsity.

If I ask, why are Bob and Sheila humans, I am looking for something much deeper than a dictionary definition. Any meaningful claim to the truth of Bob and Sheila are humans will invoke a human essence in some way. But the same can be said if we replace human with important philosophical concepts, such as justice or goodness.

But here we begin to see the importance of precise, accurate concepts. Only when I can identify the essence of justice am I truly able to make accurate claims of the form x is just or y is unjust.

We do not need to know much about philosophy to know that assigning grades based on hair color is unjust, or that assigning grades based on merit is just. That is, we rarely need philosophical analysis in the easy cases. But what about the gray areas? Is giving a normally written exam orally in order to accommodate a borderline disability just?

The answer to this question can get messy. But if we are able to accurately identify the essence of justice, we thereby eliminate any gray area, and are able to provide the correct answer. Hence, essences are crucial to philosophy, because they let us discover the truth in the areas we would otherwise find to be gray.

For another example, think about ethics. We know that punting a toddler is wrong. We know that donating to charities such as Oxfam that saves children's lives is right. No one gets into a screaming match over these cases.

But think about controversial topics, such as abortion and capital punishment. If we can determine the essence of goodness, that is, what makes any action right or wrong, then we should be able to make headway on these and other thorny topics. But if we are to make headway here, we must first learn how to start identifying essences. So that is what we will discuss now.

A helpful first step is to look into some natural categories. For instance, what is the relationship between dogs and mammals? This is a relationship not between words or statements, but between real entities. But it is certainly not a cause and effect relationship.

When considering such realities, there are two basic ways in which categories could be related. The first is the relation of sufficient condition. In this, relation A is sufficient for B if membership in A logically guarantees

membership in B.

First, it must be stressed that a sufficient condition is a relation, like saying taller than. It always applies to two things, not to one thing by itself.

In general, you should think of a sufficient condition as a relation of logical guarantee. For instance, speeding is a guarantee that you are breaking the law. Hence, speeding is a sufficient condition for breaking the law.

What other types of things are logical guarantees? Refer back to the example of dogs and mammals. Being a dog is a sufficient condition for being a mammal.

Generalizing, we see that any subclass will be a sufficient condition. Being a chair is sufficient for being furniture, et cetera.

Or think of examples which are in fact a special type of subclass. Being Obama is a sufficient condition for being a former president. Being Socrates is sufficient for being a philosopher. Being Socrates guarantees membership into the class of philosophers.

The other type of basic relation that may obtain in the world is a necessary condition. In this relation, X is a necessary condition for Y if membership and x is logically required for membership in Y.

Roughly speaking, think of a necessary condition as the relationship of logical requirement. Being 18 or older is a necessary condition for being able to vote.

What kinds of things are logical requirements? First, there is a supertype, a rarely used word, but it's the opposite of a subtype or subclass. Hence, being a tool is a necessary condition for being a hammer.

Another kind of necessary condition is the part of relation. This could be literal spatiotemporal parts-- having a spine is a necessary condition for being human-- or something a little more profound. Fairness is a necessary condition for justice.

If this seems tricky, there is a simple procedure for determining whether either of these two relationships obtains between two things. First, we set up the question properly as follows. 1 is a blank condition for 2, where 1 and 2 are whatever you're considering for logical relations.

Then we ask two simple questions. First we ask, are all cases of 1 cases of 2? If you answer yes, then 1 is sufficient for 2. If you answer no, then 1 is not sufficient for 2. Easy as that, but make sure you're checking for all, not just most.

But notice that the first question only determines sufficiency. To determine necessity, we must change the order. We flip it and ask, are all cases of 2 cases of 1? If you answer yes, then 1 is in fact necessary for 2. If you answer no, then 1 is not necessary for 2.

Notice that this test gives four possible answers relating any two categories. A, sufficient, not necessary when we answer yes, no. B, necessary, not sufficient when we answer no, yes. C, both necessary and sufficient when we answer yes, yes. D, neither necessary nor sufficient when we answer no, no. The whole of reality has just become a multiple choice question, because one of these four must always obtain between any two things.

It might be good to pause here and think of some of your own examples. They don't have to be profound. Being a taco is neither necessary nor sufficient for being a ninja.

So by now, we have seen some examples of relations that fall into the category of sufficient, not necessary, and of necessary, not sufficient. But what of the last two categories? To answer D, that is, neither necessary nor sufficient, simply means that there is no logical relation. For instance, being a major league baseball team is neither necessary nor sufficient for being a Broadway play. However, this is an example of no relationship at all.

