



EUTHUPHRO

By: PLATO

Translated by: BENJAMIN JOWETT

Additions, corrections, and footnotes by Barry F. Vaughan¹

Persons of the Dialogue: Sokrates and Euthuphro

Scene: The Porch of the King Archon, Athens

²Euthuphro: Why have you left the Lyceum, Sokrates? And what are you doing in the Porch of the King Archon?² Surely you cannot be concerned in a suit before the King, like myself?

Sokrates: Not in a suit, Euthuphro; impeachment is the word which the Athenians use.

Euthuphro: What?! I suppose that someone has been prosecuting you, for I cannot believe that you are the prosecutor of another.

Sokrates: Certainly not!

Euthuphro: Then, someone else [is] prosecuting you?

Sokrates: Yes.

Euthuphro: And, who is he?

Sokrates: A young man who is little known, Euthuphro; and I hardly know him: his name is Meletos, and he is of the deme of Pitthis. Perhaps you may remember his appearance; he has a beak, and long straight hair, and a beard which is ill grown.

¹ This text is adapted from the Project Gutenberg's *Crito*, by Plato, www.gutenberg.org. For the full text visit the Project Gutenberg website. This edited version is intended for academic or personal use and may not be sold or used for profit.

I have changed spellings of proper names to more accurately match the Greek text as opposed to the more traditional Latinized spellings which were dominant in Jowett's time. I have also changed UK spellings to US spellings where appropriate, as well as made clarifications in translation (noted with brackets) and have added explanatory footnotes.

² Athens had been a democracy since 510 BCE when the dictator Hippias was overthrown by a popular uprising led by Kleisthenes. However, the title of "King Archon" was maintained for the officer who oversaw the high court of Athens where capital cases were heard.

Euthuphro: No, I do not remember him, Sokrates. But what is the charge which he brings against you?

Sokrates: What's the charge? Well, a very serious charge, which shows a good deal of character in the young man, and for which he is certainly not to be despised. He says he knows how the youth are corrupted and who are their corruptors. I fancy that he must be a wise man, and seeing that I am the reverse of a wise man, he has found me out, and is going to accuse me of corrupting his young friends. And of this our mother the [Polis] is to be the judge. Of all our political men he is the only one who seems to me to begin in the right way, with the cultivation of virtue in youth; like a good husbandman, he makes the young shoots his first care, and clears away us who are the destroyers of ³them. This is only the first step; he will afterwards attend to the elder branches; and if he goes on as he has begun, he will be a very great public benefactor.

Euthuphro: I hope that he may; but I rather fear, Sokrates, that the opposite will turn out to be the truth. My opinion is that in attacking you he is simply aiming a blow at the foundation of the [Polis]. But in what way does he say that you corrupt the young?

Sokrates: He brings a wonderful accusation against me, which at first hearing excites surprise: he says that I am a poet or maker of gods, and that I invent new gods and deny the existence of old ones; this is the ground of his indictment.

Euthuphro: I understand, Sokrates; he means to attack you about the familiar [voice] which occasionally, as you say, comes to you. He thinks that you are an [inventor of religion], and he is going to have you up before the court for this. He knows that such a charge is readily received by the world, as I myself know too well; for when I speak in the assembly about divine things, and foretell the future to them, they laugh at me and think me a madman. Yet every word that I say is true. But they are jealous of us all; and we must be brave and go at them.

Sokrates: Their laughter, friend Euthuphro, isn't a matter of much consequence. For a man may be thought wise; but the Athenians, I suspect, do not much trouble themselves about him until he begins to impart his wisdom to others, and then for some reason or other, perhaps, as you say, from jealousy, they are angry.

Euthuphro: I am never likely to try their temper in this way.

Sokrates: I dare say not, for you are reserved in your behavior, and seldom impart your wisdom. But I have a benevolent habit of pouring out myself to everybody, and would even pay for a listener, and I am afraid that the Athenians may think me too talkative. Now if, as I was saying, they would only laugh at me, as you say that they laugh at you, the time might pass gaily enough in the court; but perhaps they may be in earnest, and then what the end will be you soothsayers only can predict.

Euthuphro: I dare say that the affair will end in nothing, Sokrates, and that you will win your cause; and I think that I shall win my own.

Sokrates: And what is your suit, Euthuphro? Are you the [prosecutor] or the defendant?

Euthuphro: I am the [prosecutor].

Sokrates: Of whom?

⁴Euthuphro: You will think me mad when I tell you.

Sokrates: Why, has the fugitive wings?

Euthuphro: Nay, he isn't very [active] at his time of life.

Sokrates: Who is he?

Euthuphro: My father.

