

EUTHYPHRO

PLATO

TRANSLATION BY G. SALMIERI BASED ON EARLIER
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INTRODUCTION

EUTHYPHRO: Why have you left the Lyceum, Socrates, and what are you doing in the king-archon's porch?¹ Surely you cannot be concerned in a prosecution before the king as I am? 2

SOCRATES: Not in a prosecution, Euthyphro; "indictment" is the word the Athenians use.

EUTHYPHRO: What? I guess someone's been accusing you, since I can't believe that you're accusing another. b

SOCRATES: Certainly not.

EUTHYPHRO: Then someone else has accused you?

SOCRATES: Yes.

EUTHYPHRO: Who?

SOCRATES: A young man who is little known about, Euthyphro. I hardly know him. His name is Meletus, and he is from the deme of Pitthis.² You might remember his appearance: he has a beak, and long straight hair, and an ill-grown beard.

EUTHYPHRO: No, I don't remember him, Socrates. But what charge is he bringing against you?

SOCRATES: What 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 their corruptors are. I suppose 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 our mother, the city, will be the judge of d

¹ In the Athens of Socrates' time, the "king-archon" was an elected official. Among his duties were presiding over trials for murder and impiety. The Lyceum was a park-like area to the east of Athens' city wall, where Socrates frequently passed his time in philosophical conversation. It would later become the site for Aristotle's philosophical school.

² A deme is a district of Attica, the area surrounding Athens.

this. 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 farmer, he first takes care of the young shoots, and clears away those of us who destroy of them. This is only the first step; later he'll take care of the older branches; and if he continues as he's begun, he will be a very great public benefactor. 3

EUTHYPHRO: I hope that he will; but I rather fear, Socrates, that the opposite will turn out to be the truth. I think that in attacking you he is simply striking a blow at the foundation of the city. But in what way does he say that you corrupt the young?

SOCRATES: In a strange way, which is surprising when you first hear it: he says that I am a maker of gods, and that I make up new gods and deny the existence of old ones; this is the ground of his indictment. b

EUTHYPHRO: I understand, Socrates; he means to attack you about the divine sign which occasionally, as you say, comes to you. He thinks that you are a theistic innovator, 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 I'm a madman.³ Yet every word that I say is true. They're jealous of us all; and we must be brave and go at them. c

SOCRATES: Their laughter, Euthyphro my friend, is not very important. For a man may be thought wise, but I don't think the Athenians will get too concerned 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 get angry. d

EUTHYPHRO: I'm never likely to try their temper in this way.

SOCRATES: I'm sure you won't, since you are reserved in your behavior and seldom impart your wisdom. But I have a benevolent habit of pouring myself out to everybody, and would even pay for a listener; and I'm afraid that the Athenians might think I'm too talkative. Now, as I was saying, if they only laugh at me, as you say that they laugh at you, my day in court might go pleasantly enough; but they might be serious, and then only you fortunetellers can predict what the end will be. e

EUTHYPHRO: I predict that the affair will end in nothing, Socrates, and that you will win your case, as I think I'll win mine.

SOCRATES: And what is your case, Euthyphro? Are you the prosecutor or the defendant?

EUTHYPHRO: The prosecutor.

SOCRATES: Of whom?

³ Euthyphro was a farmer and a (self-proclaimed) prophet. He would have been in his forties at the time of this dialogue, which is set in 399 shortly before Socrates' trial.

EUTHYPHRO: Someone they think I'm crazy for prosecuting.

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SOCRATES: Why, does he wings to fly away with?⁴

EUTHYPHRO: No, he's not too mobile at his age.

SOCRATES: Who is he?

EUTHYPHRO: My father.

SOCRATES: Your own father?!

EUTHYPHRO: Of course.

SOCRATES: And of what's the charge?

EUTHYPHRO: Murder, Socrates.

SOCRATES: By Heracles, Euthyphro, most men would not know how this could be done rightly. This isn't the deed of just any man, but of someone who excels in wisdom.

b

EUTHYPHRO: Yes by Zeus, Socrates, it is.

SOCRATES: I suppose that the man your father murdered was one of your relatives. Clearly he was, since you'd never consider prosecuting your father for killing a stranger.

