

Piety and holiness

[Philosophy](#)



Socrates and Euthyphro present a dialog about the definition of piety or holiness and impiety. This is a long and drawn out conversation built on what Euthyphro assumes the definition of piety or impiety and Socrates challenging every definition with logic. During his conversation he is quick to point out the inconsistencies in the definition to the point where I believe that Euthyphro was out of answers and tired of trying to make a point or define piety and impiety when it was pretty apparent that he couldn't explain what it was but I believe that he knew in his heart what it is.

The concept of holiness or piety emerges in the dialog when Euthyphro is explaining why he is charging his father with murder. He states that he is being pious because that is what the gods think is piety and impiety. Clearly at this time, what the gods want is more important than how your father or family feels about it. He believes that what he is doing will please the gods. Socrates believes that he is indicted by Meletus because he believes Socrates to be impiety. Socrates then goes on to find out if he can find the definition of piety or holiness and impiety so that he may present an argument that will allow him to live.

The first definition that Euthyphro presents for piety is “ Piety is doing as I am doing” that is to say, prosecuting anyone who is guilty of murder, sacrilege, or of any similar crime – whether he be your father or mother, or whoever he may be – that makes no difference; and not to prosecute them is impiety.”

He also goes on to cite Zeus, who bound his father (Cronos) because he wickedly devoured his sons, and that he too had punished his own father for the same reason, in a nameless manner. Socrates seemed a little confused

by this and thought that maybe he wasn't being charged with impiety. He did not know the gods so surely he could not know what the gods liked or loved and looked again to Euthyphro who had at that time, only given a couple of examples of piety. The second definition that Euthyphro presented is " Piety, then, is that which is dear to the gods, and impiety is that which is not dear to them."

Socrates challenged him once again he states that the gods have differences of opinions about good, evil, just and unjust, honorable and dishonorable. He then continued to state that " the same things are hated by the gods and love d by the gods and both are hateful and dear to them." Which Stanley Rosen has a similar view: " The view that the god causes the good and nothing but the good is unusual by everyday Greek standards, but it is nevertheless a modification of the traditional view that good and bad things come from the gods.

The shift from gods to ' the god' is more unusual still. It is plausible to argue that if the god is good, he will do no harm. But why should there be one god rather than many? Perhaps the answer is that if there are two or more gods, this leaves room for disagreement on the nature of the good. In this case, there will be degrees of goodness, and therefore relative badness, in the domain of the divine." (Plato's Republic: A Study, p. 91) I would have to agree that having more than one god would cause such a problem as we see in our own legal systems.

With us and maybe even with them, the majority would win the argument or decided what is just or not just, holy and what is not. Socrates pleads with Euthyphro to continue and he asks " The holy is what all the gods love, and <https://assignbuster.com/piety-holiness/>

the opposite, what all the gods hate, is unholy" Socrates then asks " is the holy loved by the gods because it is holy? Or because it is loved by the gods?" Here Socrates then makes the distinction between loving and being loved: Is the pious loved by the gods because it is pious, or is it pious because it is loved by the gods?"(Kemerling, 2011).

If they which is holy is the same that which is dear to God, and is loved because it is holy, then that which is dear to God is dear to him because loved by him, then that which is holy would have been holy because loved by him. Euthyphro agrees with Socrates. Socrates then follows by saying that " what is loved and dear to the gods is loved because of their loving." And that what is dear is different from what is piety or holy. Believe the Euthyphro becomes so frustrated by Socrates that he sees the argument going around in circles. That's when Socrates then states " Is not that which is pious necessarily just?" Euthyphro gives a third definition, he says " Piety or holiness, Socrates, appears to me to be that part of justice which attends to the gods, as there is the other part of justice which attends to men.

Socrates then wants to know what " attends" means; he gives examples like the art of horsemanship is the art of attending horses. Euthyphro is stumped once again, this is not what he meant because when Socrates breaks it down again, and asks, and does piety or holiness, which has been defined to be the art of attending to the gods, benefit or improve them. Would you say that when you do a holy act you make any of the gods better? So he changes his definition once again, he says that piety or holiness is learning how to please the gods in a word and deed, by prayers and sacrifices.

Socrates mocks Euthyphro by explaining that he could have used fewer words. He ends up with the same definition that he began with as Euthyphro cannot give a definition of piety or holiness. I believe that Socrates goal was to get Euthyphro to examine his own beliefs about piety and holiness, he asked him to instruct him on his knowledge as opposed to coming right out saying it to him. Although it is not clear if Euthyphro understood this, the level of frustration that he showed could have him re-examining his beliefs. He was supposed to be a man of intelligence and could after a period of time, approach the leaders with a new definition or at least let them know that the one that they have is not accurate.

The part of the dialog that aligns with me would be the constant questioning that Socrates kept coming with. I don't think that I would have been able to come back that quickly, but just don't tell me something to shut me up. I want to know why, and how. What interested me in this dialog was how they went from God to gods and maybe they started with gods and went to God. I'm not sure if they were talking about the one in heaven or having only one god. I also would not be willing to input justice into a dialog about holiness or piety.

I know that our most basic laws comes from the Bible, but as we try to keep church and state separate, I would not have included just, as in justice for a definition of piety or holiness. I do have to say though, although I like the constant questions, while reading it, it was confusing me, so I can just imagine how Euthyphro felt. Would I go that far to examine my own beliefs? I'm not sure, but it's definitely something that will be on my mind.

My definition of holiness...I really don't have one. What I thought was holiness was blown out of the water with the constant corruption in the churches, the abuse by the Catholic churches. My thoughts on holiness now cannot be examined because through the tragic religious problems, I cannot begin to answer any of the questions that Socrates would approach me with.