

Euthyphro 11b–16a¹

Introduction. Euthyphro suggests further definitions of piety or holiness. Since the discussion reaches a point they had refuted before, Socrates wants to start again. But Euthyphro says he has to dash off.

Questions.

1. Sketch Socrates's suggestion at 11e–12d.
2. Euthyphro's fourth definition says that piety or holiness is the part of justice that 'looks after' the gods. What does he mean (12e ff.)?
3. But what is the problem with this suggestion (13c–d)?
- 4.★ Euthyphro has a fifth suggestion, which is that piety is a service to the gods (13d). As every service has some aim or function, Socrates invites Euthyphro to consider a few examples as analogies for the suggestion. How do these analogies work (13d–14a)? Do they work?
5. At 14e, Euthyphro agrees that piety is a trading skill. How do they reach this position (14c ff.)?
- 6.★ Why does Socrates press the point about gratification (15a ff.)? What problem with Euthyphro's position is thus revealed?
- 7.★ Looking back over the entire dialogue: what is your impression?

Background. (a) The transitional passages of 11b–d allude to Daedalus. Like Socrates, he was a stonemason, and ingenious inventor (e.g., the saw, glue), who also made figures with moveable limbs, something like ancient 'automatons' (among them an artificial cow for Pasiphaë used for conceiving Minotauros). So, Socrates carves out ideas; and these ideas are restless for both him and others: they are *elusive*. This makes Socrates cleverer or more ingenious than Daedalus. This is ironical. (b) In Euthyphro's fourth suggestion, 'looking after' is the translation of *θεραπεία* (*therapeia*), which is, of course, *therapy*. It may seem strange to say, today, that a farmer who looks after cattle does therapy with them. But the Greek word also has connotations with 'taking care of'. (c) Euthyphro's sixth suggestion is that piety is the 'science' of prayer and sacrifice. The Greek word here is *ἐπιστήμη* (*epistêmê*), which is commonly translated as 'knowledge' or understanding (cf. *epistemology*; theory of knowledge). So, accordingly, to be pious is to know how to request donations from the gods and how to donate what the gods request from us.

¹ *The Last Days of Socrates*, pp. 22–30.