EUTHYPHRO: It's silly, Socrates, to distinguish here between relatives and strangers, since the pollution is certainly the same in either case, if you knowingly associate with a murderer when you ought to clear yourself and him by prosecuting him. The real question is whether the murdered man has been justly slain. If so, then your duty is to let the matter alone; but if not, then even if the murderer lives under the same roof with you and eats at the same table, you should prosecute him. 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, and one day in a fit of drunken passion he got into a fight with one of our domestic servants and killed him. My father bound his hands and feet and threw him into a ditch, and then sent a messenger to Athens to ask a soothsayer what he should do with him. In the meantime he never attended to him and gave no thought to him, for he regarded him as a murderer and thought that no great harm would be done even if he died. And this is just what happened. The cold and hunger and chains had such an effect on him that he was dead by the time the messenger returned from the soothsayer. Now my father and family are angry with me for taking the side of the murderer and prosecuting my father. They say that he did not kill him, and that if he did, dead man was only a murderer, and I should ignore it, since it's impious of a son to prosecute his father. This shows, Socrates, how little they know the gods' attitude towards piety and impiety.⁵

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⁴ The joke turns on a pun. The word for "prosecutor" more literally means someone who pursues or chases someone.

⁵ Naxos was an island where Athens had established a colony in 407. Euthyphro's father and perhaps Euthyphro himself must have been among the colonists. The colonists had to leave in 404, when Athens lost control of the

SOCRATES: By Zeus, Euthyphro, is your knowledge of religion and of what's pious and impious so exact, that, in the circumstances you describe, you are not afraid that you might also be doing something impious by bringing your father to trial?

EUTHYPHRO: I'd be useless, Socrates, and Euthyphro wouldn't surpass most men, if I did not have exact knowledge of all such matters. 5

SOCRATES: I'm impressed. I think the best thing for me to do is to become your student. Then, before the trial with Meletus, I'll challenge him, saying that I've always been very interested in religious questions, and that now that he's charging me with theistic improvisations and innovations, I've become your pupil. "Meletus," I'll say to him, "if you think Euthyphro is wise about these things, you ought to approve of me too and not bring me to trial; but if you disapprove, then you should begin not by prosecuting me, but by going after my teacher for corrupting the old—me, who he teaches, and his own father, who he exhorts and chastises." And if Meletus refuses to listen to me, but carries on without shifting the indictment from me to you, I can repeat this challenge in the court. b

EUTHYPHRO: Yes, by Zeus, Socrates; and if he tries to indict me I'm sure I'll find his flaws; the court will have a great deal more to say to him than to me. c

SOCRATES: It's because I know this, my friend, that I'm eager to become your student. For I see that no one seems to notice you—not even this Meletus; though he sees me so sharply that he has indicted me for ungodliness. So please, by Zeus, tell me the things you just said you knew so clearly: What sort of thing do you say the godliness and ungodliness are, in relation to murder and to other things? Isn't the pious the very same thing in every action? And isn't the impious the opposite of everything pious, but likewise the very same in every action, with everything that's impious having a single form? d

EUTHYPHRO: Of course, Socrates.

SOCRATES: Then tell me: what do you say the pious is; and what is the impious?

EUTHYPHRO'S FIRST ACCOUNT OF THE PIOUS AND IMPIOUS

EUTHYPHRO: The pious is to do what I'm doing: prosecuting anyone who is guilty of murder, sacrilege, or of any similar crime, whether he's your father or mother, or anyone else—that makes no difference. Not to prosecute them is impious. e

And notice, Socrates, what strong evidence I can give you (I've already given it to others) that this is the law and that we should not let an impious man go unpunished, whoever he may be: Men regard Zeus as the best and most just of the gods, and yet they admit that he put his father in bonds because he unjustly devoured his children and that the father had castrated his own father for a similar reason. And yet when I prosecute my father, 6

island, so it is likely that Euthyphro is prosecuting his father for events that happened more than five years earlier. There was much political turmoil in Athens, however, in the intervening years that could have forced the trial to be postponed.

they get angry with me. They're inconsistent in what they say about the gods and about me.

SOCRATES: Euthyphro, this might be why I'm charged with impiety: When people tell such stories about the gods I find it hard to accept them. This is where people would probably say I go wrong. But if you, who know so much about such things, share these views, then it seems that I will have to assent as well. What else can I say, since I confess that I know nothing about them? Tell me, by the god of friendship, whether you really believe that these things are true. b

EUTHYPHRO: Yes, Socrates; and so are even stranger things about which most people are ignorant.

SOCRATES: And do you really believe that the gods, fought with one another, and had dire quarrels, battles, and the like, as the poets say, and as we see represented in the works of great artists and embroidered on robe of Athena, which is carried up to the Acropolis at the great Panathenaea. Are all these stories about the gods true, Euthyphro? c

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

SOCRATES: I'm sure, but you can tell me them at your leisure some other time. For now, try to tell more clearly what I asked you just now. For, my friend, you did not teach me adequately when I asked you what the pious was. Rather you told me that what you are doing now in prosecuting your father for murder is pious. d

EUTHYPHRO: And what I said was true, Socrates.