Sokrates: Your father?! My good man!

Euthuphro: Yes!

Sokrates: And of what is he accused?

Euthuphro: Of murder, Sokrates.

Sokrates: By Herakles, Euthuphro! How little does the common herd know of the nature of right and truth. A man must be extraordinary, and have made great strides in wisdom, before he could have seen his way to bring such an [case].

Euthuphro: By Zeus, Sokrates, he must.

Sokrates: I suppose that the man whom your father murdered was one of your relatives? Clearly he was; for if he had been a stranger you would never have thought of prosecuting him.

Euthuphro: I am amused, Sokrates, at your making a distinction between one who is a [relative] and one who isn't; for surely the pollution³ is the same in either case, if you knowingly associate with the murderer when you ought to [cleanse] yourself and him by [prosecuting] him.

The real question is whether the murdered man has been justly slain. If justly, then your duty is to let the matter alone; but if unjustly, then even if the murderer lives under the same roof with you and eats at the same table, proceed against him.

³ The Greek term here is *miasma*-μιασμα which can be translated 'stain', 'pollution', 'sin', 'taint'. However, none of these English terms quite captures the full implications of the Greek term. *Miasma* was thought to be a kind of infection of the soul contracted through acts contrary to the will of the gods, especially sacrilege and murder. If not expiated via sacrifice *miasma* could spread beyond the wrongdoer to infect other members of the household of the offender and even later generations.

Now the man who is dead was a poor dependent of mine who worked for us as a field laborer on our farm in Naxos: one day in a fit of drunken passion he got into a quarrel with one of our house [slaves] and slew him. My father bound him hand and foot and threw him into a ditch, and then sent to Athens to ask of a [seer] what he should do with him. Meanwhile he never attended to him and took no care about him, for he regarded him as a murderer; and thought that no great harm would be done even if he did die. Now this was just what happened. For such was the effect of cold and hunger and chains upon him, that before the messenger returned from the [seer], he was dead.

And [now] my father and family are angry with me for [defending] the murderer and prosecuting my father. They say that he [my father] did not kill him, and that if he did, the dead man was a murderer [anyway], and I ought not to [be concerned for him]; [they say] a son is impious who prosecutes [his] father. Which shows, Sokrates, how little they know what the gods think about piety and impiety.

Sokrates: Good heavens, Euthuphro! And is your knowledge of religion and of things pious and impious so very exact, that, supposing the circumstances to be as you state them, you are not afraid lest you too may be doing an impious thing in bringing an action against your father?

Euthuphro: [What makes me better than other men], Sokrates, is exact[ly my] knowledge of all ⁵such matters. What should I be good for without it?

Sokrates: Rare friend! I think that I cannot do better than be your [student]. Then before the trial with Meletos [begins] I shall challenge him, and say that I have always had a great interest in religious questions, and now, as he charges me with rash imaginations and innovations in religion, I have become your disciple.

“You, Meletos,” as I shall say to him, “acknowledge Euthuphro to be [an expert on religion], and sound in his opinions; and if you approve of him you ought to approve of me, and not have me into court; but if you disapprove, you should begin by indicting him who is my teacher, and who will be the ruin, not of the young, but of the old; that is to say, of myself whom he instructs, and of his old father whom he admonishes and chastises.”

And if Meletos refuses to listen to me, but will go on, and will not shift the indictment from me to you, I cannot do better than repeat this challenge in the court.

Euthuphro: Yes, indeed, Sokrates! And if he attempts to indict me I am mistaken if I do not find a flaw in him; the court shall have a great deal more to say to him than to me.

Sokrates: And I, my dear friend, knowing this, am desirous of becoming your disciple. For I observe that no one appears to notice you—not even this Meletos. But his sharp eyes have found me out at once, and he has indicted me for impiety. And therefore, I adjure you to tell me the nature of piety and impiety, which you said that you knew so well, and of murder, and of other offences against the gods. What *are* they? Isn't piety in every action always the same? And *impiety*—is it not always *the opposite of piety*, and also the same with itself, having, as impiety, one notion which includes whatever is impious?

Euthuphro: To be sure, Sokrates.

Sokrates: [So], what *is* piety, and what *is* impiety?

Euthuphro: *Piety is doing as I am doing*; that is to say, prosecuting any one who is guilty of murder, sacrilege, or of any similar crime—whether he be your father or mother, or whoever he may be—that makes no difference; and not to prosecute them is impiety.

