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Reason and Persuasion

Three Dialogues By Plato: Euthyphro, Meno, Republic Book I

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The text is set in Hypatia Sans Pro.

Chapter 6
EUTHYPHRO





SUMMARY OF SECTIONS

On the Steps of the Court: Socrates' Case

[2A-3E]

Introductions. We meet Socrates, Euthyphro, the absent Meletus (Socrates' prosecutor) and — stretching a point — the citizens of Athens. Socrates explains about his case. He is accused of corrupting the youth by introducing new gods into the city.

Euthyphro's case: Ought a Son to Prosecute a Father?

[3E-5A]

Euthyphro explains about his own case. His father caused the death of a servant, who was himself a murderer. The question: ought a son to prosecute a father? How to know? Euthyphro's first stab: family ties don't bind in these matters.

Holy Enroller: What is Holiness?

[5A-6E]

Socrates enrolls as Euthyphro's pupil. What is holiness? Speculation about the nature of the gods. A condition on possible answers: not just examples; a general form or idea must be produced.

First Attempt at Definition: What the Gods Love is Holy

[7A-8A]

Euthyphro's first attempt at definition: what the gods love is holy; what is unloved by them is unholy. Awkward consequence: some things will be both holy and unholy.



Injustice Must Be Punished; Second Attempt at Definition

[8A-9D]

E: No one denies that unjust killings must be punished. S: But there is disagreement about what counts as unjust. How does Euthyphro know what the gods will make of his particular case? And, again: what is the definition of 'holiness'. Will it be: what all the gods love?

Do the Gods Love It Because It Is Holy? Divine Orders; Orders of Explanation

[9E-11B]

Modified definition: what all the gods love is holy; what they all hate is unholy. But is the holy loved by the gods because it is holy, or is it holy because it is loved by the god? Either the good (holiness) comes first, inducing love, or love induces the good qualities (holiness). E: The gods love things because they are good (holy). Therefore, Euthyphro's definition cannot be correct. It implies a contradiction: if A is prior to B, and $A = B$, then B is prior to A.

Statues of Daedalus; Containment relations

[11B-12E]

Euthyphro's claims are like statues of Daedalus, running around in circles. A fresh start: all that is holy is necessarily just. But: is all that is just holy? Comparison with the case of fear and shame. Holiness is only one part of the domain of justice. But which part?

Care of the gods; Inconclusive conclusion

[12E-16A]

Holiness is the part of justice concerned with the care of the gods. But what sort of care do the gods require? And why? Shrewd consideration of the balance of trade sustaining the divine service industry. Return to the proposition that what the gods love is pious. Inconclusive conclusion.



- 2A EUTHYPHRO: WHAT'S NEW, SOCRATES? Something out of the ordinary, since it has dragged you from your usual haunts in the Lyceum to hang around the archon basileus' court. Surely it can't be that you, like me, have a suit pending against someone before the basileus?

SOCRATES: The Athenian term for what brings me here is not suit but indictment, Euthyphro.

- E: What? Someone must have indicted you, then.
2B There's no way **you** have indicted someone else.

S: No indeed.

E: But someone has indicted you?

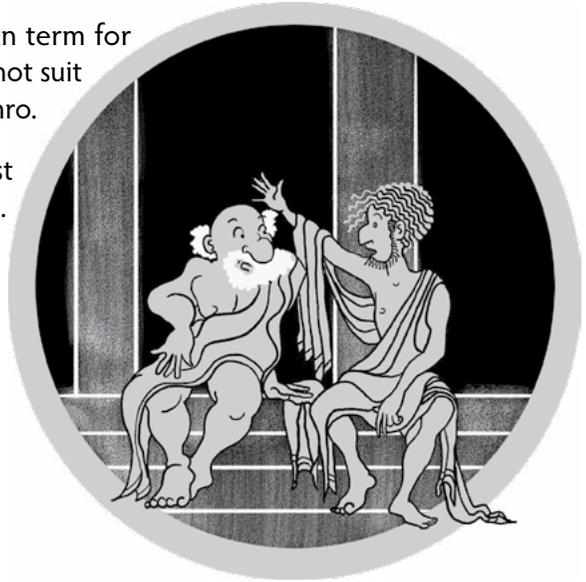
S: That's just it.

E: Who is it?

S: I don't really know the man myself, Euthyphro. He seems to be a young man, and still unknown. He's called Meletus, I gather. He belongs to the Pitthean deme, if you happen to know anyone from there by that name — long hair, thin little beard, rather pointy nose.

- 2C E: Doesn't ring a bell, Socrates. But what's the charge he brought against you?