SOCRATES: No doubt, Euthyphro; but you would admit that there are many other pious acts?

EUTHYPHRO: There are.

SOCRATES: Remember that I what I asked you to teach me was not one or two of things that are pious, but that very form by which everything that is pious is pious. For you agreed that it is by one form that all impious actions are impious and all pious actions are pious, don't you remember? e

EUTHYPHRO: I do.

SOCRATES: Then teach me what this form itself is, so that I can gaze at it and, using it as a model, say that any action such as it is pious, whether it is taken by you or by someone else, and that any action that is not such as it is impious.

EUTHYPHRO: If that's what you want, Socrates, I'll explain it that way.

SOCRATES: Yes, that's what I want.

EUTHYPHRO'S SECOND ACCOUNT OF THE PIOUS AND IMPIOUS

EUTHYPHRO: Alright, what is dear to the gods is pious; what is not is impious. 7

SOCRATES: Very good, Euthyphro; you have now given me the sort of answer I wanted. I can't tell yet whether or not what you say is true, but I don't doubt that you'll prove it.

EUTHYPHRO: Of course.

SOCRATES: Come, then, let's examine what we're saying. Any thing or person that is dear to the gods is pious, and any that thing or person that is hateful to the gods is impious, with these two being the extreme opposites of one another. Is that right?

EUTHYPHRO: Yes.

SOCRATES: And well said?

EUTHYPHRO: Yes, Socrates, I think so. b

SOCRATES: Did we also say, Euthyphro, that the gods have enmities and hatreds and disagreements?

EUTHYPHRO: Yes, that was also said.

SOCRATES: And what sort of disagreement creates enmity and anger? Suppose for example that you and I, my good friend, disagreed which numbers were bigger than which. Would differences of this sort make us enemies and set us against one another? Wouldn't we just settle them by counting? c

EUTHYPHRO: We would.

SOCRATES: And if we disagreed about what is larger and smaller, we would settle the disagreement quickly by measuring?

EUTHYPHRO: Right.

SOCRATES: And we end a disagreement about what was heavier or lighter by weighing?

EUTHYPHRO: Of course.

SOCRATES: What differences are there that cannot be decided in this way and therefore make us angry and set us against one another? Maybe nothing occurs to you, so consider whether, as I'll suggest, it is the just and unjust, the fine and shameful, and the good and bad. Aren't these the things over which you and I and other people become enemies, when they do become enemies, because they disagree about them and cannot reach any satisfactory agreement? d

EUTHYPHRO: Yes, Socrates, it is disagreements about such things.

SOCRATES: And what about the gods, Euthyphro, if they disagree, wouldn't it be about these things?

EUTHYPHRO: Necessarily.

SOCRATES: So, according to your account, high-born Euthyphro, different gods consider different things just and fine or shameful and good or bad; since unless there were such differences, there wouldn't have been any fights between them, would there? e

EUTHYPHRO: You're quite right.

SOCRATES: Doesn't everyone loves the things he considers fine and good and just and hate their opposites?

EUTHYPHRO: Very much so.

SOCRATES: But, as you say, some consider the same things to be just that others consider unjust; and, because they disagree about these things, they quarrel and wage war with one another. 8

EUTHYPHRO: Right.

SOCRATES: Then the same things are hated by the gods and loved by the gods, and are both dear to the gods and hateful to them?

EUTHYPHRO: So it seems.

SOCRATES: And the same things will be both pious and also impious, Euthyphro, by this account?

EUTHYPHRO: I'm afraid so.

SOCRATES: You're full of surprises, but you didn't answer the question I asked. For I didn't ask you what is both pious and impious, and now it would seem that what is loved by the gods is also hated by them. And therefore, Euthyphro, in punishing your father you're likely doing what's pleasing to Zeus but displeasing to Cronus and Uranus, and what's pleasing to Hephaestus but displeasing to Hera, and there may be other gods who also disagree. b

EUTHYPHRO: But I believe, Socrates, that all the gods would be agreed as to the propriety of punishing a murderer: there would be no disagreements about that.

SOCRATES: Well, in the case of men, Euthyphro, did you ever hear any one arguing that a murderer or any sort of criminal ought to be let off? c

EUTHYPHRO: I should rather say that these are the questions which they are always arguing, especially in courts of law: they commit all sorts of crimes, and there is nothing which they won't do or say in their own defense.

SOCRATES: But do they admit their guilt, Euthyphro, and yet say that they ought not to be

punished?