And please consider, Sokrates, *what a notable proof* I will give you of the truth of my words, a proof which I have already given to others: of the principle, I mean, that the impious, whoever he may be, ⁶ought not to go unpunished. For do not men regard Zeus as the best and most righteous of the gods, and yet they admit that he bound his father (Kronos) because he wickedly devoured his sons, and that he too had punished his own father (Oranos) for a similar reason, in a nameless manner.⁴ And yet when I proceed against my father, they are angry with me. So inconsistent are they in their way of talking when the gods are concerned, and when I am concerned.

Sokrates: May not this be the reason, Euthuphro, why I am charged with impiety—that I cannot [abide] these stories about the gods? And [that], I suppose, [is why] people think me [wicked]. But, as you who are well informed about them approve of them, I cannot do better than assent to your superior wisdom. What else can I say, confessing as I do, that I know nothing about them? Tell me, for the love of Zeus, whether you really believe that they are true.⁵

Euthuphro: Yes, Sokrates! And things [even] more [amazing], of which the world is in ignorance.

Sokrates: And do you really believe that the gods, fought with one another, and had [fierce] quarrels, battles, and the like, as the poets say, and as you may see represented in the works of great artists? The temples are full of them; and notably the robe of Athena, which is carried up to the Acropolis at the great Panathenaea, is embroidered with them.⁶ Are all these tales of the gods true, Euthuphro?

Euthuphro: Yes, Sokrates; and, as I was saying, I can tell you, if you would like to hear them, many other things about the gods which would quite amaze you.

Sokrates: I dare say; and you shall tell me at some other time when I have leisure. But at present I would rather hear from you a more precise answer, which you have not as yet given,

⁴ The story of how Kronos overthrew his father, Oranos, and how Zeus in turn overthrew his father—Kronos—is found in the Greek creation myth by Hesiod: *The Theogeny*. You can read Hesiod's poem in Chapter 1 above.

⁵ This is a particularly interesting passage where while he does not outright say he does not believe these stories about the gods, he clearly implies skepticism. While he defers here to Euthuphro's "superior wisdom" in these matters, it is clear from the following passages that Sokrates thinks it would be impossible for the gods to disagree about most things. See 7bff below.

⁶ The Panathenaia (literally, "all Athena") was the major Athenian holiday celebrated every four years in the month of June.

my friend, to the question, “What is *piety*?” When asked, you only replied, “Doing as [I am] do[ing], charging [my] father with murder.”

Euthuphro: And what I said was true, Sokrates.

Sokrates: No doubt, Euthuphro; but you would admit that there are many *other* pious acts?

Euthuphro: There are.

Sokrates: Remember that I did not ask you to give me two or three *examples* of piety, but to explain the [*that*] which makes all pious things pious. Do you not recollect that there was one idea which made the impious impious, and the pious pious?

Euthuphro: I remember.

Sokrates: Tell me what is the nature of this idea, and then I shall have a standard to which I may look, and by which I may measure actions, whether yours or those of any one else, and then I shall be able to say that such and such an action is pious, such another impious.

Euthuphro: I will tell you, if you like.

Sokrates: I should *very* much like.

⁷**Euthuphro:** Piety, then, is *that which is dear to the gods*, and impiety is that which isn't dear to them.

Sokrates: Very good, Euthuphro; you have now given me the sort of answer which I wanted. But whether what you say is true or not I cannot as yet tell, although I make no doubt that you will prove the truth of your words.

Euthuphro: Of course.

Sokrates: Come, then, and let us examine what we are saying. That thing or person which is [loved by] the gods is pious, and that thing or person which is [despised by] the gods is impious, these two being the opposites of one another. Was not that said?

Euthuphro: It was.

Sokrates: And well said?

Euthuphro: Yes, Sokrates, I thought so; it was certainly said.

Sokrates: And further, Euthuphro, the gods were admitted to have [quarrels] and [fights] and [disagreements]?

Euthuphro: Yes, that was also said.

Sokrates: And what sort of [disagreement] creates [quarrels] and anger? Suppose for example that you and I, my good friend, differ about a number; do differences of this sort make us enemies and set us at variance with one another? Do we not go at once to arithmetic, and put an end to them by [calculating the answer]?

Euthuphro: True.

Sokrates: Or suppose that we differ about [sizes], do we not quickly end the differences by measuring?

Euthuphro: Very true.

Sokrates: And we end a controversy about heavy and light [things] by resorting to a weighing machine?

Euthuphro: To be sure.

Sokrates: But what [disputes] are there which cannot be decided [this way], and which, therefore, make us angry and set us at [odds] with one another? I[t seems] the answer doesn't occur to you at the moment, and therefore I will suggest that these [fights] arise when the [dispute is over] the just and unjust, good and evil, [and what is] honorable and dishonorable. Are not these the points about which men differ, and about which when we are unable satisfactorily to decide our differences, you and I and all of us quarrel, when we do quarrel?

