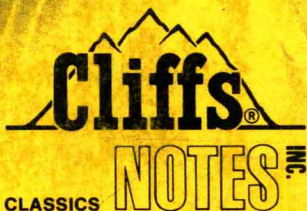


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# **PLATO'S EUTHYPHRO, APOLOGY, CRITO & PHAEDO**



**YOUR KEY TO THE CLASSICS**

# PLATO'S EUTHYPHRO, APOLOGY, CRITO, & PHAEDO

## NOTES

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- *Introduction*
- *Life of Socrates and Life of Plato*
- *Socrates' Discussion of Piety*
- *Socrates' Own Defense at His Trial*
- *Dialogs with Socrates during His  
Last Days and Hours*
- *Summaries and Commentaries*
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- *Selected Bibliography*

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## Plato's Selected Dialogs of Socrates Notes

### INTRODUCTION

The philosophy of ancient Greece reached its highest level of achievement in the works of Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle. The influence of these men on the culture of the Western world can scarcely be overestimated. Each of them made significant contributions to philosophy and it would be difficult to determine to which one of them we are most indebted. All three were original thinkers as well as great teachers. In point of time Socrates was the one who appeared first. Plato became the most distinguished of his pupils and Aristotle in turn received instruction from Plato. Both Plato and Aristotle were prolific writers and what we know about them has been derived chiefly from their published works. In contrast to them, Socrates left no writings at all. Consequently, what information we have concerning him comes from the testimony of others who were associated with him and who were influenced both by the moral quality of his living and the significance of the ideas that he expounded.

On the basis of what has been reported concerning Socrates, we would judge that he made a profound impression upon a group of his followers who were closely associated with his life and teachings. The name of Socrates has been revered throughout the centuries and he has been regarded as one of the greatest teachers of all time. Plato, in one of his best known dialogs, refers to Socrates as a friend "whom I may truly call the wisest, and justest, and best of all men whom I have ever known." Although Socrates was never deified by the Greeks in the sense in which Jesus has been deified by Christians, it is interesting to note some of the striking similarities that have characterized both of their lives. For instance, both men were teachers of great distinction. Neither of them left any writings of his own. Both conducted their teaching activities by means of conversations with individuals. Both men were critical of the religious and political leaders of their time. Each of them proclaimed by precept and example a standard of moral conduct above that which prevailed among the recognized leaders of the society in which he lived. Both of them suffered a martyr's death. Finally, there is a sense in which each of them arose from the dead by virtue of the fact that his teachings and the causes that he served became more alive and powerful after his death than during the times when he was living.

Plato and Aristotle have been held in high esteem because of their intellectual achievements and the fact that their ideas have been preserved through the writings that they produced. Socrates has also been recognized as an intellectual genius, but in addition, his career in the city of Athens has come to be regarded by many persons as an outstanding example of the

virtues that he advocated. His humility, intellectual honesty, devotion to the public good, and loyalty to what he believed was morally right exemplify his conception of what constitutes the good life. Because of the quality of his living, along with the abiding truth of what he taught, the story of his trial and death is something that will continue to stir the imagination of people and to win for him their admiration and respect.

## LIFE OF SOCRATES

Although Socrates left no written records concerning himself, it is possible to reconstruct a fairly accurate account of his life from the writings of his Greek contemporaries. Aristophanes caricatured him in a work called *The Clouds*. Xenophon in his *Memorabilia* expressed high praise for Socrates, with special reference to the method that he advocated for selecting the rulers of a state. Plato, to whom we are most indebted for information about Socrates, made him the chief character in many of his famous dialogs. It is generally assumed that in Plato's earlier dialogs the speeches attributed to Socrates are historical in the sense that they reproduce what Socrates actually said in the conversations he held with fellow Athenians. In the later dialogs there is reason to believe that, at least in some instances, Plato was setting forth his own ideas by putting them into the mouth of Socrates. To what extent this was done is something that cannot be known with certainty.