EUTHYPHRO: No, they do not.

SOCRATES: Then there are some things which they do not venture to say and do: for they do not venture to argue that the guilty are to be unpunished, but they deny their guilt, don't they? d

EUTHYPHRO: Yes.

SOCRATES: Then they don't argue that the criminal should not be punished, but they argue about the fact of who the criminal is, and what he did and when?

EUTHYPHRO: True.

SOCRATES: And it's the same with the gods, if, as you assert, they fight about what's just and unjust, and some of them say that injustice is done among them while others deny it. For surely no one, whether god or man, ventures to say that someone who does injustice is not to be punished? e

EUTHYPHRO: That is true, Socrates, as to the main point.

SOCRATES: But I think, Euthyphro, those who dispute, both men and gods, if the gods do dispute, dispute about each separate act. When they disagree with one another about any act, some say it was right and others that it was wrong. Is it not so?

EUTHYPHRO: Quite true.

SOCRATES: Well then, my dear friend Euthyphro, teach me so that I can become wiser, what proof do you have that all the gods consider a servant who is guilty of murder to have died unjustly if he was bound by the master of the man he killed and died as a result of his bonds before the master who had bound him found out from the seers what he ought to do with him, and that they all consider it right for a son to prosecute his father and accuse him of murder on behalf of such a man. 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. b

EUTHYPHRO: It will be a difficult task; but I could show you very clearly.

SOCRATES: I understand: you think I am dumber than the judges, since you'll obviously show them that such acts are wrong and that all the gods hate them.

EUTHYPHRO: I'll certainly show them clearly, Socrates, if they'll listen to me.

SOCRATES: They'll listen if they find that you're a good speaker.

EUTHYPHRO'S THIRD ACCOUNT OF THE PIOUS

SOCRATES: Something occurred to me while you were speaking. I said to myself, “Even if Euthyphro teaches me perfectly that all the gods consider such a death unjust, how much will I have learned from him about what the pious and the impious are? For it seems that this act would be hateful to the gods; but we saw just now that the pious and impious are not defined in this way; since we saw that what is hateful to the gods is also dear to them.” So I’ll let this point go, Euthyphro. If you want, let’s say that all the gods consider it unjust and that they all hate it. But let’s now emend our account and say that whatever all the gods hate is impious and whatever they all love is pious, and what some love and others hate is neither or both? Is this how you want to define the pious and impious now? c d

EUTHYPHRO: What’s to prevent us, Socrates?

SOCRATES: Nothing on my part, Euthyphro, but consider whether on your part whether by assuming this you will most easily teach me what you promised.

EUTHYPHRO: Well, I’d say that what all the gods love is pious and that what they all hate is impious. e

SOCRATES: Then we’ll examine this again, Euthyphro, to see if it is correct, or should we let it go and accept our own statement, and those of others, agreeing that it is so, if anyone merely says that it is without inquiring into the correctness of the statement?

EUTHYPHRO: We ought to enquire, but I think that it’s now correct.

SOCRATES: We’ll know better, my friend, in a little while. Just consider this question: Is the pious loved by the gods because it is pious, or is it pious because it is loved by the gods? 10

EUTHYPHRO: I do not understand your meaning, Socrates.

SOCRATES: I’ll try to explain: We speak of something that is carried and something that carries it, of something that is led and something that leads it, of something that is seen and something that sees it, and you understand that these things are all different from one another and how they differ?

EUTHYPHRO: I think that I understand.

SOCRATES: So there is something that is loved, and a different thing that loves it?

EUTHYPHRO: Of course.

SOCRATES: Now tell me, is something that gets carried a carried-thing because someone carries it or for some other reason?⁶ b

⁶ I’ve translated the Greek here and in the following examples very liberally. What it literally says is difficult to represent in English, because Greek verbs have more noun- and adjective-forms than English verbs do. But there are some English verbs that do have enough related nouns to approximate more closely to what Plato is saying here.

EUTHYPHRO: No; that is the reason.

SOCRATES: And something that gets led, is a led-thing because someone leads it, and something that gets seen is a seen-thing because someone sees it?

EUTHYPHRO: True.

SOCRATES: Then no one sees it because it is a seen-thing; rather, on the contrary, it's a seen-thing because someone sees it. And no one leads anything because it's a led-thing; rather it's a led-thing because someone leads it. And no one carries anything because it's a carried-thing; rather it's a carried-thing because someone carries it. Is what I'm trying to say clear, Euthyphro? I'm trying to say this: If something becomes a certain way or undergoes anything, it does not become as it does because it is a thing-that-becomes-this-way nor does it undergo what it does because it is a thing-that-undergoes-this; rather it is because it becomes this way that it is a thing-that-becomes-this-way, and it is because it undergoes what it does that it is a thing-that-undergoes-this. Don't you agree? c

EUTHYPHRO: I do.

