

Plato's *Euthyphro*

Translated by David Horan

Person of the dialogue: Euthyphro, Socrates

^{2A} Euthyphro: What ever is going on, Socrates? You've left your usual haunt, the Lyceum, and you're now spending time here at the Royal Stoa. Surely you too don't have a suit before the Royal Archon, as I do.

Socrates: Well the Athenians call it not a suit, Euthyphro, but a prosecution.

Euth: ^{2B} What are you saying? Then someone is prosecuting you, it seems, for I shan't accuse you of prosecuting someone else.

Soc: Of course not.

Euth: Is someone prosecuting you then?

Soc: Yes, indeed.

Euth: Who is he?

Soc: I hardly even know the man myself, Euthyphro; yes, apparently he is someone young and unknown. Anyway, his name, I believe, is Meletus; he belongs to the deme of Pittheus, if you can think of a Meletus from Pittheus with straight hair, not much of a beard, and a hook nose.

Euth: I can't think of anyone, Socrates, but tell me, what charge has he brought against you?

Soc: ^{2C} What charge? Well it is no ordinary charge, in my opinion, anyway. Indeed it is quite an achievement for a young man to have understood a matter of such importance. For this fellow claims to know how the young people are being corrupted and who their corrupters are. And he is probably wise and, having discerned my ignorance, he goes to the city, just as a child runs to its mother, accusing me of corrupting people of his own age. And it looks to me as if he alone embarks upon his political career ^{2D} in the right way, for it is right to care for the young people first, so that they turn out as good as they possibly can, just as a good farmer is likely to care first for the young plants, and after that, for the others. And in fact, Meletus ^{3A} is probably clearing us out first; the destroyers of the crop of youth, as he says. Then, of course, once he has cared for the older generation as well, he will be responsible for great benefits aplenty to our city; at least that would be the likely outcome of setting about it in this way.

Euth: Would that it were so, Socrates, but I fear that the outcome may turn out to be the very opposite. In fact I think he is actually starting off by damaging the very heart of our city by attacking you unjustly. But tell me, he says you corrupt the young by doing exactly what?

Soc: ^{3B} It sounds absurd, my wonderful friend, on first hearing, at any rate. For he says that I am an inventor of gods and, on the grounds that I am inventing new gods and disregarding the old ones, he is prosecuting me on their behalf, so he says.

Euth: I understand, Socrates; it's because you say that the divine sign comes to you from time to time. So he has prosecuted you on this charge, as an innovator in matters divine, and he goes into court, out to slander you, knowing that such issues are easily misrepresented, to most people. Indeed in my own case too, whenever ^{3C} I say anything in the assembly about

matters divine, predicting the future for them, they laugh at me as if I were a madman, and yet, nothing I foretold has not come true but, nevertheless, they are jealous of everyone like us. However we mustn't worry about them, but face up to them.

Soc: Dear Euthyphro, being laughed at is surely not an issue. Indeed the Athenians, in my view, are not greatly concerned if they believe that someone is clever, provided, of course, he doesn't set about teaching his own wisdom. But if they believe ^{3D} he is also making other people turn out like himself, they get angry, either out of jealousy, as you say, or for some other reason.

Euth: Well I am not very keen to test their precise attitude to me on this issue.

Soc: Well perhaps you have a reputation for holding yourself aloof and being reluctant to teach your own wisdom, while I am afraid, that, due to my love of humanity, I have a reputation, in their eyes, for saying whatever I have to say, without restraint, to anyone I meet, free of charge and, not only that, but I would gladly pay someone who was prepared to listen to me. Well, as I was saying just now, if they are going to laugh at me, just as you say ^{3E} they laugh at you, it might be quite pleasant to spend our time having fun and laughing in the courtroom. But if, on the other hand, they are going to be serious, then it is unclear how the issue will turn out; except to soothsayers like yourself.

Euth: Well, Socrates, surely it will all come to nothing; you will contest the suit successfully, and I think I shall also succeed with mine.

Soc: But, Euthyphro, what is this suit of yours; are you defending or prosecuting?

Euth: I am prosecuting.

Soc: Whom?

Euth: ^{4A} Someone whom, once more, I am regarded as mad for prosecuting.

Soc: Why so? Are you prosecuting someone who has wings with which to flee from you?

