

A Map of Euthyphro (ΕΥΘΥΦΡΩΝ)

Euthyphro is a combination of *εὐθύς* (euthys), which means straight, and also sincere or direct (and perhaps blunt), and the verb *φρονέω* (phroneō), which means to think, to reason, or to understand. Hence, Euthyphro means something like ‘straight thinker’, or ‘Mr. Right-Mind’.¹

- 2a–3e Opening; the charges against Socrates: corrupting the young men and inventing new gods.
- 3e–4e Euthyphro’s murder case against his own father; he assumes he knows about what is holy (*τὸ ὅσιον*, to hosion) and unholy (*τὸ ἀνόσιον*, to anosion).
- 5a–d Irony: Socrates wants to be Euthyphro’s pupil (*μαθητῆς*, mathêtês): what is holiness or piety?
- 5d–6c First answer: holiness is prosecuting a criminal; the gods and their disputes are examples.
- 6c–e But the examples are not explanatory. Socrates wants to know what makes actions holy or pious in general, or as such (*ἐκεῖνο αὐτὸ τὸ εἶδος ᾧ πάντα τὰ ὅσια ὅσια ἐστίν; ἔφησθα γάρ που μὴ ἰδέα τὰ τε ἀνόσια ἀνόσια εἶναι καὶ τὰ ὅσια ὅσια*).²
- 7a–8e Second answer: holy is what is agreeable to the gods. But what is approved by the gods varies, just as there is human disagreement over what is just (*δίκαιον*, dikaion) or good (*ἀγαθόν*, agathon). Problem: according to the first definition, an action may be holy and *not* holy at the same time.
- 9a–e Third answer: what *all* gods approve is holy, and what *all* gods disapprove is unholy (*εἶναι τὸ ὅσιον ὃ ἂν πάντες οἱ θεοὶ φιλῶσιν, καὶ τὸ ἐναντίον, ὃ ἂν πάντες θεοὶ μισῶσιν, ἀνόσιον*).³
- 10a–11a The ‘dilemma’: is the holy approved by the gods because it is holy; or is it holy because it is approved? (*ἀρα τὸ ὅσιον ἐστίν φιλεῖται ὑπὸ τῶν θεῶν, ἢ ὅτι φιλεῖται ὅσιόν ἐστίν*).⁴ Put differently, is the reason or cause for the gods’ approval that the holy is holy, or is the gods’ approval the reason or cause for the holy being holy? There are two ideas here. (a) Some action *A* is holy because the gods approve it, which means that it is the divine approval that makes *A* holy. (b) The gods approve of *A* because *A* is holy, in which case what is holy is indepen-

1 Cf. Geach, P. (1966). Plato’s Euthyphro. *Monist*, 50, 369–82.

2 Transliteration: *ekeino auto to eidos ho panta ta hosia hosia estin? Ephēsta gar pou mia idea ta te anosia anosia einai kai ta hosia hosia?*

3 Transl.: *einai to hosion ho an pantes hoi theoi philōsin, kai to enantion, ho an pantes theoi misōsin, anosion.*

4 Translit.: *ara to hosion estin philetai hypo ton theon, ē hoti philetai hosion estin?*

dent of divine approval. Comparison: if we carry a stone, it is (something) carried because we carry it. So, the stone *is being carried* because it *gets carried* by us. But it seems wrong to say that the stone *gets carried* because it *is being carried*, i.e. because we carry it. Likewise, we do not see the stone because it is seen; rather, it is seen because we see it. It is *being seen* because it *gets seen*; not: its gets seen because it is seen. (The Greek is very hard to translate.⁵) Related to (b), the real question concerns the essence (*οὐσία*, *ousia*) or nature of piety. That nature has to be established independently of any divine act of approval and disapproval.

- 11b–d Euthyphro complains: there is no progress in the clarification. Irony: the straight thinker goes in circles.
- 11e–12e Socrates now asks: is everything holy also just (*δίκαιον εἶναι πᾶν τὸ ὅσιον*, *dikaion einai pan to hosion*), and is everything that is just holy (*πᾶν τὸ δίκαιον ὅσιον*, *pan to dikaion hosion*)? Analogy: shame and fear. Result: the holy is part of the just, or a kind of justice.
- 12e–13d Fourth answer: holy is the part of justice that concerns looking after, or caring for, the gods (*τὸ μέρος τοῦ δικαίου εἶναι εὐσεβες τε καὶ ὅσιον, τὸ περὶ τῆν τῶν θεῶν θεραπείαν*).⁶ ‘Looking after’ *x* aims at improving *x*. Problem: but then being pious or holy improves the gods.
- 13d–e Fifth answer: ‘*therapeia*’ is more like service (*ὑπηρετική*; ‘*hupêreteo*’ means to serve, obey, or help) to the gods. Analogy: service to the doctor, shipbuilder and builder. Socrates: what do the gods accomplish if we serve them? (Perhaps also: what is it that the gods could not do without our service?)
- 13e–14c Answer: many good things (*πολλὰ καὶ καλά*, *polla kai kala*). Sixth answer: holy is knowing how to act such as to gratify or please the gods. Piety is the ‘science’ (*ἐπιστήμη*, *epistêmê*) of sacrifice and prayer.
- 14c–15b Problem: sacrifice is donating, and prayer is requesting. So, piety is a trading skill (*ἐμπορικὴ τέχνη*, *emporikê technê*): what we need from the gods, and what they need from us. But what do the gods gain from these transactions? Answer: gratification or grace (*χάρις*; *charis*).
- 15b–d So, the holy is what the gods find gratifying. Problem: holy is what the gods approve. Ironically, the discussion comes full circle (see dilemma).
- 15d–16a Socrates wants to begin again, for Euthyphro surely would not accuse his father if he did not know what piety is. But Euthyphro dashes off.

5 οὐδὲ διότι φερόμενον, φέρεται, ἀλλὰ διότι φέρεται, φερόμενον (*oude dioti pheromenon, pheretai, alla dioti pheretai, pheromenon*). For experts: ‘*φέρεται*’ is the middle of the verb ‘*φέρω*’ and hence means ‘it carries (itself), it is carrying’, which Waterfield translates as ‘gets carried’. ‘*φερόμενον*’ is the corresponding participle, and thus means ‘is being carried, is carried’, which Waterfield renders as ‘being carried’.

6 Translit.: *to meros tou dikaiou einai eusebes te kai hosion, to peri tēn tōn theōn therapeian*.