Euthuphro: Yes, Sokrates, the nature of the differences about which we quarrel is such as you describe.

Sokrates: And the quarrels [between] the gods, noble Euthuphro, when they occur, are of a like nature?

Euthuphro: Certainly they are.

Sokrates: They have differences of opinion, as you say, about [what is] good and evil, just and unjust, honorable and dishonorable: there would have been no quarrels among them, if there had been no such differences, would there?

Euthuphro: No, you are quite right.

Sokrates: Doesn't every man love that which he [believes is] noble and just and good, and hate the opposite of them?

Euthuphro: Very true.

⁸**Sokrates:** But, as you say, people regard the same things—some [thinking them] just and others unjust—about *these* [things] they [argue]; and [therefore] wars and fighting [arise] among

them.

Euthuphro: Very true.

Sokrates: Then the same things are hated by [some] gods and loved by the [others], and [the same things] are both hateful *and* dear to them?

Euthuphro: True.

Sokrates: And upon this view the same things, Euthuphro, will be [both] pious *and* also impious?

Euthuphro: I should suppose.

Sokrates: Then, my friend, I remark with surprise that you have not answered the question which I asked. For I certainly did not ask you to tell me what action is *both* pious and impious: but now it would seem that what is loved by the gods is also hated by them. And therefore, Euthuphro, in [prosecuting] your father you may very likely be doing what is agreeable to Zeus but disagreeable to Kronos or Oranus, and what is [loved by] Hephaestus but [hated by] Hera, and there may be other gods who have similar differences of opinion.

Euthuphro: But I believe, Sokrates, that all the gods would agree [about] the propriety of punishing a murderer: there would be no difference of opinion about *that*.

Sokrates: Well, but speaking of men, Euthuphro, did you ever hear any one arguing that a murderer or any sort of evil-doer ought to be let off?

Euthuphro: I [would] say that these are the questions which they are *always* arguing [about], especially in courts of law: they commit all sorts of crimes, and there isn't anything which they will not do or say in their own defence.

Sokrates: But, do they admit their [own] guilt, Euthuphro, and [*then*] say that they ought not to be punished?

Euthuphro: No! They do not.

Sokrates: Then there are some things which they do not venture to say and do: for they do not argue that the guilty are to be *unpunished*, but [rather] they deny [that they *are* guilty], do they not?

Euthuphro: Yes.

Sokrates: Then they do not argue that the [wicked] should not be punished, but they argue about who the [wicked] *is*, and what he *did*, and *when*?

Euthuphro: True.

Sokrates: And the gods [would be] in the same [position], if as you assert they quarrel about [what is] just and unjust, and some of them say while others deny that injustice is done among them. For surely neither god nor man will ever venture to say that the doer of injustice isn't to be punished?

Euthuphro: That is true, Sokrates, in the main.

Sokrates: But they [disagree] about the particulars—[both] gods and men alike—and, *if* they dispute at all, they dispute about some act which is called in question, and which by some is affirmed to be just [and] by others to be unjust. Isn't that true?

Euthuphro: Quite true.

Sokrates: Well then, my dear friend Euthuphro, do tell me, for my better instruction and information, what proof have you that in the opinion of *all* the gods a servant who is guilty of murder, and is put in chains by the master of the dead man, and dies because he is put in chains before he who bound him can learn from the interpreters of the gods what he ought to do with him, dies unjustly; and that on behalf of such a one a son *ought* to proceed against his father and accuse him of murder. How would you show that *all the gods absolutely agree* in approving of his act? Prove to me that they do, and I will applaud your wisdom as long as I live.

Euthuphro: It will be a difficult task; but I could make the matter very dear indeed to you.

Sokrates: I understand; you mean to say that I am not [as bright] as the judges: for to them you will be sure to prove that the act is unjust, and [therefore] hateful to the gods.

Euthuphro: Yes indeed, Sokrates; at least if they will listen to me.

Sokrates: But they will be sure to listen if they find that you are a good speaker. There was a notion that came into my mind while you were speaking; I said to myself: "Well, and what if Euthuphro *does* prove to me that all the gods regarded the death of the *thete* as unjust, how do I know anything more of the nature of piety and impiety? For granting that this action *may* be hateful to the gods, still piety and impiety are not *defined* by these distinctions, for that which is hateful to the gods has been shown to be also pleasing and dear to them."

And therefore, Euthuphro, I do not ask you to prove this; I will suppose, if you like, that all the gods condemn and abominate such an action. But I will amend the definition so far as to say that *what all the gods hate is impious, and what they love pious or holy; and what some of them love and others hate is both or neither*. Shall this be our definition of piety and impiety?