Euth: He is very far indeed from flying; in fact, he happens to be well on in years.

Soc: Who is the man?

Euth: My own father.

Soc: Your father, my good man?!

Euth: Yes, certainly.

Soc: But what is the charge, and what is your suit about?

Euth: Murder, Socrates.

Soc: By Heracles, Euthyphro! Most people are, presumably, unaware of the proper procedure here. For I do not believe it is appropriate for any random person ^{4B} to do this, but only someone who is, presumably, already far advanced in wisdom.

Euth: Far advanced, indeed, by Zeus, Socrates.

Soc: And was it some member of your family who was killed by your father? Of course it was, for I presume you would not have prosecuted your father for murder on account of a stranger.

Euth: It's amusing, Socrates, that you think it makes any difference whether the murdered man was a stranger or a family member; instead of attending to the single issue of whether the killer killed his victim justly or unjustly; and if he acted justly, one should leave him be. However, if he acted unjustly, one should prosecute him, especially if the killer shares your hearth ^{4C} and your table; for equal is the pollution that befalls you if you live with such a person, knowing what he knows, without purifying yourself, and that person by bringing him to justice. In this case, the man who was slain was a day labourer of mine, and when we were farming on Naxos he worked on our land. One day, mad with wine, he got angry with one of our slaves and slit his throat. So my father bound him, hand and foot, threw him into a ditch and sent a man, here, to Athens to find out what he should do, from the legal expositor. Meanwhile ^{4D} he showed no regard for the man he had tied up, and neglected him because he was a murderer and it didn't matter even if he died; which is exactly what happened to him. Before the messenger arrived back from the legal expositor, the man died from hunger, the cold, and his bonds.

Well my father and the rest of my family are obviously angry over this, because I am prosecuting my father for murder, on behalf of the murderer. They maintain that he didn't actually kill the man and, even if he did definitely kill him, the slain man was a murderer anyway, and I shouldn't be concerned over someone like this, because it is unholy for a son ^{4E} to prosecute his father for murder; so poor is their knowledge of the divine realm, Socrates, and where it stands in relation to what is holy and what is unholy.

Soc: But, by Zeus, Euthyphro, do you believe that you understand divine matters in relation to holiness and unholiness, so precisely, that you are not afraid, given the circumstances you are describing, of performing a further unholy action yourself, by bringing your father to justice?

Euth: Socrates, I would be useless, indeed, and ^{5A} Euthyphro would not be different from anybody else, if I did not have precise knowledge of all such matters.

Soc: In that case, wonderful Euthyphro, my best course of action is to become your pupil, and challenge Meletus on these very issues, in advance of his prosecution. I'll do so by saying that, heretofore, I have always attached great importance to knowledge of divine matters, and now, since the man claims that I am falling into error through my rash utterances and innovations on matters divine, I have become your pupil. I would then say: ^{5B} "Dear Meletus, if you accept that Euthyphro is wise in such matters, then you should also believe that my own views are sound and drop the charge. Otherwise, take legal action against him, the teacher, rather than me, for corrupting his elders, myself and his own father, by instructing me, and by censuring and punishment him." And if I did not convince him, and he did not drop the charge, or prosecute you instead of me, I would say the very same things in court as in my pre-trial challenge.

Euth: Yes, by Zeus, Socrates, and if he were to attempt ^{5C} to prosecute me, I think I would find where his weak point lies, and our argument in court would be concerned with him, long before it concerned me.

Soc: Yes, my dear friend, and I am eager to become your pupil, because I recognise all this. I know that neither this man Meletus, nor anyone else, I presume, seems even to notice you, yet he picked me out immediately, with so little difficulty that he has prosecuted me for impiety. So tell me now, by Zeus; what sort of thing, according to you, is pious, and what is impious, in relation ^{5D} to murder or in relation to anything else; you claimed confidently, a moment ago, to know this full well? Isn't the holy itself the same as itself, while the unholy

is, in turn, the opposite of everything holy, yet like itself; in other words, anything that is to be unholy possesses a single form based upon unholiness.

Euth: Of course, Socrates, entirely so.

Soc: Tell me, then; according to you, what is holiness and what is unholiness?