SOCRATES: Isn't a loved-thing a thing that becomes a certain way or undergoes something?⁷

EUTHYPHRO: Of course.

SOCRATES: And is this case like the others: those who love it do not love it because it is a loved-thing; rather it's is a loved-thing because they love it?

EUTHYPHRO: Obviously.

SOCRATES: Now what do you say about the pious, Euthyphro? According to what you said, the gods love it, right? d

EUTHYPHRO: Yes.

SOCRATES: Do they love it because it is pious, or for some other reason?

Consider, for example, the word "gift" (or "present"). For something, say a book, to be a gift (or present) is for it to be given (or presented). From the verb "give," we get the nouns "giver" (for someone who gives something), and gift (for something that is given). In Greek it is possible to make such nouns (or—to be more exact, substantive adjective that can function as nouns) from any verb; and the word I'm translating "carried-thing" stands to the verb "carry" as "gift" stands to the verb "give." Another parallel case in English is the verb "employ", from which we get "employer" (for someone who employs others) and "employee" (for someone who is employed). There are a number of other nouns similar in form to "employee": "trainee" (for someone who is being trained), "adoptee" (for someone who has been adopted), etc. Using these words as a model, and taking some real liberties with the English language, we could then translate what Socrates asks Euthyphro here as follows: "Is a carreee a cariee because it is carried or for some other reason?"

⁷ In the case of the verb "love," English does function similarly to Greek. We have the word "beloved" which is primarily an adjective describing people who are loved, but which can be used as a noun as in the phrases "dearly beloved" or "my beloved." The Greek word here ("*philoumenon*") functions in exactly this way, and I could have translated it "beloved." I chose instead to use "loved-thing" to preserve the parallel with "carried-thing" and the other examples.

EUTHYPHRO: No, that is the reason.

SOCRATES: It is loved because it is pious, rather than pious because it is loved?

EUTHYPHRO: I think so.

SOCRATES: And yet, because the gods love it, it is a loved-thing—that is, it is dear to the gods.

EUTHYPHRO: Of course.

SOCRATES: Then what is dear to the gods and the pious are not identical, but they differ from one another. e

EUTHYPHRO: How is that, Socrates?

SOCRATES: Because we agreed, on the one hand, that the gods love the pious because it is pious and that it is not pious because they love it.

EUTHYPHRO: Right.

SOCRATES: And, on the other hand, that what is dear to the gods is so because the gods love it, by the very fact of their loving it. But it is not because it is dear to the gods that they love it.

EUTHYPHRO: True.

SOCRATES: But if what is dear to the gods and the pious were the same, my dear Euthyphro, then, if the gods loved the pious because it is pious, they would also love what is dear to them because it is dear to them; and if what is dear to them was dear to them because they loved it, then the pious would be pious because the gods loved it. But now you see that the opposite is the case, and this shows that the two are different from each other. For the one is loved because the gods love it, whereas the gods love the other because it is such as to be loved. 11

Euthyphro, I'm afraid that when you were asked what piety is you were unwilling to reveal its substance.⁸ Instead you told me a feature of it—it has the feature of being loved by

⁸ The word translated “substance” is “*ousia*” (plural, “*ousiai*”). This is a term that we will see a lot of later in the course. Grammatically it is a derivative form of the verb “to be”: it’s one of two forms of that word that correspond roughly to the English word “being”. (Traditionally, especially in discussions of Aristotle, “being” is used to translate the other word, “*to on*”, and “substance” to translate “*ousia*”, and that is the policy I will follow here.) “*Ousia*” has a range of uses in ordinary Greek, corresponding very loosely to the ways we might use the words “thing” or “stuff”. For example sometimes it refers to someone’s property (as in “That thief stole my *ousia*”). In philosophy it is primarily used in two senses: First, it can refer to what something *is*, as contrasted with a mere feature of it—something’s *essence* as opposed to something that just happens to be true of it. (“Essence” is another word sometimes used to translate “*ousia*”, but it is more often used to translate another Greek phrase [*to ti ein einai*] coined by Aristotle; and this is how I will use it in this class.) Thus you might say about a certain man that his *ousia* is that he’s a human being, and that he only “happens to be” black (or thin, or gay, or your next-door neighbor). In saying this, you’re saying that human being is *what he is*, whereas his skin color is a mere features. This is the sense in which *ousia* is being used in the present passage: being loved by the gods, Socrates says, is not *what piety is*; it is

all the gods—but you have not told me what the pious is.⁹ Now please, don't hide it from me, but begin over again and tell me what the pious is, no matter whether it's loved by the gods has some other feature (let's not argue about that). But tell me frankly: what are the pious and the impious? b

EUTHYPHRO: But, Socrates, I do not know how to say what I mean. For whatever statement we advance, somehow or other it moves about and won't stay where we put it.