Euthuphro: Why not, Sokrates?

Sokrates: Why not! Certainly, as far as I am concerned, Euthuphro, there is no reason why not. But whether this admission will greatly assist you in the task of instructing me as you promised, is a matter for you to consider.

Euthuphro: Yes, I should say that *what all the gods love is pious and holy, and the opposite which they all hate, impious.*

Sokrates: Ought we to enquire into the truth of this, Euthuphro, or simply to accept the mere statement on our own authority and that of others? What do you say?

Euthuphro: We should enquire; and I believe that the statement will stand the test of enquiry.

¹⁰**Sokrates:** We shall know better, my good friend, in a little while. The point which I first wish to understand is whether [piety]—[that which is holy]—is loved by the gods *because* it's [pious], or [is it pious] because it's loved [by] the gods.

Euthuphro: I do not understand your meaning, Sokrates.

Sokrates: I will endeavor to explain: we, speak of 'carrying' and we speak of 'being carried', of 'leading' and 'being led', 'seeing' and 'being seen'. You know that in all such cases there is a difference, and you know also in what the difference lies?

Euthuphro: I think that I understand.

Sokrates: And isn't 'that which is loved' distinct from 'that which loves'?

Euthuphro: Certainly.

Sokrates: Well now tell me, is 'that which is carried' in this state of 'carried' *because* it's being carried, or for some other reason?

Euthuphro: No; that is the reason.

Sokrates: And the same is true of what is led and of what is seen?

Euthuphro: True.

Sokrates: And a thing isn't 'seen' *because* it's visible, but conversely, [it's] visible *because* it's seen; nor is a thing led *because* it's in the state of being led, or carried *because* it's in the state of being carried, but the converse [true]. And now I think, Euthuphro, that my meaning will be intelligible; and my meaning is, that *any state of action or passion implies previous action or passion*. It doesn't *become* because it's *becoming*, but it's in a state of becoming because it becomes; neither does it suffer because it's in a state of suffering, but it's in a state of suffering because it suffers. Do you not agree?

Euthuphro: Yes.

Sokrates: Isn't that which is loved in some state either of becoming or suffering?

Euthuphro: Yes.

Sokrates: And the same holds as in the previous instances; the state of being loved *follows the act* of being loved, and not the act the state.

Euthuphro: Certainly.

Sokrates: And what do you say of piety, Euthuphro: isn't piety—according to your definition—loved by all the gods?

Euthuphro: Yes.

Sokrates: *Because* it's holy, or for some *other* reason?

Euthuphro: No, that is the reason.

Sokrates: It is loved *because* it's holy, [its] not holy because it's loved?

Euthuphro: Yes.

Sokrates: And that which is [desired by] the gods is loved by them, and is in a state to be loved [by] them *because* it's loved [by] them?

Euthuphro: Certainly.

Sokrates: Then that which is dear to the gods, Euthuphro, isn't holy, nor is that which is holy loved [by] god, as you affirm; but they are two different things.

Euthuphro: How do you mean, Sokrates?

Sokrates: I mean to say that [piety] has been acknowledged by us to be loved [by] god *because* it's holy, [it is] not holy *because* it's loved [by god].

Euthuphro: Yes.

Sokrates: [On the other hand] that which is dear to the gods is dear to them *because* it's loved by them, [it is] not loved by them *because it's dear to them*.

Euthuphro: True.

Sokrates: [So], friend Euthuphro, if that which is [pious] is the same [as] that which is dear to god, and is loved because it's holy, then that which is dear to god would have been loved [because it ¹¹was] dear to god; but if that which [is] dear to god is dear to him *because* [it's] loved by him, then that which is holy would have been holy *because [it was] loved* by him. But now you see that the reverse is the case, and that they are quite different from one another. For one 'the god loved' (θεοφιλες – *theophiles*) is of a kind to be loved *because it's loved*, and the

other is loved because it's *of a kind* (οσιον – *osion*) *to be loved*. Thus you appear to me, Euthuphro, when I ask you what is the *essence* of [piety], to [only be offering] an *attribute* and not the *essence*—the attribute of being loved by all the gods.

But you still refuse to explain to me the [essence] of [piety]. And therefore, if you please, I will ask you not to hide your treasure, but to tell me once more what holiness or piety *really is*, whether [it's] dear to the gods or not (for that is a matter about which we will not quarrel), and [also tell me] what impiety [is]?

Euthuphro: I really do not know, Sokrates, how to express what I mean. For somehow or other our arguments, on whatever ground we rest them, seem to turn [a]round and walk away from us.