Euth: Well I say that what is holy is exactly what I am now doing; prosecuting a wrongdoer for murder, for robbing temples, or for committing any other crimes of that sort, even if he happens to be ^{5E} your father or mother or anyone else at all; while failure to prosecute is unholy. Now, Socrates, behold what convincing evidence I shall present of the law that this is the case; evidence I have already given to others, showing that these events are unfolding as they should, and we should not give way to an impious person no matter who that person happens to be. For people regard Zeus as the best ^{6A} and most just of the gods, and they accept that he bound his own father, Cronos, for unjustly devouring his children, and that he, Cronos, in turn, had castrated his own father for similar reasons; yet they are angry with me for prosecuting my father for acting unjustly, and so, when speaking about the gods and when speaking about me, they are contradicting themselves.

Soc: Well, Euthyphro, could this be the reason I am being prosecuted, because whenever someone tells me stories of this kind, about the gods, I accept them only with some reluctance? Because of this, it seems, someone may well declare that I am in error. So now, if you who understands such matters so well, ^{6B} also approve of these stories, then, it seems that I need to go along with them too. For what else can I say, I who accept that I know nothing about them? But tell me, in the name of friendship, do you believe, in truth, that these things happened in this way?

Euth: Yes, Socrates, and there are stories, even stranger than these, that most people do not know about.

Soc: So do you also believe that there really is war between the gods, bitter enmities, battles and lots of other things like these, as recounted by the poets? These also adorn our sacred places, courtesy of the fine ^{6C} painters; and, in particular, the robe that is carried up to the Acropolis at the great Panathenaea is full of depictions of this kind. Are we to say that these are all true, Euthyphro?

Euth: Not only that, Socrates, but as I said just now, I shall, if you like, relate lots of other stories to you about matters divine, which I know full well you will be astonished to hear.

Soc: I wouldn't be surprised. But you can recount these to me, at your leisure, on some other occasion. Right now, please try to answer the question I asked you a moment ago, more clearly. ^{6D} For, you did not instruct me adequately, my friend, when I asked you earlier what precisely holiness is; instead you told me this action you are performing, prosecuting your father for murder, is holy.

Euth: And I told you the truth, Socrates.

Soc: Perhaps, Euthyphro, but in fact you say that lots of other things are holy too.

Euth: And so they are.

Soc: Then you remember that I didn't ask of you for this; to teach me about one or two of the many holy actions, but about that very form by which everything that is holy, is holy. For I think you said, that what is unholy is unholy, and what is holy is holy, by a single form, ^{6E} or do you not remember?

Euth: I do remember.

Soc: Well what precisely is this form? Teach me so that I may focus upon it, and using this as a standard, declare that any action that is like this standard is holy, and any action that is unlike it, is not, whether it is performed by you or by anyone else.

Euth: Well, Socrates, if you want me to express it in those terms, I shall do so.

Soc: Yes, that is what I want.

Euth: Well then, what is loved by the gods is holy but what ^{7A} is not loved by them is unholy.

Soc: Excellent, Euthyphro; you have now answered in the way that I asked you to answer, although I don't yet know if you have answered truthfully; but of course you will go on to explain that what you are saying is true.

Euth: Yes, certainly.

Soc: Come on then, let us consider what we are saying; whatever is beloved of the gods, and the person who is beloved of the gods, is holy, and whatever is hated by the gods, and whoever is hated by them, is unholy. And the holy is not the same as the unholy, but is its complete opposite. Isn't this so?

Euth: It is so, indeed.

Soc: And what we are saying is, apparently, correct?

Euth: ^{7B} I think so, Socrates.

Soc: But, Euthyphro, wasn't it also stated that the gods quarrel, and differ with one another and that there is enmity between them?

Euth: Yes, that was stated.

Soc: But what is the disagreement about when it generates enmity and anger? Let's consider this: suppose you and I differ about number; about which of two numbers is greater; would our disagreement about these generate enmity and make us angry with one another, or would we quickly settle the matter through recourse to calculation, in such cases as these, at any rate?

Euth: ^{7C} Of course.

Soc: And if we were to differ about the greater and the lesser, we would quickly put an end to our dispute through recourse to measurement.

Euth: Yes.

Soc: And I think we would decide about what is heavier and what is lighter by recourse to weighing?

Euth: Of course.