SOCRATES: Euthyphro, your statements are like the creations of my ancestor Daedalus.¹⁰ If I were the one saying or propounding them, you might joke that it's because of my relationship to him that my verbal creations run away and won't stay where they are put. But now—well, the statements are yours; so some other joke is called for, since they will not stay put, as you yourself say. c

EUTHYPHRO: I think the joke works fine as it is. I am not the one who makes these statements move about and not stay in the same place—no, you are the Daedalus; for they would have stayed, so far as I am concerned. d

SOCRATES: Then I must be more clever than Daedalus: for he only made his own creations move, whereas I move those of other people as well. And the beauty of it is that I am clever unwillingly. For I would give the wisdom of Daedalus, and the wealth of Tantalus, to have your statements to me remain fixed and stable. e

only a feature of piety. The second sense in which “*ousia*” is used in philosophy is closely related to the first. It can be used to refer to something that *exists in its own right*, as opposed to things that exist merely as features or transient effects of other things. For example, you might think that you are an *ousia* and that your fingerprints, your moods, your complexion, and your being a student are not *ousiai*, because none of these things exist in their own right; rather they exist only as features you have or things you do. These non-*ousiai* cannot exist without you: you “stand under” them (as it were) and make it possible for them to exist, whereas (you might think) there is nothing that supports your existence in this same way. Thus (on this view) you are a *substance*—a thing that, by existing in its own right, stands under other things and makes them possible—whereas they are not. Similarly, some religious people think that God is the only true *ousia*, because (on their view) only He exists in his own right, and the existence of all other things depends on Him in something like the way the existence of your fingerprints or complexion depends on you. Similarly, materialists think that the only substances are whatever basic particles or materials they think make up everything else. Philosophers argue about what things are substances (in this second sense), and we'll have occasions to discuss Plato and Aristotle's differing views on this question later in the course. In any event, though the word “substance” (which is itself a word imported from Latin) is a traditional translation and does capture some of the connotations of the Greek *ousia*, it was never an ideal term (since “standing under” is no part of the etymology of “*ousia*”) and some of its modern connotations are misleading. (In modern English the word tends to be used only for stuffs, like water, gold, or cocaine, and not for things like people and plants.) So it is best to think of “substance” simply as a stand-in for the Greek word “*ousia*” and to learn its meaning by context.

⁹ The word translated “feature” here is “*pathē*”. It is related to the verb “*paschein*”, which I translated “undergo” when it occurred earlier (at 10c1 ff.). The same verb occurs in this sentence, where it's translated “has a feature”. Thus another way to translate this sentence would be: “Instead you told me something that happens to it—it happens to be loved by all the gods—but you have not told me what the pious is.” However, “*pathē*” is used not only to describe events that happen to something; it is also used for any feature that a thing has, especially in contexts where a thing's features are being distinguished from *what it is*, so this last translation would be misleading.

¹⁰ Daedalus is a mythological figure who, among other things, is supposed to have created sculptures so lifelike that they began to move and ran away from him. Socrates, who comes from a family of sculptors, jokingly cites him as an ancestor, because all sculptors were supposed to be descended from him.

A FOURTH ACCOUNT OF THE PIOUS

But enough of this. It seems to me that you're loafing, so I'll try to show you how you can teach me about the pious; and I hope that you won't give up. Tell me: doesn't it seem to you that everything pious is necessarily just?

EUTHYPHRO: Yes.

SOCRATES: And are all just things pious? Or, is everything pious just without everything just being pious—with some just things being pious and others not? 12

EUTHYPHRO: I don't understand, Socrates.

SOCRATES: And yet you are as much younger than I as you are wiser; but, as I said, you are loafing because of your great wisdom. But exert yourself, my friend; for it is not hard to understand what I mean. What I mean is the opposite of what the poet who wrote: "Zeus the creator, him who made all things, thou wilt not name; for where fear is, there also is shame." Now I disagree with the poet. Should I tell you how? b

EUTHYPHRO: By all means.

SOCRATES: I don't think that where there is fear there is also shame; for I am sure that many persons fear poverty and disease, and similar bad things, but I don't think they're ashamed of the things they fear.