Sokrates: Your [statements], Euthuphro, are like the handiwork of my ancestor Daidalos⁷ and if I were the [speaker] or [maker] of them, you might say that my arguments walk away and will not remain fixed where they are placed because I am a descendant of his. But now, since *these notions are your own*, you must find some other [joke], for they certainly, as you yourself allow, show an inclination to be on the move.

Euthuphro: [No], Sokrates, I shall *still* say that you are the Daidalos who sets arguments in motion; not I, but you make them move or go round, for they would never have stirred, as far as I am concerned.

Sokrates: Then I must be a *greater* than Daidalos: for whereas he only made his own inventions move, I move those of other people as well! And the beauty of it is, that I would rather not. For I would give the wisdom of Daidalos, and the wealth of Tantalos,⁸ to be able to detain them and keep them fixed.

But enough of this! As I perceive that you are lazy, I will myself endeavor to show you how you might instruct me in the nature of piety; and I hope that you will not grudge your labor.

Tell me, then, isn't that which is pious [also] *just*?

⁷ Daidalos is a mythical figure in Greek culture most noted for his creation of the labyrinth of Crete and the tragic story of his son Ikaros who's wax wings melted when he flew too close to the sun. Athenians, like all Classical Greeks, traced their tribal lineages back to mythical figures. Daidalos had been appropriated in Athens and held to be the great-grandson of Eretheos, the mythical founder and first king of Athens. Thus, Sokrates, an Athenian, can claim to be descended from Daidalos. Daidalos was also associated with tool-making and industrious invention. Sokrates' reference to his statues "walking away" reflects Daidalos' supposed mechanical innovations.

⁸ Tantalos is a mythical figure associated with the underworld. He was a demigod who incurred the wrath of Zeus and was punished by banishment to Tartaros where he stood in a pool of water, under a fruit tree. When he grew hungry, the branches of the tree would withdraw from him so he could never reach the fruit. When he grew thirsty, the water would retreat so he could never quench his thirst. Sokrates' reference to the "wealth" of Tantalos could refer to the fact that he was never able to consume the wealth (the fruit and water) he had at his disposal and thus he was always "wealthy". It could also be a reference to one of the sins for which he was supposedly punished, stealing a golden dog made by the god Hephaestos. Or, it might simply refer to the bounty of the underworld (i.e., gold and silver) with which he is associated.

Euthuphro: Yes.

¹²**Sokrates:** And is all [that] is just [also] pious? Or, is that which is pious all just, but that which is just, only [a] part, and not all, pious?

Euthuphro: I do not understand you, Sokrates.

Sokrates: And yet, I know that you are as much wiser than I am, as you are younger. But, as I was saying, revered friend, the abundance of your wisdom makes you lazy. Please exert yourself, for there is no difficulty in understanding me. What I mean I [can] explain [with] an illustration. The poet sings:

Of Zeus, the author and creator of all these things, You will not tell: for where there is fear there is also reverence.⁹

Now I disagree with this poet. Shall I tell you in what respect?

Euthuphro: By all means.

Sokrates: I [would] not say that “where there is fear there is also reverence.” For I am sure that many [people] fear poverty and disease, and [similar] evils. But, I do not [think] that they [revere] the [things they] fear.

Euthuphro: Very true.

Sokrates: But where[ver] reverence is, *there* [you find] fear. For he who has a feeling of reverence and shame about the commission of any action, fears and is afraid of [a bad] reputation.

Euthuphro: No doubt.

Sokrates: [Therefore], we are wrong in saying that where[ever] there is fear there is also reverence. [Rather] we *should* say, where[ever] there is reverence, there is also fear. But there isn’t always reverence where there is fear; for fear is a more extended notion, and *reverence is a part of fear*, just as the odd is a part of number, and number is a more extended notion than the odd. I suppose that you follow me now?

Euthuphro: Quite well.

Sokrates: That was the sort of question which I meant when I asked whether the just is always pious, or the pious always just; and whether there may not be justice where there isn’t piety. For justice is the more extended notion [and] piety is only a part. Do you [disagree]?

Euthuphro: No, I think that you are quite right.

⁹ Stasinos of Cyprus (c. 800 BCE), purported author of the epic poem Kupria.

Sokrates: Then, if piety is a *part* of justice, I suppose that we should enquire [into] what part?

If you had pursued the enquiry in the previous cases—for instance, if you had asked me what is an even number, and what part of number the even is, I should have had no difficulty in replying, “a number which represents a [geometrical] figure having two equal sides.” Do you not agree?

Euthuphro: Yes, I quite agree.

Sokrates: In like manner, I want you to tell me what *part* of justice piety [is], that I may be able to tell Meletos not to do me injustice, or indict me for impiety, as I am now adequately instructed by you in the nature of piety, and its opposite.