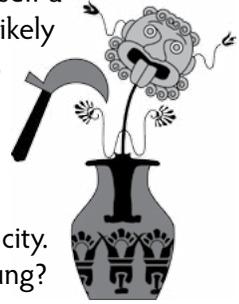
S: What charge, you ask? No mean one, as I see it, for it is no small thing for one so young to have figured out such a serious situation. He says he knows how, and by whom, the young are corrupted. More likely than not the man is wise, so when he sees my dull ignorance corrupting his whole generation, he is provoked to denounce me to the city like a child running to its mother. I think he is the only one of our public men to make a proper start in politics. One's primary concern really ought to be for the young, so they will become



good men — just as it's reasonable for a good farmer to tend young sprouts first, looking after the rest later. In just this way Meletus will start off by uprooting weeds — such as myself — that damage the tender shoots of the young, as he says. Later he will obviously turn his attention to older men, thereby making himself a source of bounty and fruitful blessings for the city; a likely fate for anyone who sets out from a starting point as good as this one.

3 A

E: I hope so, Socrates, but I'm afraid it may be just the opposite. By trying to hurt you, it seems to me he makes a very crude start, cutting at the very heart of the city. But tell me, what does he say you do to corrupt the young?



S: It sounds like an outlandish business, my friend, when you first hear it. He says I fabricate gods. He indicts me, so he says, on behalf of the old gods, whom I don't believe in, since I'm busy making new ones.

3 B

E: I see, Socrates. This is due to the divine sign you say comes to you now and again. This man has written out his indictment against you as against an innovator in divine matters. He comes to court to slander you, knowing such matters can easily be made to appear in a bad light before the crowd. That's how it is with me, too. Whenever I speak up concerning divine matters in the assembly, and foretell the future, they laugh me down as if I were crazy. Yet I have never made a prediction that didn't come true. They envy those of us with such gifts. But you shouldn't pay any attention to them. Just face them head-on.

3 C

S: My dear Euthyphro, maybe being laughed at isn't such a big deal. The Athenians, it seems to me, don't care much about whether so-and-so is brainy, as long as he doesn't **teach** his peculiar brand of wisdom. But if they start to think someone is bringing others round to his way of thinking, **then** the Athenians get riled up — either out of jealousy, as you say, or for some other reason.

3 D

E: I certainly don't have any desire to put their feelings towards **me** to the test.

S: Perhaps they take you for someone who is stingy with himself, and not unduly eager to teach your personal wisdom. But I'm worried that my fondness for people makes them think I am ready to pour out whatever wisdom I have to anyone and everyone — not just for free, but maybe with a little something extra tossed in, happily, if anyone is willing to listen to me talk. Well then, as I said just now, if they were just going to laugh at me, as they laugh at you, there would be nothing unpleasant about the prospect of a day in court, spent laughing and having fun. But if they are serious about it? Well, in that case the outcome is somewhat obscure — except to prophets like you.

3 E

E: Perhaps it will all come to nothing, Socrates, and you will bring your case to a gratifying end, as I trust I will mine.

S: WHAT ABOUT YOUR CASE, Euthyphro? Are you defending or prosecuting?

E: Prosecuting.

S: Who?

4A E: One whom I am thought insane to indict.

S: Why? Is he a flight risk?

E: He's far from able to flee; he's actually quite old.

S: Who is it?

E: My father.

S: My dear sir! Your own father?

E: Exactly so.

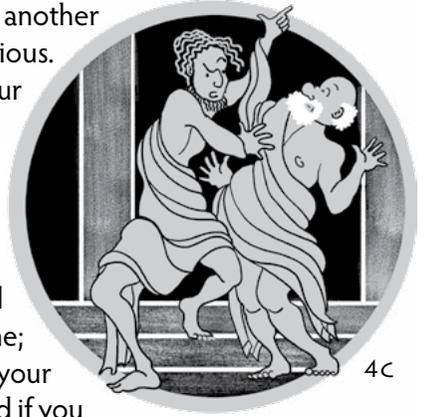
S: What is the charge? What is the case about?

E: Murder, Socrates.

4B S: Hercules! I imagine, Euthyphro, most men don't know how things ought to be. I don't think just anyone would be able to do what you are doing. This is a job for one far advanced in wisdom!

E: Yes, by Zeus — **very** advanced, Socrates.

S: Is it a case, then, of your father killing another relative? But I suppose that much is obvious. You certainly wouldn't be prosecuting your father for killing a stranger.



4C

E: It's ridiculous, Socrates, for you to think it makes a difference whether the victim is a stranger or a relative. One should only consider whether the killer acted justly or not. If he acted justly, let him alone; if not, prosecute even a killer who shares your hearth and home. You are just as polluted if you intentionally remain under the same roof with a person like that, instead of purifying both yourself and him by bringing charges. The victim was a dependent of mine, and when we were farming in Naxos he acted as our servant. In a drunken rage, he killed one of our household slaves, so my father bound him hand and foot, threw him into some ditch, then sent a man here to inquire of a religious advisor what should be done. In the meantime, he didn't show any consideration to the man as he lay there bound, and neglected him, thinking that as he was a murderer it wouldn't be a big deal if he were to die — which is just what

4D

happened. He died from hunger, the cold and his bonds before the messenger came back from the religious advisor. Now my father and other relatives are furious that I am prosecuting him for murder on behalf of a murderer — when, they say, my father didn't even murder him! And besides, even if he **had** just **completely** murdered him, the dead man, being a murderer, doesn't deserve a second thought. They say it is impious for a son to prosecute a father for murder — that's how wrong they are, Socrates, about how things stand in the divine realm with respect to holiness and unholiness.