But notice that statistical relationships also fall into category D. For instance, being tall is neither necessary nor sufficient for being a basketball player. Why? There are tall people who are not basketball players, and there are a few basketball players who are not tall. Put another way, being tall is neither a requirement nor a guarantee of being a basketball player.

The most important category in conceptual analysis is C, that is, both necessary and sufficient.

What kinds of things are both necessary and sufficient? First are cases of identity. Being Sacramento is both necessary and sufficient for being the capital of California. Or even more intuitively, being Sacramento is both necessary and sufficient for being Sacramento.

But much more importantly are two things we are interested in in philosophy, good definitions, which are linguistic, and essences, which are metaphysical. Being a bachelor is both necessary and sufficient for being an unmarried male of consenting age. Hence, using necessary and sufficient conditions is a simple entryway into conceptual analysis.

Here are now six problems for you to try on your own. Feel free to pause and think of an answer.

If you follow the procedure we've outlined, you should arrive at the following answers.

Now that we are a bit more familiar with these relations, we can turn to Plato's dialogue, the Euthyphro. Though the terminology for these categories did not exist during Plato's lifetime, Plato teaches his students many of these concepts and a few more in the Euthyphro.

Here, Socrates inquires as to the essence of piety, or if you like, holiness, goodness. Hence, he is asking Euthyphro to try to identify the necessary and sufficient conditions for piety.

In the dialogue, Euthyphro presents six unsatisfactory definitions, and through Socrates' rejection of them, the students of Plato's Academy can learn some of the fundamentals of conceptual analysis. We will briefly cover some of them.

The first definition that Euthyphro proposes is that piety is to do what he himself is doing, that is, to prosecute the wrongdoer. Socrates quickly points out that this is merely an example, or to use our new language, sufficient but not necessary for piety.

There are other ways of being pious. So an example, while helpful, does not tell us the whole story. Imagine if someone asked you what it means to be human and you merely pointed at some passerby.

Euthyphro then moves on to say that piety is what is loved by the gods. Socrates points out that this won't do either, because the gods disagree, making it neither necessary nor sufficient in our terminology. What is loved by Aphrodite, goddess of love, is different than what is loved by Ares, god of war. The important lesson here when dealing with concepts is to always say what you mean, that is, what you are willing and able to defend, nothing more, nothing less.

To show the importance of this lesson, think of an example. Consider someone who makes the claim abortion is wrong. Does this person mean all abortions? What about cases of rape? What about cases where the pregnancy will kill the mother? Surely they can't mean in cases where the pregnancy would kill the mother and the fetus. Only claim what you are willing to support, and the world will be a better place.

Euthyphro tries to do this in presenting his third definition, that piety is what is loved by all the gods. There might be such things-- the Greek virtues of courage, wisdom, justice, and moderation, for instance-- but the real issue here is a problem now known as the Euthyphro dilemma. Is it good because the gods love it, or do the gods love it because it is good? The former makes goodness arbitrary and uninteresting. The latter means we need to keep looking beyond the gods in order to identify the concept.

This is what Euthyphro tries in presenting his fourth definition, that piety is part of justice, that all that is pious is just. But once more, the part of relation is incomplete. Recall that part of is necessary, not sufficient. We've also tried to define a tricky concept by introducing an even trickier concept, a rookie mistake in conceptual analysis

which is rarely helpful.

Euthyphro then moves on to another religion-based definition of piety. Piety is doing what is required by the gods, or care of the gods. But this is vague-- care how? We have not adequately defined the concept.

He makes this more precise in his sixth and final definition, that piety is service to the gods. Once more, this is vague, but it gets worse when we remove the vagueness. We serve the gods by doing what they wish. But this is the same as saying doing what is pleasing to the gods. Put another way, Euthyphro has simply restated his third definition, which has already been rejected.

Though these six definitions are rejected, the dialogue is not purely negative. Socrates does give a positive notion of what the essence of piety may mean, the virtue of living so as to fulfill one's duties to both humanity and the gods. But we need not get into analyzing that here. What is important for our purposes is to realize how we begin to approach precise philosophical concepts, avoiding some of the standard pitfalls, and why it matters.

So let's recap. In this tutorial, we learned that philosophy pursues truth, but this means we need to identify the truth makers of categories, that is, essences. A good way to do so is to learn necessary and sufficient conditions, logical guarantees and requirements that obtain between categories of being. In Plato's Euthyphro, he teaches the students along these lines with the concept of piety, bringing out the importance of precise concepts.

Thanks for watching, and we'll see you next time.