Soc: What then might our disagreement be about when we become enemies and get angry with one another? What issue might we be unable to resolve? Perhaps you cannot answer offhand, but I'll make a suggestion: ^{7D} consider if the issue might be, the just and the unjust, beautiful and ugly, good and bad. Aren't these the issues we disagree about and, being unable

to come to an adequate resolution, don't we become mutual enemies, whenever this happens to you and me, or to anyone else?

Euth: Yes, Socrates, this is the disagreement in question, and it concerns these issues.

Soc: But what about the gods, Euthyphro? If they do, in fact, disagree on anything, wouldn't they disagree on these very issues?

Euth: This must be so.

Soc: ^{7E} And in fact, according to your account, noble Euthyphro, the various gods hold various views on what is just, beautiful, ugly, good, or bad, for they would not have quarrelled with one another if they had not differed on these issues; is this so?

Euth: What you are saying is correct.

Soc: Wouldn't each of them love anything they regard as beautiful, good, or just, and wouldn't they hate the opposites of these?

Euth: Very much so.

Soc: Yes, but according to you, the same things are regarded as just by some gods but ^{8A} unjust by others and, because they disagree on these issues, they quarrel and fight with one another; is this not so?

Euth: This is so.

Soc: Therefore it seems that the same things are hated by the gods and are loved by them; and what is hated by the gods and what is beloved of the gods would be the same.

Euth: So it seems.

Soc: Then, by this argument, the same thing would be both holy and unholy, Euthyphro.

Euth: Quite likely.

Soc: In that case, you did not answer the question I asked you, my friend, for I was not asking what is, at once, both holy and unholy; which would, it seems, be beloved of the gods and hated by the gods. ^{8B} And so, Euthyphro, it would be no surprise if, in punishing your father, as you are now doing, you are doing something that is loved by Zeus but hated by Cronos and Ouranos; loved by Hephaestus but hated by Hera, and if any other gods differ with one another on this issue the same considerations apply.

Euth: But, in my opinion, Socrates, none of the gods differ with one another on this issue: that a man who kills someone unjustly need not the penalty.

Soc: But, Euthyphro, in the case of us humans, have you ever heard ^{8C} anyone arguing that a man who has killed someone unjustly, or performs any other unjust action whatsoever, should not pay a penalty?

Euth: Why, they never stop arguing over these issues, especially in the law courts; indeed having performed all sorts of injustices, people do and say anything at all to avoid a penalty.

Soc: Yes, Euthyphro, but do they also admit that they have acted unjustly, and, despite this admission, claim, nevertheless, that they should not pay a penalty?

Euth: No, they don't do that at all.

Soc: Then they do not do or say anything at all. Indeed I think they wouldn't dare assert or argue that they should not pay a penalty, if, in fact, they have acted unjustly; no, I think they deny that they have acted unjustly; is this so? ^{8D}

Euth: That's true.

Soc: So they don't argue that the person who commits injustice should not pay a penalty. They surely argue, instead, over who the wrongdoer is, what he did, and when.

Euth: That is true.

Soc: Don't the same considerations also apply to the gods, if they do indeed quarrel about justice and injustice, as you maintain, and one side claims that the other is acting unjustly, while the other side denies it? But this much is certain, my friend, no one, either god or human ^{8E} would dare to suggest that a person who acts unjustly should not pay a penalty.

Euth: Yes, Socrates, what you are saying is true, on the whole.

Soc: Yes, I think those who differ, be they humans or gods, if gods do indeed differ, differ over particular actions. When they differ over any action, some maintain that it was performed in a just manner, others that it was performed in an unjust manner. Isn't this so?

Euth: Entirely so.

Soc: ^{9A} Come on then, dear Euthyphro, and instruct me so that I may become wiser: what evidence do you have that all the gods think that this man met his death unjustly; a man who committed murder whilst working as a day labourer, who was tied up by the master of the murder victim, and who died prematurely on account of his bonds, before the master, who had tied him up, had found out from the legal expositor what he should do about him. Where is your evidence that it is actually right for a son to prosecute his father, and denounce him, on behalf of a person like that? Come on, try to prove these ^{9B} points clearly to me; that all of the gods really do believe that this course of action is right, and if you prove this to me adequately, I shall sing the praises of your wisdom, unceasingly.