4E

S: You on the other hand, Euthyphro, think your knowledge of the divine, of holiness and unholiness, is **so** accurate that — by Zeus! — given that it all happened just as you say, you have no fear of acting impiously now by bringing your father to trial?

- 5A E: I would be of no use at all, Socrates — there wouldn't be any difference between **Euthyphro** and the man on the street — if I did not have accurate knowledge of all such things.



S: THEN THE BEST THING that could possibly happen to me, admirable Euthyphro, is to become your student and, before the suit from Meletus starts, go offer to settle with him. I would say to him that even in the past I thought it was very important to know about divine matters, and now, since he says I do wrong by treating religious subjects carelessly and innovating in them, I have enrolled myself as your pupil. I would say to him: Meletus, if you grant that Euthyphro is wise in these matters, then grant that I have correct beliefs too, and don't drag me into court. If you don't grant it, sue my teacher, not me, for corrupting the old — both me and his father — by teaching me, and by admonishing and punishing his father. If he won't buy it, and doesn't either drop the charge, or else pin it on you instead of me, I'll try out the same line of defense in court as I did in my settlement offer to him.

- 5B
- 5C E: Yes, by Zeus, Socrates! And if he should try to indict me, I would find his weak spot, I think, so that talk in the court would sooner be about him than me.

S: I'm well aware of that, my dear friend, which is why I'm so eager to become your pupil. I know that neither Meletus nor anyone else

seems to cast you so much as a glance, whereas he has seen through me so sharply and easily that he has indicted me for impiety. So tell me now, by Zeus, that thing you just maintained you knew so well: namely, what is the nature of righteousness and unrighteousness, regarding murder and everything else. I take it holiness always consists in some **one** thing, with regard to every action; and unholiness is always the opposite of holiness, and the same as itself. For everything unholy always appears to us in the same form — namely as a form of unholiness.

5 D

E: Most certainly, Socrates.

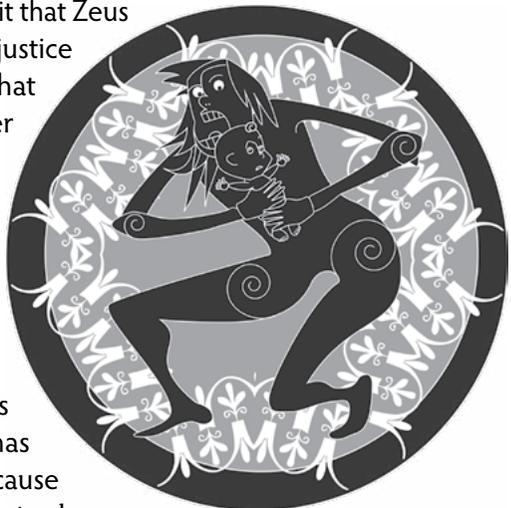
S: Tell me what you say, then. What do you say holiness is, and what unholiness?

E: I say holiness is doing what I'm doing now — namely, prosecuting wrong-doers, whether the crime is murder or temple robbery or anything else, and whether the culprit is your father or mother or anyone else, and not prosecuting is unholy. And please note, Socrates, that I can point you to a certain proof — one which I have already offered to others — that this is the law and that it is right for things to turn out this way, and that we must not let a wrong-doer escape **no matter who** he might be. As it happens, these people themselves believe that Zeus is the best and most just of gods, but they admit that Zeus bound his own father for the injustice of devouring his sons — and that he in his turn castrated **his** father on similar grounds. Yet they're angry at me for prosecuting my father for wrongdoing! And so they contradict themselves in what they claim about the gods and about me.

5 E

6 A

S: Indeed, Euthyphro, isn't this just the sort of business that has landed me in legal trouble, because I find it somehow hard to accept it when



6 B someone says such things about the gods? Someone is likely to say I am going wrong on this very point. Now, however, if you — who know all about this stuff — believe these tales, then I must, it seems, give way. What else can I say, since I freely admit I know nothing about it? Tell me then, in the name of the god of friendship, do you really believe these things happened?

E: Yes, Socrates, and even more astonishing things as well — things that most people don't know.

6 C S: So you believe that the gods really go to war with one another, that there are hateful rivalries and battles between them, and other things of this sort, like the ones narrated by the poets, or represented in varied ways by our fine artists — particularly upon the robe that is carried up to the Acropolis during the great Panathenaic festival, which is embroidered with all these sorts of designs? Should we agree these things are literally true, Euthyphro?



E: Not only these things, Socrates. As I was just saying, I will, if you wish, relate many other things about the gods that I'm quite sure will astound you when you hear them.

6 D S: I wouldn't be a bit surprised. Someday — when you've got time on your hands — you must tell me all about it. In the meantime, try to speak more clearly about what I was asking just now. Because, my friend, you did not teach me adequately when I inquired as to what holiness is. You told me that the thing you happen to be doing at the moment — namely, prosecuting your father for murder — is holy.

E: And what I said was true, Socrates.

S: That may be. But there are lots of other things, Euthyphro, that you would also claim are holy.