Socrates was born in the city of Athens in 469 B.C. He was the son of poor parents, his father being a sculptor and his mother a midwife. Early in life he took up the occupation of his father and continued in it for a relatively brief period of time. Later he volunteered for service as a soldier in the Peloponnesian War. In the campaigns in which he fought, he showed himself to be a brave and loyal member of the fighting force. After his retirement from the army, the most of his adult life was spent in response to what he believed to be a divine command to devote his time and energies to the pursuit of wisdom. It was in this connection that he felt called upon to examine himself by questioning other men. Accordingly, it was his custom to engage in conversation with all sorts and conditions of men and women on the streets, in the marketplace, or wherever it was convenient for them to meet. Their discussions covered a wide range of subjects, including such topics as love, marriage, politics, war, friendship, poetry, religion, science, government, and morals. The method that Socrates used in these discussions is known as *dialectic*. It consisted of conversations, the purpose of which was to bring to light the implications involved in different points of view and thus to expose the errors that they contained. He had a keen mind and was quick to discover the fallacies in an argument and he was skillful in steering the conversations toward the very heart of the matter.

With regard to his personal appearance, it is said that Socrates was most unattractive. It is reported that he was short, stout, snub-nosed, and careless about his dress. However, these peculiarities were quickly forgotten by those who listened to his conversations. As soon as he began to speak, his listeners were charmed by his wit, his good humor, and his kindly disposition. His brilliant discourses, which covered a wide range of subjects, brought admiration and respect on the part of those who participated in the conversations with him. He was especially concerned with the subject of moral conduct. He not only talked about the virtues that are an essential part of the good life, but he exemplified in his own living the virtues that he taught others should seek for themselves. For example, he possessed to a remarkable degree the virtue of self-control. He never boasted of his own achievements. He was humble and intellectually honest. He was magnanimous in his attitude toward others. He was noble in character, frugal in his living, and a person of great endurance.

He is remembered not only for the quality of his living but for the content of his teachings. He believed that the most important topic that can occupy the mind of man is the meaning of the good life. He had no quarrel with the physicists and natural scientists of his day, who were trying to obtain a descriptive account of the way things are and the laws that govern their behavior. Important as this type of information might be, it was a matter of far greater significance to understand the meaning of human life and the way that men ought to live. The physical sciences do not reveal anything concerning the purpose for which things exist nor do they tell us anything about the nature of goodness. They do not reveal what is good or bad nor do they distinguish between what is morally right and wrong. A far more important type of inquiry has to do with knowledge of what constitutes the good life.

Although he rejected the popular conceptions of the Greek gods and their relation to human beings, Socrates believed that a divine providence had to do with the creation of the world and, further, that the purpose toward which it was directed was the achievement of the good life on the part of human beings. Man was something more than a physical organism. His body was the dwelling place of the soul and what happens to the soul was vastly more important than what happens to the body.

An epitome of Socrates' moral philosophy can be expressed briefly in the statement "virtue is knowledge." Virtues, he taught, are acquired through a fulfillment of the purpose for which one exists. In the case of a man, this would mean the harmonious development of the elements found in human nature and this would apply to life as a whole rather than just the present moment or the immediate future. The knowledge to which this statement refers is something more than an awareness of facts concerning the order of the material universe. It involves an understanding of the soul in relation to the good life. It was Socrates' conviction that ignorance concerning the good life was the chief cause of the evil that men do. He did

not believe that anyone would knowingly do that which was harmful to himself. Virtue alone is capable of bringing satisfaction to the soul. Although this is the goal toward which everyone strives, not everyone reaches it. Their failures are due to the fact that they do not know what will bring lasting satisfaction. They pursue sensuous pleasures, material wealth, public esteem, and similar goals, thinking that these will bring about the greatest amount of happiness. When any one or all of these goals has been reached, they discover that objectives of this type do not bring about peace of mind nor do they meet the demands of one's true or real self. It is only through the proper development of the mind in its pursuit of truth, beauty, and goodness that the goal and purpose of human life can be achieved.