Euth: Well that's surely no small task, Socrates, yet I should be able to prove it to you, very clearly.

Soc: I understand; that is because you think that I am a slower learner than the jurors, since you will, of course, prove to them that these actions are unjust, and that all of the gods hate such actions as these.

Euth: Very clearly, Socrates, if they will only listen to what I say.

Soc: ^{9C} They will listen alright, Euthyphro, provided they think you are speaking well. But while you were speaking, something occurred to me and I am thinking to myself: "If Euthyphro were to teach me, comprehensively, that all the gods regard a death like this one as unjust, what more have I learned from Euthyphro as to what exactly holiness and unholiness are? Yes, this particular action would, it seems, be hateful to the gods, but it turned out earlier that what is holy and what is not, are not defined by this; for what is hated by the gods proved also to be beloved of the gods." So, if you like, Euthyphro, I'll grant you this; let all the gods think ^{9D} it unjust, and let them all hate it.

But what about this correction we have just introduced into the argument, whereby whatever *all* the gods hate is unholy, and whatever they *all* love is holy, and whatever some love and others hate is neither or both; would you now like us to define what is holy and what is unholy in this way?

Euth: Is there any reason not to, Socrates?

Soc: In my case, no, Euthyphro, but in your own case, you should decide whether adopting this hypothesis is the easiest way for you to teach me what you promised.

Euth: ^{9E} Well I would say that what is holy is what all the gods love; and its opposite, what all the gods hate, is unholy.

Soc: Should we also investigate whether this formulation is correct, Euthyphro, or should we leave it, and accept our own or other people's assertions, just like that, agreeing that this is the case just because somebody says so? Or should we consider what the speaker means?

Euth: We should consider that; however, in my view, this is now a good formulation.

Soc: ^{10A} Good man; we shall know better soon enough. Yes, think about this; is the holy loved by the gods because it is holy, or is it holy because it is loved?

Euth: I don't understand what you are saying, Socrates.

Soc: Then I shall try to speak with greater clarity. We say that something is carried and something carries; something is led and something leads; something is seen and something sees; and in all these cases, you understand that there are differences between them, and the way in which they differ.

Euth: I think I understand.

Soc: And is there something that is loved, and, is that different from that which loves?

Euth: Of course.

Soc: ^{10B} Then tell me whether something that is carried, is what it is, because it is being carried, or for some other reason?

Euth: No, that is the reason.

Soc: And something that is led, is what it is, because it is being led, and something that is seen, is what it is, because it is being seen.

Euth: Yes, certainly.

Soc: So it is not because it is being seen, that it is seen; it is the other way around, because it is seen, it is being seen: nor is it because it is being led, that it is led, no; because it is led, it is being led: nor is it because it is being carried, that it is carried, no; because it is carried, it is being carried. So, Euthyphro, is it ^{10C} obvious what I wish to say? What I mean is this: if anything becomes, or is affected, it is not because it is becoming that it becomes, no; because it becomes, it is becoming: nor is it because it is being affected, that it is affected, no; because it is affected, it is being affected. Do you agree that this is so?

Euth: I do.

Soc: Now, isn't that which is loved either something that is becoming, or something that is being affected by something?

Euth: Yes, certainly.

Soc: So this case is like the previous cases; it is not because it is being loved, that it is loved by those who love it, no; because it is loved, it is something that is being loved.

Euth: Necessarily.

Soc: ^{10D} Well then, what do we say about what is holy, Euthyphro? Isn't it loved by all the gods, according to your argument?

Euth: Yes.

Soc: So, is this because it is holy, or for some other reason?

Euth: No, that's the reason.

Soc: So, because it is holy it is loved; it is not the case that it is loved, and is holy for that reason?

Euth: So it seems.

Soc: And yet, because something is loved by the gods, it is being loved and is beloved of the gods.

Euth: Of course.

Soc: Therefore what is beloved of the gods is not holy, Euthyphro, nor is the holy what is beloved of the gods, as you maintain; they are different from one another.

Euth: ^{10E} How so, Socrates?

Soc: Because we agree that what is holy is loved because it is holy, and it is not because it is loved, that it is holy; is this so?

Euth: Yes.