E: Yes, there are.

S: Keep in mind, then, that this isn't what I asked you to do — to give me one or two examples out of the many holy actions. Rather, I asked what essential form all holy actions exhibit, in virtue of which they are holy. For you did agree all unholy actions are unholy and all holy actions holy in virtue of some shared form, or don't you remember? 6E

E: I remember.

S: Tell me then what this form is, so that I can pay close attention to it and use it as a paradigm to judge any action, whether committed by you or anyone else. If the action be of the right form, I will declare it holy; otherwise, not.

E: If that is how you want it, Socrates, that is how I will give it to you.

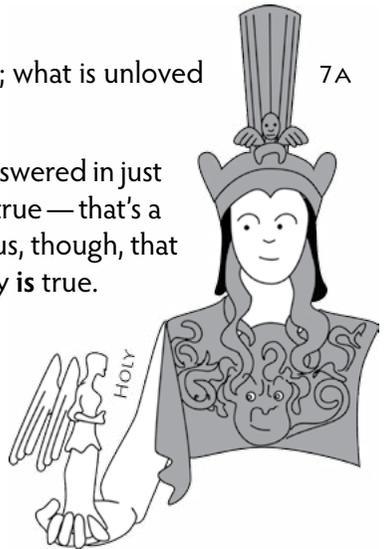
S: That's what I want.

E: WELL THEN, WHAT THE GODS LOVE is holy; what is unloved by them is unholy. 7A

S: Magnificent, Euthyphro! You have now answered in just the way I wanted. Whether your answer is true — that's a little something I don't know yet. It's obvious, though, that you are going to show me that what you say **is** true.

E: Oh, certainly.

S: Come then, let us examine your words. A man or deed loved by the gods is holy. On the other hand, a man or deed hated by the gods is unholy. They are not one and the same — in fact, they are diametrical opposites: the holy and the unholy. Isn't that so?



E: It is indeed.

S: This seems to you a sound proposition?

7B E: I think so, Socrates.

S: Haven't we also declared, Euthyphro, that the gods exist in a state of discord, that they disagree with each other — indeed, that they hate one another. Haven't we said this, too?

E: We did say that.

S: When hatred and anger arise, Euthyphro, what sorts of disagreements are likely to be the cause? Let's look at it this way. If you and I were to get into an argument about which of two numbers was greater, would this difference of opinion turn us into enemies and make us furious with each other, or would we sit down, count up, and quickly smooth our differences?

7C

E: The latter, certainly.

S: Likewise, if we had a fight about the relative sizes of things, we would quickly end the disagreement by measuring?

E: That's so.

S: And we would employ a scale, I think, if we disagreed about what was heavier and what lighter?

E: Of course.

S: What sorts of things might we argue about that would make us angry and hostile towards one another, if we couldn't reach agreement? Maybe you don't have an immediate answer, but let me suggest something. See whether it isn't these things: justice and injustice, beauty and ugliness, good and bad. Aren't these the very things for causing disputes which, when we are unable to reach any satisfactory agreement, make people become enemies, whenever we do become enemies — whether you and I or anybody else?

7D

E: That's just how it goes in arguments about such things, Socrates.

S: What about the gods, Euthyphro? If in fact they get into arguments, won't they be about these sorts of things?

E: That must be how it is, Socrates.

S: Then according to your argument, good Euthyphro, different gods consider different things to be just, beautiful, ugly, good, and bad—for they wouldn't be at odds unless they disagreed about these things, would they?

7E



E: You are right.

S: Each of them loves what each considers beautiful, good, and just, and each hates the opposite of these things?

E: Certainly.

S: But now the very same things, according to what you say, are considered just by some gods but unjust by others. It's because they disagree with one another about these things that they quarrel and war with one another, isn't it?

8A

E: It is.

S: The same things, then, are loved by the gods and hated by the gods, and will be both god-loved and god-hated.

E: It seems likely.

S: And the same things will be both holy and unholy, according to the terms of this argument?

E: I'm afraid so.



8B S: SO YOU DIDN'T ANSWER MY QUESTION, you man of mystery. I did not ask you for something which, while remaining one and the same, is both holy and unholy. But it appears what is loved by the gods is also hated by them. So it won't be too surprising if the thing you're doing now — namely, punishing your father — is pleasing to Zeus but hateful to Kronos and Ouranos; is pleasing to Hephaestus but hateful to Hera. And the same goes for any other gods who may disagree with one another about the matter.

E: I think, Socrates, that here we have something no god would dispute: whoever kills anyone unjustly must pay the penalty.

8C S: Well now, Euthyphro, have you ever heard any man arguing that one who has murdered or otherwise acted unjustly should not pay the penalty?

E: There are endless disputes about this sort of thing, both in and out of the courts, because wrongdoers will say and do anything to avoid getting punished.

S: Do they admit they have done wrong, Euthyphro, but maintain that, **even so**, they should not be punished?

E: No, they don't admit it at all.

8D S: So then they don't say or do just **anything**. For they don't presume to claim that, nor do they deny that they should pay the penalty **if** they did wrong. I think they just deny their guilt, don't they?