Euthuphro: Piety, Sokrates, appears to me to be that part of justice which [cares for]¹⁰ the gods, as the other part of justice [cares for] men.

Sokrates: That is good, Euthuphro; yet still there is a little point about which I should like to have ¹³further information. What is the meaning of ‘care for’? The term ‘care’ can hardly be used in the same sense when applied to the gods as when applied to other things. For instance, horses are said to require ‘care’, and not every person is able to [care for] them, but only a person [knowledgeable]¹¹ in horsemanship. [Isn’t that right]?

Euthuphro: Certainly.

Sokrates: [So] horsemanship is the [knowledge] of [caring for] horses?

Euthuphro: Yes.

Sokrates: Nor is everyone qualified to [care for] dogs, but only the huntsman?

Euthuphro: True.

Sokrates: And I should also conceive that the [knowledge]of the huntsman is the [knowledge]of attending to dogs?

Euthuphro: Yes.

Sokrates: As the [knowledge] of the ox-herd is the [knowledge]of attending to oxen?

¹⁰ The Greek term here is *θραπειαν-thrapeian* from which the English word ‘therapy’ is derived. Jowett follows Fowler in translating it as ‘attention’. I agree with Grube that ‘care’ is a far better translation. One might “pay attention” to something or someone without having the kind of commitment to improvement which is clearly indicated by the context of Sokrates’ analogies of horsemen, herdsmen and dog trainers.

¹¹ The Greek term here is *επισταται-epistatai*, which is a cognate of *επισταμαι-epistamai*, which means ‘to know’ or ‘be knowledgeable’ to the point of practical application. Having an interest in something, even having a fascination or love of something does not bestow this kind of expertise. One might be fascinated with, or even love, horses and also fail to have the kind of knowledge required to make them an equestrian.

Euthuphro: Very true.

Sokrates: In like manner piety and reverence is the art of [caring for] the gods? That would be your meaning, Euthuphro?

Euthuphro: Yes.

Sokrates: And isn't [care (*therapeia*)] always designed *for the good or benefit of* that to which the attention is given? As in the case of horses, you may observe that when attended to by the [equestrian's] art they are benefited and improved, are they not?

Euthuphro: True.

Sokrates: As the dogs are benefited by the huntsman's [knowledge], and the oxen by the art of the ox herd, and all other things are tended or attended for their good and not for their [harm]?

Euthuphro: Certainly, not for their [harm].

Sokrates: But for their [benefit]?

Euthuphro: Of course.

Sokrates: Then does holiness—which has been defined [as caring for] the gods—benefit or improve them? Would you say that when you do a [pious] act you make any of the gods better?

Euthuphro: No! That was certainly *not* what I meant.

Sokrates: And I, Euthuphro, never [thought] you did. I asked you the question about the nature of the [care], because I thought that you did *not*.

Euthuphro: You do me justice, Sokrates; that isn't the sort of [care] I mean.

Sokrates: Good! But I must still ask *what is* this [care] to the gods which is called 'piety'?

Euthuphro: It is such, Sokrates, as [slaves] show to their masters.

Sokrates: I understand—a sort of [assistance] to the gods.

Euthuphro: Exactly.

Sokrates: Medicine is also a sort of [assistance] or service, having in view the attainment of some object—would you not say of health?

Euthuphro: I [would]!

Sokrates: Again, there is an art which [assists] the ship-builder with a view to the attainment of

some result?

Euthuphro: Yes, Sokrates, with a view to the building a ship.

Sokrates: As there is an art which [assists] the house-builder: with a view to the building of a house?

Euthuphro: Yes.

Sokrates: And now tell me, my good friend, about the art which [assists] the gods: what work does that help to accomplish? You must surely know if, as you say, you are of all [living] men the one who is [most knowledgeable] in religion.

Euthuphro: And I speak the truth, Sokrates.

Sokrates: Tell me then, oh [please] tell me—what is that [good] work which the gods do [with] our [assistance]?

Euthuphro: Many and fair, Sokrates, are the works which they do.

¹⁴**Sokrates:** Why, so are those of a general, my friend. But the chief of them is easily told. Would you not say that victory in war is the chief of them?

Euthuphro: Certainly.

Sokrates: “Many and fair”, are also the works of the husbandman, if I am not mistaken; but his chief work is the production of food from the earth?

Euthuphro: Exactly.

Sokrates: And of the many and fair things done by the gods, which is the chief or principal one?