EUTHYPHRO: Quite true.

SOCRATES: But where shame is, there is fear; for anyone who has a feeling of shame and embarrassment about the commission of any action, fears and is afraid of a bad reputation. c

EUTHYPHRO: He's certainly afraid.

SOCRATES: Then we are wrong in saying that where there is fear there is also shame; and we should say, where there is shame there is also fear. But there is not always shame where there is fear; for, as it seems to me, fear is wider than shame, and shame is a part of fear, just as the odd is a part of number, and number is wider than odd. I suppose that you follow me now?

EUTHYPHRO: Perfectly.

SOCRATES: That was the sort of question that I meant to raise when I asked whether the just is always pious, or the pious always just; and whether there may not be justice where there is not piety; for justice is wider than piety, which is only one part of it. Do you disagree? d

EUTHYPHRO: No, I think that you're right.

SOCRATES: Then, if the pious is a part of the just, I suppose that we should enquire into what part of the just it is? Now if you asked me about one of the things I just mentioned—

for example, “What part of number is the even?” (that is, “What sort of number is the even?”)—I would say: “It is number that is divisible into two equal (rather than unequal) parts.” Don't you agree?

EUTHYPHRO: Yes, I quite agree.

SOCRATES: Now try to teach me what part of the just the pious is, so that can tell Meletus not to wrong me anymore or bring suits against me for ungodliness, since I have now been adequately instructed by you about what is godly and pious and what is not. e

EUTHYPHRO: Socrates, the godly and the pious appears to me to be that part of justice that takes care of gods, and the other part of justice takes care of men.

SOCRATES: I think you put that very well Euthyphro, but I still need a little bit more: what do you mean by “taking care”? For “taking care” can't mean the same thing when applied to the gods as when applied to other things. For example, we say that horses need to be taken care of, and that not every person is able to take care of them, but only a person skilled in horsemanship. Is it not so? 13

EUTHYPHRO: Certainly.

SOCRATES: I guess that horsemanship is taking care of horses?

EUTHYPHRO: Yes.

SOCRATES: Nor is every one qualified to take care of dogs, but only the gamesman?

EUTHYPHRO: True.

SOCRATES: And I suppose that gamesmanship is taking care of dogs? b

EUTHYPHRO: Yes.

SOCRATES: And ranching is taking care of oxen?

EUTHYPHRO: Very true.

SOCRATES: And piety and godliness is taking care of the gods? Is that what you mean Euthyphro?

EUTHYPHRO: Yes.

SOCRATES: Does taking care of something always have the same aim? I mean something like this: Does it aim at some good or benefit to what's taken care of? For example, horses when taken care of by the horseman are benefitted and made better? Don't you think so?

EUTHYPHRO: True.

SOCRATES: As the dogs are benefitted by the gamesman, and the oxen by the rancher, and so

on? Or do you think that things taken care of for the sake of hurting them?

c

EUTHYPHRO: Certainly not.

SOCRATES: So taking care is always for the sake of benefitting what's taken care of?

EUTHYPHRO: Of course.

SOCRATES: Then piety, since it is taking care of the gods, benefits the gods and makes them better? Would agree that when you do something pious you are making one of the gods better?

EUTHYPHRO: By Zeus, I'd never say that!

SOCRATES: No, Euthyphro, I didn't think you would. That's why I asked you what you meant by "taking care of the gods," because I didn't think you meant anything like that.

d

EUTHYPHRO: You're right, Socrates; that's not what I mean by taking care.

SOCRATES: Alright, but then what sort of taking care of the gods is piety?

EUTHYPHRO: It is the sort that servants take of their masters, Socrates.

SOCRATES: I understand—you mean it's a sort of assistance to the gods.

EUTHYPHRO: Exactly.

SOCRATES: Alright. Can you tell me what purpose assistance to a physician assists in achieving? Isn't it health?

EUTHYPHRO: Yes.

SOCRATES: What about assistance to shipwrights, is there some purpose that it assists them to achieve?

e

EUTHYPHRO: Clearly, Socrates: a boat.

SOCRATES: And assistance to a builder assists in building a house?

EUTHYPHRO: Yes.

SOCRATES: And now tell me, great man, what purpose would assistance to the gods assist in achieving? Evidently you know, since you say you know more than any other man about matters which have to do with the gods.

EUTHYPHRO: And I speak the truth, Socrates.

SOCRATES: Tell me then, by Zeus, tell me: what is the supremely fine purpose that the gods

achieve using us as their servants?

EUTHYPHRO: Many fine things, Socrates.