E: That's how it is.

S: Then they don't dispute **this**: wrongdoers must be punished. Maybe they just disagree about who did wrong, what they did, and when.

E: You are right.

S: Don't the gods have the same experience — if indeed they are at odds about justice and injustice, as your argument maintains? Some say some have done wrong, while others deny it? For surely, my friend, no one, either among gods or men, goes so far as to say a wrongdoer should not be punished.



8 E

E: Yes, that is basically true, Socrates.



S: So parties to a given dispute, whether gods or men, dispute about each separate action — if in fact the gods ever dispute. Some say the thing was done justly, others unjustly. Isn't that how it goes?

E: Yes, indeed.

S: Come now, my dear Euthyphro. Tell me, that I may be the wiser for it, what proof do you have that all gods deem this man unjustly killed — this servant-turned-murderer, bound by the master of his victim, who died in bondage before his captor learned from the seers what was to be done about him — and that all gods consider it right for a son to denounce and prosecute a father on behalf of such a person? Come, try to show me clearly that all the gods

9 A

9 B

definitely believe this action to be right. If you can demonstrate this adequately I will sing the praises of your wisdom forevermore.

E: Perhaps this is no small task, Socrates — though I could show you very clearly indeed.

S: I quite understand that you think I'm dull-witted compared to the jurors, since obviously you are going to show **them** that these actions are unjust and hated by all the gods.

E: I will show them **very** clearly, Socrates, if only they will listen to me.

- 9C S: They will listen so long as you seem to be speaking well. But something occurred to me while you were talking, a thought I am even now turning over in my mind. Suppose Euthyphro does show me conclusively that all the gods consider such a death unjust. To what extent will he thereby have taught me the nature of holiness and unholiness? That such a deed is hated by all the gods — so much would seem to follow. But a definition of holiness and unholiness does not, for what is hated by the gods has also been shown to be loved by them. So I won't keep pressing the point. Let us grant, if
- 9D you like, that all gods consider this thing unjust and hate it. Is this, then, the only correction we wish to make to our account — namely, that what all gods hate is unholy, whereas what they all love is holy, and what some gods love and some hate is both or neither? Is this how we now wish to define holy and unholy?

E: Is anything stopping us, Socrates?

S: Not as far as I'm concerned, Euthyphro, but consider your own position. See whether this proposal will pave the way to the instruction you promised me.

- 9E E: I WOULD CERTAINLY SAY the holy is what all the gods love, and the opposite — what all the gods hate — is unholy.

S: Then let us examine, once again, whether what we have here is a sound proposition. We could, of course, just let it pass. Whenever we — or anyone — say something is so, we could simply take it to be so. Alternatively, we could look and see what it all means.

E: We must look and see, but I really think what we have now is a sound proposition.

S: And soon we will know better about that. Consider this: is the holy loved by the gods because it is holy, or is it holy because it is loved by the gods?

E: I don't know what you mean, Socrates.

S: Let me try to explain more clearly. We speak of something carried and of a carrier; of something guided and a guide; of something seen and one who sees. You understand that, in every case of this sort, these things are different from one another, and how they are different?

E: I think I do.

S: Similarly, isn't there something which is loved and something which loves, separate from it?

E: Of course.

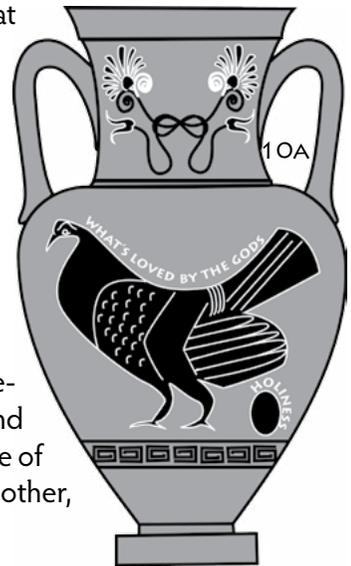
S: Tell me then whether the thing carried is carried because someone carries it, or for some other reason. 10B

E: No, that's the reason.

S: Likewise, the thing guided is guided because someone guides it, and the thing seen is seen because someone sees it.

E: Of course.

S: It isn't that someone sees it because the thing is seen. It's the other way round: it is seen because someone sees it. Likewise, something's being guided doesn't cause its guide; the thing is guided because of a guide. Nor do carriers come to be by things getting carried; instead, things are carried because someone carries them. Is what I am getting at clear, Euthyphro? I mean this: when something comes to be, or undergoes some effect, it doesn't come to be because it's in a state of becoming. Rather, it is in a state of becoming precisely 10C



because it is coming to be. Likewise, effects don't happen because things undergo effects; effects happen because of **causes**. Or don't you agree?



E: I do.

S: Either the quality of being loved — belovedness — is something that just comes about, or it is something brought about by someone's love?

E: Certainly.

S: So this case is analogous to those just mentioned: the thing is not loved because of its belovedness; rather, it is beloved because of one who loves it.

E: Necessarily.

10D S: What then do we say about holiness, Euthyphro? Surely that it is loved by all the gods, by your account?