Because knowledge concerning the meaning of the good life was an essential requirement for making proper decisions with regard to the welfare of the community, Socrates was especially critical of a democratic form of government in which a given society is ruled by the majority of its citizens, regardless of their qualifications for understanding the issues upon which they must make decisions. He pointed out that in any other line of activity only those persons with the necessary qualifications would be selected for the job. For example, if one wanted to have his shoes repaired he would employ a shoemaker. If he wanted to build a house he would hire a carpenter, or if he wanted someone to manage a particular line of business he would select someone who by his training and experience would have demonstrated that he had the ability to perform successfully. Those who are called upon to govern the state are asked to make decisions that are far more important than those having to do with the lesser affairs of everyday living. For this reason they ought to possess both intellectual and moral qualifications that are above the average. Athenian democracy in the age of Socrates did not insist on a high standard of qualifications for those who would rule the state. Hence, it followed that in many instances persons would be elected to high office and entrusted with extraordinary power, even though they lacked both the will and the ability to govern the state in accordance with the best interests of the people.

When Socrates would call attention to these shortcomings on the part of elected officials who were unprepared for their duties, he incurred the wrath of those whom he had criticized. As a general rule, people do not like to have their defects pointed out to them, and when this does occur they usually show their resentment by launching an attack on the person who has questioned their qualifications. Whether their accusations are based on facts appears to make no difference, since their purpose is to arouse sentiment against the individual who has charged them with incompetency. This is what happened when Socrates pointed out that Meletus, a member of the governing Council, was ill-prepared for the decisions he was called upon to make. Meletus, along with Anytus, Lycon, and others

who belonged to the same group, retaliated by charging that Socrates had rejected the gods of Athens, was a corrupter of the youth, and an enemy of the state. Meletus even insisted that Socrates was an atheist and that his teachings would bring about an utter collapse of public morality.

In reply to these charges Socrates made a noble defense of his manner of living. He presented sufficient evidence to show that the accusations brought against him were without adequate foundation. Nevertheless, when the issue was put to a vote a majority of the judges voted against him and thus Socrates was sentenced to die. When given the opportunity to propose an alternate sentence, he asked that the state provide for him in a manner that would be appropriate for one of its chief benefactors. This alternative was rejected and Socrates was placed in jail to await his execution. Although he had ample opportunity to escape and several of his friends urged him to do so, Socrates refused to follow their advice, stating that it was his duty to see to it that the laws of the state were obeyed. His execution was delayed for a period of thirty days because of an Athenian tradition that maintained that the period of time taken by the passage of a ship to and from the island of Delos was regarded as holy and no execution of a criminal could take place during that interval. While waiting for the ship to return, Socrates was visited by a number of his friends, who came not only for the purpose of expressing their sympathy but for another opportunity of carrying on conversations with the master whom they had come to love and admire. The jailer who had charge of the prison treated Socrates very kindly and would have allowed him to escape if he would have been willing to do so. Socrates had no fear of death, which could only do harm to the body but was powerless to injure the soul. He regarded loyalty to what he believed was right as more important than mere physical survival. After bidding good-bye to the members of his family and having a final discourse with friends who had come to be with him during his last hours, he cheerfully submitted to the penalty that had been imposed upon him and drank the poison that the jailer handed to him.

## LIFE OF PLATO

Among those who were influenced by the life and teachings of Socrates no one has done more to perpetuate his memory than Plato, who has long been recognized as one of the greatest philosophers of ancient Greece and one of the most profound thinkers of all time. Plato was too young to have been one of Socrates' most intimate friends. It was not until the last seven or eight years of Socrates' life that Plato came under his influence, but those years made a lasting impression on his life and determined to a large extent the future course of his life. In his later years Plato is reported to have said

**"I thank God that I was born Greek and not barbarian, free and not slave, male and not female, but above all that I was born in the age of Socrates."**

Owing to the fact that he was ill at the time, Plato was not present when a group of Socrates' friends came to the prison for their last visit with him. However, he had been so deeply impressed by the moral quality of Socrates' teachings and his devotion to the cause of truth and justice that he determined to perpetuate his memory by writing a series of biographical dialogs in which his true character would be brought to light. Even after Plato's own thought had matured he continued to make Socrates the protagonist of his dialogs. The result has been such a blending of views that in several instances it is difficult, if not impossible, to tell where the actual historical Socrates leaves off and Plato's own thought begins.

