

Plato, *Euthyphro*. Translated by Harold North Fowler. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1960.

Plato (428-348 B.C.) studied under Socrates, and instructed Aristotle. His philosophical system based on ideal forms supported a potent ethical structure. Plato's system proved seminal to all subsequent Western philosophy. Plato founded the Academy in Athens, where he taught until his death.

Socrates meets Euthyphro at court administration. Socrates is at court to deal with issues surrounding his indictment by Meletus on charges of inventing gods and corrupting youth to follow those figments. Euthyphro is at court to bring charges against his own father, who left a murderer employee to die in a ditch, bound at wrists and ankles. Socrates notes that, in order to bring such a serious charge against one's own father, Euthyphro must have advanced greatly in wisdom. Euthyphro brags that he has. Socrates questions Euthyphro's claim to knowledge, but Euthyphro persists, claiming to possess clear knowledge. So, Socrates makes himself Euthyphro's student upon questions of piety.

Euthyphro says he should prosecute his father because Zeus punished his own father. Socrates asks Euthyphro if he believes such stories. Euthyphro indicates that he does. Euthyphro says that holiness consists in just such acts as prosecuting one's father under these circumstances. Socrates objects that this is an instance of holiness, as Euthyphro understands it, but not a definition. Socrates asks Euthyphro to state what is essential to the concepts of "holy" and "unholy."

DEFINITION #1: Euthyphro responds that the holy is what is dear to the gods. Socrates notes that the gods disagree, and the subject of their disputes is holiness or goodness. So, prosecuting Euthyphro's father will be approved by some gods and disapproved by others. Euthyphro's definition fails. Socrates notes that men, and gods as well, do not argue that wrongdoers should not pay the penalty for their deeds.

DEFINITION #2: Whatever all the gods hate is unholy and whatever they all love is holy, and those matters on which they disagree are neither or both. Socrates inquires whether the gods love the holy because it is holy, or is a matter holy because it is loved by the gods. Euthyphro acknowledges that this definition is also defective. He complains that whatever definition he proffers seems to prove inadequate.

DEFINITION #3: All that is holy is right. Holiness is a subset of right, so some right things may not be holy. Euthyphro suggests that holy rightness pertains to attention to the gods. The remainder of rightness pertains to the service of men. Socrates inquires as to the meaning of "attention." Socrates points out that human attention cannot help the gods. Euthyphro clarifies that "attention" to the gods means service to the gods. Socrates asks what the gods accomplish by utilizing men's service. Euthyphro backtracks, asserting that holiness is doing what gratifies the gods. Socrates criticizes this as a recurrence to Definition #1. Euthyphro moves on.

DEFINITION #4: Euthyphro defines holiness as the science of giving to and asking from the gods. Socrates asks what the gods get in this barter with men. Euthyphro answers that gods receive praise, which is precious to them. Socrates notes that this is again a return to Definition #1. Socrates proposes that he and Euthyphro begin again at the beginning.

Euthyphro is too busy, and bustles off.