E: Yes.

S: Is it loved because it is holy, or is there some other reason?

E: There is no other reason.

S: It is loved then because it is holy, but it is not holy because it is loved?

E: So it seems.

S: And because the gods love it, it becomes loved by the gods and god-beloved?

10E E: Of course.

S: What is loved by the gods is not, then, identical to what is holy, Euthyphro, nor does 'holy' mean god-beloved, as you maintain. These are distinct things.

E: How so, Socrates?

S: Because we agree that what is holy is loved because of its holiness. It isn't holy because it is loved. Isn't that so?

E: Yes.

S: And, on the other hand we agree that what is god-beloved is so, just because the gods love it — that's just what it is to be god-beloved. It's not the case that they love it **because** it's god-beloved.

E: True.

S: But if that which is god-beloved and that which is holy were one and the same, dear Euthyphro, and if the holy were loved because it was holy, then what is god-beloved would be loved by the gods because it was — god-beloved! And if the god-beloved were god-beloved because it was loved by the gods, then the holy would also be holy because it was loved by the gods. But now you see we have two quite opposite sorts of cases here — very different from one another. We have someone who loves a thing, making it be loved; and we have a lovable thing, which makes someone love it. I'm afraid that when I asked you what holiness is, Euthyphro, you didn't want to make its nature clear to me. Instead, you told me about one of its properties — namely the property holiness has of being loved by all the gods. But you have yet to tell me what holiness is in itself. Now, if you please, stop hiding things from me and start over again from the beginning, telling me what holiness is. Never mind whether it is loved by the gods, or has some other such quality — we won't argue about that — but tell me freely what holiness and unholiness are.

E: BUT SOCRATES, I CAN'T possibly explain to you what I have in mind, because every time we advance some proposition it runs around in circles somehow, refusing to stay where we put it.

S: Your propositions, Euthyphro, seem like the works of my ancestor, Daedalus. If it were **me** stating them and setting them forth, you might make fun of me, saying that, due to my relation to him even my works in words run away from me and won't stay where they're put. As it is, these propositions are **yours**, so we need some other joke — they really won't stay put, as you yourself have noticed.

E: I think that joke suits our discussion well enough, Socrates, because I'm not the one making these things wander around and fail to

11 D remain in one spot. I think you're the Daedalus here, because they would have stayed put if it were up to me



S: Then it looks as if I must be even **more** terribly clever than Daedalus, my friend, since he set only his own creations in motion, while I have apparently animated both my own and those of others.

11 E And the pinnacle of my genius is that I am clever without wanting to be, for I would give up the wealth of Tantalus as well as the cleverness of Daedalus, if only my words would stay and remain fixed in one spot. But enough of this. Since you seem inclined to slack off, I'll have to share my excitement with you so that you can teach me about holiness somehow. So don't give up before you find a way! Consider whether you think all that is holy is necessarily just.

E: I think so.

12 A S: So, then, is **all** that is just holy? Or is it rather that while all that is holy is just, not all that is just is holy, but some is and some not?



E: You lost me there, Socrates.

S: And yet you outshine me as much in your youth as you do in wisdom! As I was saying, your rich diet of wisdom has made you sluggish. Pull yourself together, my good man, because the thing I'm saying is not that hard to grasp. I am saying the opposite of what that poet said, who wrote:

12 B Zeus, who has brought all that to pass, and made it grow, you will not name/ For where there is fear there is also shame.

I disagree with the poet. Shall I tell you why?

E: Please do.

S: I don't think that where there is fear there is also shame, for I think many people who fear disease and poverty and many other things feel fear but are not ashamed of what they fear. Don't you agree?



E: I do indeed.

S: But where there is shame there is also fear. For is there anyone who feels shame and contrition about some matter, who does not at the same time fear and dread a reputation for wickedness?

12C



E: He will fear it.

S: Then it isn't right to say, where there is fear there is also shame, rather that where there is shame there is also fear. But shame is not everywhere that fear is, since fear covers a wider area than shame. Shame is **part** of fear, just as odd is part of the concept of number — from which it follows that it isn't true that where there is number there is also oddness. Rather, where there is oddness there is also number. Do you follow me now?

E: Absolutely.

S: This is the kind of thing I was asking about before: where there is justice, must there be holiness? Or is it rather that where there is holiness, there is also justice, since justice is not coextensive with holiness — holiness is a part of justice? Shall we say so, or do you think otherwise?

12D

E: No, that's fine; I think what you say is right.

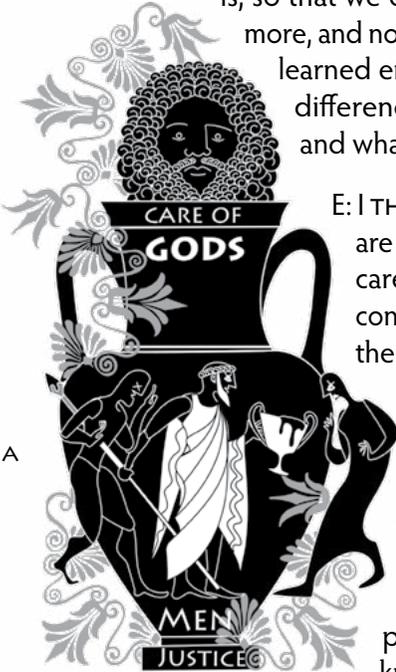
S: See what comes next: if holiness is part of justice, we must, it seems, find out what part of justice it might be. Now if you asked me a similar question about the thing I just mentioned — what part of the concept of number is even, and what kind of



number it was, I would say: a number which can be divided evenly, rather than unevenly, by two. Or don't you think so?