Soc: And yet, what is beloved of the gods is beloved of the gods, by reason of their very love. But the reason it is loved is not because it is beloved of the gods.

Euth: That is true.

Soc: But, dear Euthyphro, if what is beloved of the gods, and what is holy, were the same, then, if what is holy ^{11A} was loved because of being holy, what is beloved of the gods too would be loved, because of being beloved of the gods; and if, on the other hand, what is beloved of the gods, was beloved of the gods, because of being loved by the gods, what is holy too would be holy because of being loved. But you can now see that these two are opposites, as they are completely different from one another; for one is the sort of thing that is loved, because it is loved, while the other is the sort of thing that is loved, and is loved for that reason. And when I asked what precisely what is holy is, it seems you were not willing to disclose its essence to me, but only to describe something it undergoes, that what is holy is affected as follows: by being loved by all ^{11B} the gods. But you have not yet said what it actually is. So, if you please, don't hide this from me, but tell me again, from the beginning, what precisely what is holy is, regardless of whether it is loved by the gods or whatever else happens to it, for we shan't argue over that. Just state what holiness and unholiness are, and don't hold back.

Euth: But, Socrates, I don't know how to tell you what I have in mind. For anything we propose always wanders about somehow and won't stay where we put it.

Soc: These pronouncements of yours, Euthyphro, seem to be ^{11C} like the works of my own ancestor, Daedalus, and if I was the one who had proposed them, and set them down, you would probably have mocked me over my kinship to that man, because my verbal

formulations run away, and refuse to remain where someone puts them. But now, of course, the hypotheses are yours, so some alternative mockery is called for, since they refuse to remain in place for you; as you can see for yourself.

Euth: But I think the pronouncements deserve, more or less, the same mockery, Socrates, for I am not the one who set them in motion, so that they don't remain in the same place, no, ^{11D} it seems to me that you are the "Daedalus", since, if it were up to me, they would have remained as they were.

Soc: Perhaps I have become cleverer at the craft than that ancestor of mine, to this extent; while he only made his own works unstable, it seems I do this to my own, and to other people's too. And indeed, what is most delightful about the skill, in my case, is that I am wise against my will, for I would have preferred that my own pronouncements be stable, fixed and unmoving, rather than possess the wisdom ^{11E} of Daedalus and the wealth of Tantalus, too. But enough of all this, since you yourself seem to be indolent, I'll join you in your desire to instruct me about what is holy. Don't give up yet: think about this; is everything that is holy necessarily just?

Euth: I think so.

Soc: And is everything that is just, also holy? Or is what is holy, all just, ^{12A} while what is just is not all holy; part of it being holy, another part otherwise?

Euth: Socrates, I can't follow you.

Soc: And yet you are younger than me and no less wise, for that: but as I said, your wealth of wisdom makes you indolent. So exert yourself, blessed man, for it is not difficult to understand what I mean. Indeed I am saying the opposite of the poet who wrote these lines:

"Zeus the creator, who made all this, ^{12B} you shrink from reviling,
For when there is fear there is also shame."

Now I disagree with this poet. Shall I tell you why?

Euth: Yes, certainly.

Soc: I don't think that "when there is fear there is also shame", because I think that many people who fear disease and poverty and lots of other things like these, are afraid, yet they are not at all ashamed of the things they fear. Isn't this how it seems to you too?

Euth: Yes, certainly.

Soc: But I do think that when there is shame there is also fear; indeed, is there anyone who is ashamed of something, feels shame, and isn't, at the same time, fearful, and afraid of a reputation for wickedness?

Euth: ^{12C} Yes, he is afraid.

Soc: So it is not right to say that "when there is fear there is also respect": on the contrary, when there is respect there is also fear, and yet, when there is fear there is not respect in every case, for I think that fear is more extensive than respect. Indeed respect is a part of fear, just as odd is part of number; and so, it is not the case that when there is number there is also the odd, and yet, where there is the odd there is also number. So I presume you follow me now.

Euth: Yes, certainly.

Soc: Well this is more or less what I meant by the earlier question: when there is justice, ^{12D} is there also holiness? Or when there is holiness is there also justice, while, conversely, when there is justice, there is not holiness in every case, because holiness is a part of justice? Should we say this, or do you think otherwise?

Euth: No, let's say this; I think you are expressing this correctly.