Plato was born in the city of Athens in the year 427 B.C. He died in the year 347 B.C. He came from an aristocratic family that for a long time had been identified with leadership in Athens. His father, Ariston, was a descendant of King Codrus and his mother, whose name was Perictione, claimed to have been descended from the famous lawgiver Solon. As a boy he was named Aristocles, but because of his broad shoulders and forehead, he was called Plato and it is by this name that he has become known to posterity. During his youth he gained distinction as an athlete and was also recognized for his extraordinary mental abilities. In addition to his achievements along these lines, his social standing and connections would have made him an outstanding individual in any career he might have entered.

He lived during a critical period of Greek history. His youth saw the decline and fall of Athenian power but not of Athenian genius. His early education began under the supervision of private tutors who were well known for their professional skills. Under their guidance he received instruction in the elementary disciplines, such as gymnastics, music, reading, writing, and the study of numbers. After reaching the age of eighteen or thereabouts, he spent two years in military training, which placed considerable emphasis on physical exercises and the proper care of the body. This was followed by a more advanced period of study in which he gained familiarity with several of the more prominent schools of Greek philosophy. This gave to him an opportunity to become acquainted with many of the Sophists, who were the recognized professional teachers of that time. Finally, Plato spent about seven or eight years as a pupil of Socrates. This experience influenced him, not only to devote the rest of his life to philosophy, but to carry on his career in the spirit and under the guidance of his beloved teacher.

Because Socrates had been put to death under the auspices of the Athenian government, Plato believed that it would not be safe for him to remain in the city and thus expose himself to the same kind of treatment. It

was well known that Plato had been one of Socrates' followers and that he was most sympathetic toward the ideas that his teacher had proclaimed. So long as these ideas were regarded as harmful to the state, anyone who subscribed to them would be in danger. For this reason Plato left the city of Athens for a time and journeyed to a number of different places, where he hoped to become better acquainted with the leaders of a number of philosophical movements. At first he went to Megara, where he carried on conversations with Euclid, the famous mathematician. Later, he made extensive journeys to Egypt, Cyrene, Crete, and southern Italy. These excursions gave him an opportunity to become better acquainted with the leaders of each of the schools founded, respectively, by Pythagoras, Heraclitus, and the Eleatic philosophers.

When Plato was approximately forty years of age, he undertook an experiment in government. From his early youth he had been interested in political affairs. From his associations with Socrates and from his own observations, he had arrived at certain convictions concerning the proper qualifications for those whose duty it was to govern the state. He believed that only those persons who possessed intellectual as well as moral qualities should be entrusted with the power to rule over others. Eventually, the opportunity came to him to put his philosophy into practice. At Syracuse, on the coast of the island of Sicily, a friend and pupil by the name of Dion urged him to undertake the education of Dionysius, the tyrant of Syracuse. Dionysius appeared to be willing to take instruction from Plato, and this would make it possible for Plato's theory of government to be tried out under actual conditions. The experiment was not a success, for Dionysius was not an apt pupil, and when Plato rebuked him for his stupidity, the tyrant retaliated by having Plato put in chains and sentenced to death. Dion used his influence to get the sentence changed. The result was that Plato's life was spared but at the price of being made a slave. Soon afterward Anniceris, a member of the Cyrenaic school of philosophy, came to Syracuse and purchased Plato's freedom, thus allowing him to return to Athens.