SOCRATES: Yes, and so do generals, my friend; but nevertheless, you could easily tell their chief concern—namely, that they bring about victory in war. Is that not the case? 14

EUTHYPHRO: Certainly.

SOCRATES: Farmers also, I think, achieve many fine things, but chief among these is food from the earth?

EUTHYPHRO: Exactly.

SOCRATES: What about the many fine things the gods accomplish? What is their chief purpose?

EUTHYPHRO: I already told you, Socrates, that it's a lot of work to learn all these things accurately. However, I say simply that when one knows how to say and do what is gratifying to the gods, in praying and sacrificing, that is pious, and such things bring salvation to individual families and to states; and the opposite of what is gratifying to the gods is impious, and it overturns and destroys everything. b

SOCRATES: I think that you could have answered in much fewer words the chief question which I asked, Euthyphro, if you had chosen. But I see plainly that you don't want to teach me. For now, when you were close upon it you turned aside; and if you had answered it, I should already have obtained from you all the instruction I need about piety. But now, like a lover who must follow his beloved wherever he leads, I must follow you. So, what do say that the pious and piety are? Are they knowledge of how to sacrifice and pray? c

EUTHYPHRO: That's right.

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

EUTHYPHRO: Yes, Socrates.

SOCRATES: On this view, then piety is knowledge of how to give and ask?

EUTHYPHRO: You understand me perfectly, Socrates.

SOCRATES: Yes, my friend, because I am eager for your wisdom, and I focus my mind on it, so that nothing you say will fall to the ground. But tell me, what is this assistance to the gods? Do you say that it consists in asking from them and giving to them?

EUTHYPHRO: Yes, I do.

SOCRATES: Isn't the right way of asking to ask them for what we need?

EUTHYPHRO: Certainly.

SOCRATES: And the right way of giving is to give to them in return what they need from us, since it wouldn't be artful to give anyone what he doesn't need. e

EUTHYPHRO: Very true, Socrates.

SOCRATES: Then piety, Euthyphro, is an art which gods and men have of bartering with one another?

EUTHYPHRO: Bartering, yes, if you want to call it that.

SOCRATES: I don't want to call it that, unless it's true. But tell me, what benefit do the gods derive from the gifts they get from us? For everybody knows what they give, since we have nothing good which they do not give. But what benefit do they derive from what they get from us? Or have do we have such an advantage over them in bartering that we get all good things from them and they nothing from us? 15

EUTHYPHRO: Socrates, why would you suppose that the gods derive any benefit from what they get from us?

SOCRATES: But if not, Euthyphro, what could these gifts from us to the gods be?

EUTHYPHRO: What else than honor and praise, and, as I said before, gratitude?

SOCRATES: The pious, then, is pleasing to the gods, but not beneficial or dear to them? b

EUTHYPHRO: I should say that nothing could be dearer.

SOCRATES: Then once again, it seems that the pious is what is dear to the gods.

EUTHYPHRO: Certainly.

SOCRATES: Then will you be surprised, since you say this, if your words do not stay put but walk around, and will you accuse me of being the Daedalus who makes them walk, when you are yourself much more skilful than Daedalus and make them go round in a circle? Don't you see that our definition has come around to the point from which it started? Surly you remember that a little while ago we found that the pious and what is dear to the gods were not the same, but different from each other. Don't you remember? c

EUTHYPHRO: I remember.

SOCRATES: Then don't you understand that you're now saying that what is loved by the gods is pious rather than it being piety that makes something dear to the gods?

EUTHYPHRO: True.

SOCRATES: Then either our agreement a while ago was wrong, or if that was right, we are

wrong now.

EUTHYPHRO: Seemingly.

SOCRATES: Then we must begin again at the beginning and ask what the pious is. Since I shall not willingly give up until I learn. And do not scorn me, but by all means apply your mind now to the utmost and tell me the truth; for you know, if anyone does, and like Proteus, you must be held until you speak. For if you didn't have clear knowledge of the pious and impious you would never have undertaken to prosecute your aged father for murder on behalf of a servant. You would have been afraid to risk the anger of the gods, in case your conduct should be wrong, and would have been ashamed to face men. But now I am sure you think you know what is pious and what is not. So tell me, esteemed Euthyphro, and do not conceal your thought. d e

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

SOCRATES: Oh my friend, what are you doing? You go away and leave me cast down from the high hope I had that I could learn from you what is pious, and what is not, and get rid of Meletus' indictment by showing him that I have been made wise by Euthyphro about divine matters and am no longer making rash innovations about them, which I did only through ignorance, and that now I am ready to lead a better life. 16