E: I do.

12 E S: Try to give me a similar account of what part of justice holiness is, so that we can tell Meletus not to wrong us any more, and not to indict me for sacrilege, since I have learned enough from you to be able to tell the difference between what is sacred and holy and what is not.



E: I THINK, SOCRATES, that piety and holiness are that part of justice concerned with the care of the gods, while the part of justice concerned with the care of men comprises the rest.

13 A

S: What you say seems excellent, Euthyphro, but I'm still unclear on one tiny point. I don't yet know what you mean by 'care', for you don't mean care of the gods in the same sense as care of other things. We say, for example — don't we? — that not everyone knows how to take care of horses, only the horse-breeder does.

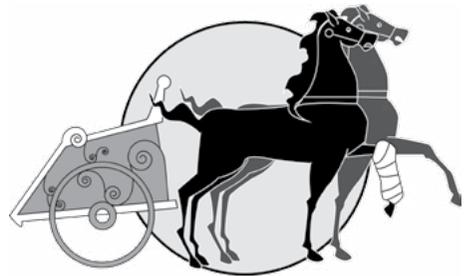
E: Yes, I do mean it that way.

S: So the art of horse breeding is the care of horses.

E: Yes.

E: Nor is it the case that everyone can care for dogs, but the hunter knows how.

E: That is so.



S: So the art of hunting is the care of dogs.

E: Yes.

13 B

S: And that of cattle-raising the care of cattle.

E: Quite so.

S: So, the art of holiness and piety is the care of the gods, Euthyphro. Is that what you mean?

E: It is.

S: Doesn't each of these types of care aim at the same result? I mean something like this: it aims at some good or benefit to the thing being cared for. Just as you see that horses, when they are cared for, gain some benefit and are made better. Or don't you think so?

E: I do.

S: So dogs are benefited by the art of hunting, cattle by the art of cattle-raising, and so on and so forth. Unless you have some notion that care aims at harming the thing cared for?

13 C

E: By Zeus, no.

S: It aims to benefit the object of care?

E: Of course.

S: Is holiness then — being the care of the gods — also a benefit to them, something that makes the gods better? Would you agree that when you do something holy you improve some one of the gods?



E: No, by Zeus, I would not!

S: I didn't think that was what you meant — quite the contrary — but that's why I asked what you meant by 'care of the gods'. I couldn't believe you meant this kind of care.

13 D

E: Quite right, Socrates. I didn't mean this kind of care at all.

S: Very well, but what kind of care of the gods would holiness be?

E: The kind of care, Socrates, that slaves take of their masters.

S: I understand. Holiness is shaping up to be a kind of service to the gods.

E: Exactly.

S: Could you tell me: what is the **goal** that service to a doctor serves to bring about? Don't you think it would be health?

E: I think so.

13 E S: What about being of service to shipbuilders? What goal would that service aim to accomplish?

E: Clearly, Socrates, the building of a ship.

S: And as to being of service to housebuilders: the goal would be houses?

E: Yes.

S: Tell me then, my good sir, what is the point of the service men provide to gods? You obviously know since you say that you, of all men, have the most complete knowledge of divinity.

E: And I speak the truth, Socrates.

S: Tell me then, by Zeus: what magnificent result is it that the gods achieve when they employ us as servants?

E: Many fine things, Socrates.

14 A S: And the same goes for generals, my friend. All the same, you would not have any trouble telling me that the main point of what they do is to achieve victory in war. Isn't that so?

E: Of course.

S: Farmers too, I think, produce many fine things, but still, the main point of what they do is to bring forth goods from the earth.

E: Quite so.

S: Well then, what is the main point of the many fine things that the gods achieve?

E: I told you just a little while ago, Socrates, that it is no easy matter to arrive at precise knowledge of these things. Nevertheless, to put it simply, I say that if a man knows how to please the gods in word and deed — with prayer and sacrifice — then his are holy actions that support and sustain private houses and public affairs alike. The opposite of these pleasing actions are unholy, and overturn and destroy everything.



14B

S: You could have been much more concise, Euthyphro, if you wanted to, by answering the main part of my question. You're not exactly dying to teach me — that much is clear. You were just on the point of doing so, but you turned aside. If you had given that answer, I would already be well versed in holiness, thanks to you. But as it is, the lover of inquiry must chase after his beloved, wherever he may lead him. Once more then: what do you say that the holy is, or holiness? Don't you say it's a kind of science of sacrifice and prayer?

14C

E: I do.

S: To sacrifice is to give a gift to the gods; to pray is to ask them for something?