After returning to Athens, Plato established his school, an institution that came to be known as the *Academy*. It continued for a period of more than eight centuries as a center for the study and evaluation of Platonic philosophy. With the establishment of the Academy, Plato devoted the most of his time to teaching and the writing of dialogues. Fortunately, the most of these dialogues have been preserved and they constitute the chief source of the information we have concerning the various aspects of his philosophy.

According to the accounts given of Plato's life, on two more occasions his career as a teacher and writer was interrupted by further attempts to reconstruct the government of Syracuse. After the death of Dionysius, he was urged again by Dion to undertake the education of the younger Dionysius, who now ruled in the place formerly held by his father. Again

the experiment failed to achieve the desired results. Reluctantly, Plato decided to give it up and he returned to Athens convinced that the education of people in powerful positions cannot be accomplished without their co-operation. We are told that he later made a third and final attempt to apply his political philosophy at Syracuse but with results similar to the ones he had experienced before. This time he was saved from the wrath of Dionysius by the good offices of his friend Archytas of Tarentum. Returning to Athens, he devoted the rest of his life to teaching and writing. He died in 347 B.C. According to one account his death occurred peacefully while he was attending a wedding feast at the home of a friend.

Plato used the dialog form of writing as the most effective means of presenting his philosophical views. There were several reasons for doing this. In the first place, it was not his intention to answer specific questions or to propose final and dogmatic solutions to any of the problems that were being discussed. He preferred instead to do something that would stimulate original thinking on the part of the reader. Second, this manner of presentation enabled him to present contrasting points of view as they would be likely to occur in a series of conversations taking place among individuals having different points of view. This would help to prepare the way for any reader of the dialogs to arrive at his own conclusion, after giving some consideration to each of the views that had been presented. Finally, by using the conversational method it would be possible to illustrate the way in which current issues of the day were related to one another. This is one of the reasons why no one of Plato's dialogs is devoted exclusively to the discussion of a single topic. He wanted to make it clear that in order to understand any particular subject you must see how it is related to other subjects and to the field of knowledge as a whole.

As a general rule, Plato did not mention his own name as the author of a particular point of view. However, in many of the dialogs we are fairly safe in assuming that what Plato himself believed about the topic under discussion is contained in the speeches attributed to Socrates. Several of the other characters used in the dialogs were well-known Sophists. The statements attributed to them constitute one of the main sources for our information about the Sophistic movement in ancient Greece.

Plato wrote more than thirty dialogs, all of which have been preserved, either in their original form or as they have been edited and translated by competent scholars who have specialized in the area of Greek philosophy. There is no way of knowing the exact order in which the dialogs were written nor is there any complete agreement on this point among historians of philosophy. It is, however, generally assumed that the earlier ones have to do primarily with the field of ethics. In these dialogs Socrates is presented as an inquirer concerning the precise meaning of specific virtues. The Sophists with whom he is holding conversation profess to have a complete

understanding of the virtues in question and they do not hesitate to make statements concerning their meanings and contents. Socrates claims that he is ignorant of these matters but he begins to question the Sophists about the statements they have made. The purpose of this questioning is to bring to light some of the implications involved in what they have said and thus to show the inadequacies of their professed wisdom. This is usually done by revealing the self-contradictory character of their statements or in what respects they are not in harmony with known facts. Without presenting any final answer to the questions that have been raised, Socrates advises his listeners to continue the search for a better understanding of the virtues and their relation to the good life.