Euthuphro: I have told you already, Sokrates, that to learn all these things accurately will be very tiresome. Let me simply say that piety or holiness is learning how to please the gods in word and deed, by prayers and sacrifices. Such piety, is the salvation of families and Cities, just as the impious, which is displeasing to the gods, is their ruin and destruction.

Sokrates: I think you could have answered the question I asked in fewer words, Euthuphro, if you had chosen. But I see that you are not disposed to [teach] me—clearly not. Why else, when we reached the [conclusion], did you turn, aside? Had you only answered me I [would] have truly learned [from] you the nature of piety.

Now, as the asker of a question is necessarily dependent on the answerer, whither he leads—I must follow and can only ask again, what is the pious, and what is piety? Do you mean that they are a sort of [expertise] of praying and sacrificing?

Euthuphro: Yes, I do.

Sokrates: And sacrificing is giving to the gods, and prayer is asking of the gods?

Euthuphro: Yes, Sokrates.

Sokrates: Upon this view, then, piety is [being expert in] asking and giving?

Euthuphro: You understand me capitally, Sokrates.

Sokrates: Yes, my friend. The reason is that I am a [follower] of your [expertise], and give my mind to it, and nothing which you say will be wasted upon me. Please then, tell me, what is the nature of this service to the gods? Do you mean that we [make] requests and give gifts to them?

Euthuphro: Yes, I do.

Sokrates: Isn't the right way of asking, to ask them what we [desire]?

Euthuphro: Certainly.

Sokrates: And the right way of giving is to give to them in return what they want [from] us. There would be no [point] in an art which gives to [someone] that which he doesn't want.

Euthuphro: Very true, Sokrates.

Sokrates: Then piety, Euthuphro, is an art which gods and men have [for] doing business with one another?

Euthuphro: That is an expression which you may use, if you like.

Sokrates: But I have no particular liking for anything *but* the truth. I wish, however, that you ¹⁵would tell me *what benefit accrues* to the gods from our gifts. There is no doubt about what they give to us; for there is no good thing which they do not give; but *how we can give any good thing to them in return is far from being equally clear*. If they give everything and we give nothing, that must be an [enterprise] in which we have the advantage of them!

Euthuphro: And do you imagine, Sokrates, that any benefit accrues to the gods from our gifts?

Sokrates: But if not, Euthuphro, what is the meaning of 'gifts', which are conferred by us upon the gods?

Euthuphro: What else, but tributes of honor; and, as I was just now saying, what pleases them?

Sokrates: Piety, then, is pleasing to the gods, but not beneficial or dear to them?

Euthuphro: I should say that nothing could be clearer.

Sokrates: Then once more the assertion is repeated: piety is [what is pleasing] to the gods?

Euthuphro: Certainly.

Sokrates: And when you say this, can you wonder at your words not standing firm, but walking away? Will you accuse *me* of being the Daidalos who makes them walk away, not perceiving that there is another and far greater artist than Daidalos who makes them go round in a circle, and he is yourself; for the argument, as you will perceive, comes round to the same point. Were we not saying that the holy or pious was *not the same* with that which is loved of the gods? Have you forgotten?

Euthuphro: I quite remember.

Sokrates: And [now you are] saying that what is loved of the gods is holy; and isn't this the same as what is dear to them—do you see?

Euthuphro: True.

Sokrates: Then either we were wrong in [our] former assertion; or, if we were right then, we are wrong now.

Euthuphro: One of the two must be true.

Sokrates: Then we must begin again and ask, What *is* piety? That is an enquiry which I shall never be weary of pursuing as far as in me lies; and I entreat you not to scorn me, but to apply your mind to the utmost, and tell me the truth. For, if *any* man knows, you are he; and therefore I must detain you, like Proteus,¹² until you tell. If you had not certainly known the nature of piety and impiety, I am confident that you would never, on behalf of a serf, have charged your aged father with murder. You would not have run such a risk of doing wrong in the sight of the gods, and you would have had too much respect for the opinions of men. I am sure, therefore, that you know the nature of piety and impiety. Speak out then, my dear Euthuphro, and do not hide your knowledge.

Euthuphro: Another time, Sokrates; for I am in a hurry, and must go now.

¹⁶**Sokrates:** Alas my companion! Will you leave me in despair? I was hoping that you would instruct me in the nature of piety and impiety; and then I might have cleared myself of Meletos and his indictment. I would have told him that I had been enlightened by Euthuphro, and had given up rash innovations and speculations, in which I indulged only through ignorance, and that now I am about to lead a better life.

¹² Probably a reference to Proteus of Egypt from Herodotos' The History, where he gives a version of the abduction of Helen by Paris. Paris' ship is blown off course and lands in Egypt. Proteus is the king of Egypt who detains Paris and demands an explanation of his actions.