E: Definitely, Socrates.

S: Then holiness must be a science of begging from the gods and giving to them, on this account.

E: You have grasped my meaning perfectly, Socrates.

S: That is because I want so badly to take in your wisdom that I concentrate my whole intellect upon it, lest a



14D

single word of yours fall to the ground. But tell me, what is this service to the gods? You say it is to beg from them and give to them?

E: I do.

S: And to ask correctly would be to ask them to give us things we need?

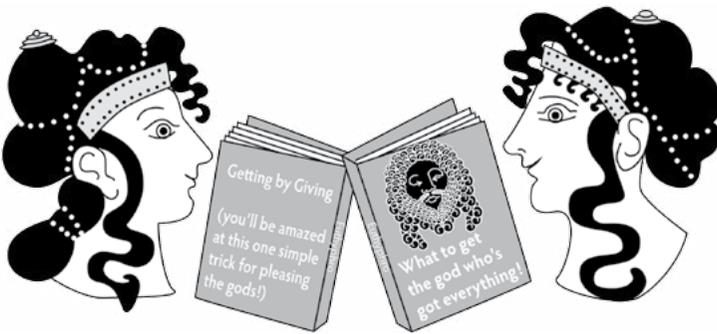
E: What else?

1 4 E S: And to give correctly is to give them in return what they need from us? For it would hardly represent technical skill in giving to offer a gift that is not needed in the least.

E: True, Socrates.

S: Holiness will then be a sort of art for bartering between gods and men?

E: Bartering, yes — if you prefer to call it that.



1 5 A S: I don't prefer to, if it isn't true. But tell me, what good do the gifts the gods receive from us do them? What they give us is obvious enough. There is no good we enjoy that does not come from them. But how is their lot improved by what they receive from us? Or have we gotten so much the better of them in our barter that we get all their blessings, while they get nothing back in return?

E: Do you really think, Socrates, that the gods receive some benefit from what they get from us?

S: What else could these gifts from us to the gods be, Euthyphro?

E: What else, indeed, except for honor, reverence, and that thing I mentioned just now, gratitude?

S: Holiness, then, is pleasing to the gods, Euthyphro, but not beneficial or dear to them?

E: I think of all things it is most dear to them.

S: So the holy is once again, it seems, what is dear to the gods.

E: Most certainly.

S: After saying that, will you be astonished that your arguments won't stand still but start wandering off? And will you accuse **me** of being the Daedalus who makes them walk — though you yourself are far more skillful than Daedalus, since you can actually make things run in a complete circle? Perhaps it has escaped your notice how our argument has revolved and come right back where it started? You surely remember how, a little while ago, we said that holiness and what is loved by the gods were not the same, but distinct from one another. Or don't you remember?

E: I do.

S: Don't you see that now you are saying that what is dear to the gods is what is holy? Is this the same as what is loved by the gods, or isn't it?

E: It certainly is.

S: Either we were wrong about what we agreed to before, or — if we were right then — we're wrong now.

E: That seems to be so.

S: So we have to begin again at the very beginning, to investigate what holiness is. And I won't willingly give up before I figure it out. Don't think me unworthy; instead, concentrate your attention to a

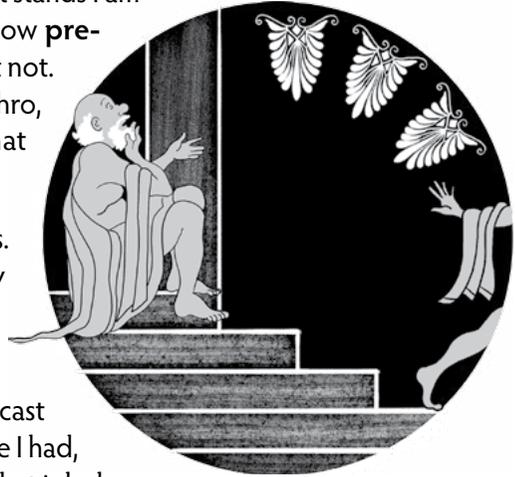


15C

15D

supreme degree and tell the truth. For you know this thing, if any man does, and so I will clutch you as tightly as if you were Proteus himself, until you tell me. If you did **not** know precisely what is holy, and what unholy, you would never have undertaken to prosecute your aged father for murder on behalf of a slave. You would have been afraid to risk the wrath of the gods, in case you should be acting wrongly, and you would have felt shame before your fellow men. As it stands I am

15 E certain you believe you know **pre-**
precisely what is holy and what not.
 So tell me, my good Euthyphro,
 and don't keep secret what
 you think it is.



E: Some other time, Socrates.
 I am in a hurry, and I really
 have to go now.

S: What are you doing, my
 friend? Will you leave, and cast
 me down from the high hope I had,
 that by learning from you what is holy
 and what not, I might have escaped Meletus'

16 A indictment? I hoped to show him that — thanks to Euthyphro — I
 have become wise in divine matters, and that I no longer proceed
 carelessly through my ignorance, nor make innovations with regard
 to them, and most of all that I will live a better life from now on!