Plato's philosophy as a whole covers a wide range of subjects, which are treated at considerable length in various parts of different dialogs. No one of the dialogs is devoted exclusively to the treatment of a single topic, for the questions that arise in connection with any one of them are necessarily related to different areas of experience and Plato wanted the discussions in the dialogs to correspond as nearly as possible to the situations that occur in human life. Nevertheless, it is possible in certain instances to indicate the theme that is the predominant one in a particular dialog. For example, Plato's theory of knowledge is the chief subject matter found in the *Meno* and again in the *Theaetetus*. His theory of Ideas, which is implicit in all of the dialogs, is subjected to a critical examination in the *Parmenides*. His cosmology, along with a theory of creation, is given special treatment in the *Timaeus*. His philosophy concerning the place of pleasure in the good life is set forth in the *Philebus*. The best known and the most widely used of Plato's dialogs is *The Republic*. Its chief purpose was to set forth the author's theory of government, but in relation to this topic there are discussions of nearly all of the more important aspects of his philosophical position. *The Republic* has often been considered to be the greatest of the dialogs, although there are many commentators who would not agree. It represents what Plato regarded as the ideal toward which actual states should strive. In a later and considerably longer dialog called *The Laws*, he proposed a less idealistic but more practical alternative for the organization of state governments.

With reference to the trial and death of Socrates there are four dialogs that are especially relevant. They are the *Euthyphro*, the *Apology*, the *Crito*, and the *Phaedo*. In the *Euthyphro* an attempt is made to answer the question "What is piety?" It has a particular bearing on the trial of Socrates, for he had been accused of impiety and was about to be tried for a crime, the nature of which no one seemed to understand. The *Apology* contains an account of Socrates' defense of himself after he had been charged with being a corrupter of the youth and one who refuses to accept the popular beliefs concerning the gods of the city of Athens. It is generally regarded as

the most authentic account on record of what Socrates actually said as he appeared before his judges. The *Crito* is an account of the conversation that takes place in the jail where Socrates is confined awaiting his execution. He is visited by Crito, an aged and trusted friend, who has come to the prison for the purpose of trying to persuade Socrates to avoid being put to death either by an escape from the prison where he is being held or by employing some other means. The dialog depicts Socrates as a man who has no fear of death and one who would rather die than commit an act that he believes to be morally wrong. The *Phaedo* is a narrative concerning the last hours in the life of Socrates. After an interval of years, the story is related to Echecrates by Phaedo, who was one of Socrates' beloved disciples. The narration takes place at Phlius, which is the home of Phaedo. The scene of the story is the prison where Socrates is held. Phaedo is one of a number of friends who have gathered for their last meeting with Socrates. Much of the discussion that takes place has to do with Socrates' attitude toward death, including his reasons for believing in the immortality of the soul.

Plato's dialogs have been translated into many different languages and they have been published in a number of editions. One of the best known translations in English is the one made by Benjamin Jowett of Oxford University in England. It was first published during the latter half of the nineteenth century. Since that time other translations have been made that are regarded as improvements in some respects over the one made by Jowett. So far as our study of the last days of Socrates is concerned the changes that have been made in the more recent translations are of minor importance and for this reason our study of the four dialogs that are included in these notes will be based on the Jowett translation. The quotations that are used both in the summaries of the dialogs and the commentaries that follow are taken from this translation.

## SUMMARIES AND COMMENTARIES

### EUTHYPHRO

#### *Summary*

Plato's dialog called *Euthyphro* relates a discussion that took place between Socrates and Euthyphro concerning the meaning of piety, or that virtue usually regarded as a manner of living that fulfills one's duty both to gods and to men. It is of particular interest in relation to the fate of Socrates, inasmuch as he has recently been charged with impiety and is about to be tried before the Athenian court to determine his guilt or innocence of the crime attributed to him. Because he felt quite sure that the Athenian people in general did not understand the real nature of either piety or impiety,

Socrates asks Euthyphro to answer the question "What is piety?" He has a real purpose in doing this, for Euthyphro, a Sophist, professes to be wise concerning such matters, while Socrates, making no such claim for himself, professes only to be ignorant. He wants to see if Euthyphro is as wise as he claims to be, and if he is not, Socrates will expose the shallowness of his claim.