Soc: Then take note of the next issue; for if holiness is part of justice, we should, it seems, find out what sort of part it would be. Now suppose you had asked me about something we have just discussed, number, for instance; what sort of part of number is the even part, and what kind of number this is, I would reply that it has equal sides rather than unequal sides: is that what you think?

Euth: It is.

Soc: ^{12E} So you should now also attempt to teach me, in this way, the sort of part of justice that is holy, so that I may tell Meletus not to wrong me anymore, or to prosecute me for impiety, as I have now received adequate instruction from you about what is pious and holy, and what is not.

Euth: Well, Socrates, it seems to me that the part of justice that is pious and holy is the part that deals with care of the gods, while the remaining part of justice deals with care of human beings.

Soc: And, in my view, you have expressed that well, Euthyphro; ^{13A} but there is one minor detail still outstanding; for I do not yet understand what the care you are referring to actually is. For I presume you do not mean that the sort of care that deals with the gods is just like the care that deals with anything else. Yes, isn't this how we speak? We say, for instance, that not everyone knows how to care for horses; only the skilled horse-trainer. Is this so?

Euth: Very much so.

Soc: For horse-training is, presumably, the care of horses.

Euth: Yes.

Soc: Nor, for that matter, does everyone know how to care for dogs; only the dog-handler.

Euth: Quite so.

Soc: For dog-handling is, presumably, the care of dogs.

Euth: ^{13B} Yes.

Soc: And ox-herding of oxen?

Euth: Very much so.

Soc: And holiness and piety are the care of gods, Euthyphro: is this what you mean?

Euth: I do.

Soc: And doesn't all care bring about the same outcome? Something like this; it is directed to some good, or some benefit, of whatever is cared for. For instance, you can see that horses cared for by horse-training are benefitted and become better; don't you think so?

Euth: I do.

Soc: And dogs are, presumably, benefitted by dog-handling, oxen by ox-herding, and the same applies in all other cases: or do you think that the care aims to harm whatever it cares for?

Euth: By Zeus, I do not.

Soc: Does it aim to benefit it, then?

Euth: How could it do otherwise?

Soc: Now is holiness too, being a care of the gods, also a benefit to the gods, and does it make the gods better? Would you accept that you make any of the gods better, whenever you do anything holy?

Euth: By Zeus, I would not.

Soc: No, I didn't think that was what you meant either, Euthyphro; far from it. And that is why I asked ^{13D} you what exactly you meant by this care of the gods; I was assuming you did not mean anything like this.

Euth: And you are right, Socrates, I do not mean anything like this.

Soc: So be it; but, in that case, what care of the gods would holiness be?

Euth: It is the care, Socrates, which servants give their masters.

Soc: I understand; it would, it seems, be some service to the gods.

Euth: Yes, certainly.

Soc: Now, can you say, in the case of service to physicians, what product this service helps to produce? Don't you think it is health?

Euth: I do.

Soc: ^{13E} What about service to ship-builders? What product does this service help to produce?

Euth: Obviously, Socrates, it is a ship.

Soc: And in the case of house-builders, presumably it is a house?

Euth: Yes.

Soc: Then, tell me, best of men; in the case of service to the gods, what product would this service help to produce? You must know the answer, since you declare that your knowledge of matters divine is superior to that of anyone else.

Euth: And what I say is true, Socrates.

Soc: Then, tell me, by Zeus, what glorious product do the gods produce, using us as their servants?

Euth: A lot, Socrates, and it is beautiful too.

Soc: ^{14A} Yes, so do the generals, my friend, but it is easy, nevertheless, to sum it all up by saying that they bring about victory in war: isn't this so?

Euth: Of course.

Soc: And farmers, too, produce a lot and it is beautiful, but nevertheless what they produce is, in summary, food from the earth.

Euth: Certainly.

Soc: Yes, but what about all the beautiful things that the gods produce? What, in summary, is their product?

Euth: Well I told you a little earlier, Socrates, that to understand precisely how matters stand in all these cases is a major ^{14B} undertaking. Yet I can say, in general terms, that if someone knows how to do and say what is gratifying to the gods, by praying and offering sacrifices, these actions are the holy ones; and such actions safeguard private homes and entire cities. But the opposite of what gratifies them is impious, and this overturns and destroys everything.