Euthyphro has the reputation of being a wise person, a diviner, and a soothsayer. As a teacher he gives instruction on moral and political matters, as well as the practical problems of everyday living. The discussion that is carried on between Socrates and Euthyphro takes place on the porch of King Archon. Both Socrates and Euthyphro are involved in matters of a legal nature. Socrates has been accused of impiety and is facing a court trial. Euthyphro is the plaintiff in a forthcoming trial for murder. Socrates asks who it is who is being charged with this crime. He is surprised and shocked to learn that Euthyphro is bringing this charge against his own father. The circumstances bringing this about have a direct bearing on the case. It appears that a poor dependent of the Euthyphro family had killed one of their domestic servants. At the command of Euthyphro's father the guilty person had been bound and thrown into a ditch. Messengers had then been sent to Athens to inquire of the interpreters of religion concerning what should be done with him. By the time these messengers had returned the criminal had died from hunger and exposure. Euthyphro's father was, at least to some extent, responsible for the offender's death and this was the basis for charging him with the crime of murder.

Socrates is impressed by the fact that Euthyphro is willing to perform his duty in the matter, even though it means taking action against a member of his own family. Without any further discussion of the case involving Euthyphro's father, Socrates is anxious to pursue inquiry concerning the nature of piety, since this is directly related to the fact that Meletus has accused him of the crime of impiety. Accordingly, he addresses this question to Euthyphro, "What is piety?" Euthyphro answers at once that piety is acting the way he is acting in bringing charges against one who has done wrong, even though that person happens to be his own father. Although admitting that Euthyphro is right in not allowing personal relationships to stand in the way of performing his duty, Socrates is not satisfied with the answer that has been given to his question. An example of the virtue of piety is not equivalent to a definition of that virtue. Euthyphro has given but one example, and even though he defended his statement by mentioning that certain of the Greek gods have acted in a similar manner, Socrates insists that a proper definition of piety must be sufficient to include all instances of that virtue. Euthyphro's statement has not been adequate for this purpose. Nevertheless, Socrates insists that, inasmuch as Euthyphro has brought a criminal charge against his own father, he must have known the

nature of impiety or he would have been unable to decide that his father was guilty of it. Once again he urges Euthyphro to tell him what piety is. If he can obtain a satisfactory answer to this question, it will enable him to know whether the charge that Meletus is bringing against him is a well-founded one.

In reply Euthyphro advances another statement. He says "Piety is what is dear to the gods and impiety is that which is not dear to them." Upon examination by Socrates, this statement turns out to be no more satisfactory than the former one. It is not clear what makes anything dear to the gods, and besides, there is the question of whether that which is dear to some of the gods is dear to all of them or only to some of them. Euthyphro then insists that piety is that which is pleasing to all of the gods. He feels sure they all agree that murder is wrong. Socrates then points out that the circumstances under which killing takes place makes an important difference concerning the moral quality of the act. The same is true with reference to the motive that was involved. It is quite evident that so far the discussion has not produced any satisfactory answer to the question concerning the nature of piety.

To approach the subject in a different way, Socrates asks Euthyphro if people who are pious are also just? Yes, says Euthyphro, but at the same time he recognizes that it is not true that all just persons are pious. Socrates then wants to know if piety is a part of justice and if it is of what part does it consist? Euthyphro replies that piety is that part of justice that attends to the gods, just as there is another part of justice that attends to men. This, too, is unsatisfactory because we do not know what "attends" means. When applied to some things such as dogs, horses, and men, it implies some way of making them better. When applied to gods it cannot have this meaning, since there is no respect in which men can make the gods better than they are. At this point Euthyphro states that there are various ways in which men can minister to the gods, but he does not have the time to point them out.

Socrates still insists that he does not know what piety is and certainly Euthyphro has not revealed its true nature. The question is an important one, not only for Socrates, but for anyone who is called upon to make decisions relative to moral conduct. The dialog closes without any final answer to the question with which the discussion started. Socrates urges Euthyphro to continue the search for the meaning of piety. Until he has found it there can be no justification for the decision he has made concerning his father.

### *Commentary*

For those who are looking for a satisfactory definition of piety, the dialog is a disappointment, for no conclusion has been reached concerning the