Soc: If you had wanted to, Euthyphro, you could have given me the summary I asked you for, much more briefly. But you are not eager ^{14C} to instruct me: obviously not. In fact, right now, you turned aside at the very point where, had you answered, I might by now, have learned about holiness from you, quite adequately. But now the questioner needs to follow the answerer, wherever he may lead. So, again, what do you say the holy and holiness is? Isn't it some sort of knowledge of sacrificing and praying?

Euth: It is.

Soc: Sacrificing is giving to the gods, and praying is asking of the gods: isn't this so?

Euth: Very much so, Socrates.

Soc: So, on this formulation, holiness would be knowledge ^{14D} of asking of, and giving to, the gods.

Euth: You have understood what I've said, perfectly, Socrates.

Soc: That's because I am eager for your wisdom, my friend, and I give it my full attention, so that nothing you say may be lost. But tell me; what is this service to the gods? Are you saying that it consists in asking of them and giving to them?

Euth: I am.

Soc: And wouldn't the right manner of asking be to ask of them, what we need from them?

Euth: That's it.

Soc: ^{14E} Then again, isn't the right manner of giving, to give them, in return, whatever they happen to need from us? Indeed, giving anyone something they do not need would, presumably, not require any skill.

Euth: That's true, Socrates.

Soc: Then, Euthyphro, holiness would be a skill whereby gods and men trade with one another.

Euth: Yes, call it trade if it pleases you to do so.

Soc: Well, nothing pleases me unless it happens to be true. But tell me, what benefit do the gods derive from the gifts they obtain from us? What they give us is obvious to everyone, for, they give ^{15A} us anything good that we have. But how are they benefitted by what they obtain

from us? Or do we gain such an advantage over them from the trading, that we get all good things from them, while they get nothing from us?

Euth: But, Socrates, do you think the gods derive benefit from what they obtain from us?

Soc: But, Euthyphro, what exactly would these gifts we bestow upon the gods be?

Euth: What else do you think, except honour, reverence and, as I said earlier, gratification.

Soc: ^{15B} So the holy is gratifying to the gods, Euthyphro, but is it not beneficial to them, or loved by them?

Euth: I really think it is the most beloved thing of all.

Soc: So, once again, it seems that the holy is what is loved by the gods.

Euth: Very much so.

Soc: And once you say this, will you be surprised then, to find that our propositions are inconstant and go walking? And will you accuse me of being the Daedalus who makes them walk, when you yourself are far more skilled than Daedalus, and can make them go around in a circle? Or can't you see that our argument has gone around in a circle, and arrived back ^{15C} in the same place? For I presume, you remember that, in our previous discussion, it was evident to us that what is holy, and what is beloved of the gods, are not the same, but differ from one another. Or do you not remember?

Euth: I do.

Soc: Well, don't you realise now, that you are saying that what is loved by the gods, is holy? But this happens not to be beloved of the gods. Doesn't it?

Euth: Certainly.

Soc: In that case, either our earlier agreement was incorrect or, if we were right then, we are wrong now.

Euth: So it seems.

Soc: So we must consider what holiness is, once more, from the beginning, since I am not willing to give up ^{15D} until I have learned this. But please don't be contemptuous towards me; just give this your fullest attention, in every way, and tell me the truth, now. For you know the truth, if any man knows it and, just like Proteus, you are not to be let go until you tell me. For if you did not know full well what is holy and also what is unholy, there is no possibility that you would ever have undertaken to prosecute an old man, your own father, for murder, on behalf of a day-labourer; no, you would have feared the gods too much to take the risk that you might be acting improperly. And you would have been ashamed before your fellow men too. But I am now well aware ^{15E} that you think you know full well what is holy and what is not; so tell me, best of men, Euthyphro, and please do not hide what you think it is.

Euth: Well, some other time, Socrates; for I am rushing somewhere else now, and it is time for me to go.

Soc: What are you doing my friend? You are leaving; casting me down from the great hope I had that, having learned what is holy and what is not, from you, I would escape the charge of Meletus by showing ^{16A} him that, through Euthyphro, I had now become wise in divine matters, and that I no longer make rash pronouncements and innovations about them because of my ignorance; and that I would live a better life from now on.

End