

# The euthyphro dilemma and descartes philosophy essay



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When comparing the works of both Descartes and Plato, one can infer that both of these philosophers exhibited a rational thought process and believed that the foundations of intelligent, wise inferences were built upon factual, dependent knowledge. In the beginning of Plato's Euthyphro, Socrates asks the thought-provoking question, "[I]s the pious being loved by the gods because it is pious, or is it pious because it is being loved by the gods?" This question is also known as the "Euthyphro Dilemma." When asking how Descartes would answer this dilemma one must first expose, interpret, and consider the principles and theories manufactured by this modern French philosopher.

The "Father of Modern Philosophy," René Descartes, was a Netherlands native, French philosopher and mathematician living during the early 17th century. Descartes is often recognized because of the phrase "Cogito Ergo Sum," meaning "I think, therefore I am;" and his Meditations on First Philosophy. During the first Meditation, Descartes states that he will reject all beliefs in which aren't completely certain and that can be doubted. Also, he declared that if there was any motive to doubt a belief, that all of the principles based off of it are just as uncertain. He then concludes that if God exists, and is not deceiving him, his mathematical abilities and expertise can help aide him in further understanding and comprehending the outside world. This creates an internal drive in Descartes to prove the existence of a supreme, perfect being.

In the very beginning of Descartes' second Meditation, he determines that even with all of his worldly uncertainties, he cannot doubt that he is living, thinking, and experiencing life. With this conclusion, Descartes can prove

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that he undeniably exists as a body of thought. This is where his most well-known quotation, “ Cogito Ergo Sum,” “ I think, therefore I am,” surfaces. At this point, Descartes is still doubtful of the physical aspects of the world, including his own being. His senses could easily be deceptive, causing doubtful beliefs towards the reasonable, physical aspects of his universe. After figuring out that not only he exists as a thinking being and his senses could be deceiving his perceptions of the physical world, Descartes tackled the argument of a higher power in the third Meditation.

In this Meditation, Descartes proved that every idea develops from a thought, and each idea had to be just as tangible as the original thought. If he has any sort of idea that isn't from his thoughts, then that idea originates from some sort of higher power. He then concluded that God ultimately exists. This is due to his original idea of a God; having flaws, he couldn't have produced the thought of a perfect, Supreme Being. Also, in order to reach for perfection, the right approach to living is to keep away from making mistakes. If one is absolutely confident in their knowledge, they will never be mistaken because of their faith in the reliability and perfection of God. The idea of an existing, all-powerful God carries onto the next Meditation where he ultimately proves that this God is not deceiving him, and he can further extend his understanding of his surrounding universe.

Now that there's a full understanding the claims made by Descartes, recalling the overall belief of the existence of an all-powerful, perfect God, one can look into Plato's discoveries and the “ Euphrates Dilemma” observed in Plato's The Trials and Death of Socrates. Living during the 350-450 B. C.

period, Plato grew up in Greece as a student of Socrates where he extended <https://assignbuster.com/the-euthyphro-dilemma-and-descartes-philosophy-essay/>

his knowledge and ultimately became classified as a premier Greek Philosopher. Plato had a type of mystical idealistic view on the realistic aspects of the world. When looking at his observations visible in his *The Trials and Death of Socrates*, an incredibly controversial issue is apparent in the thought-provoking, intriguing question known as the “ Euthyphro Dilemma.”

When looking at the “ Euthyphro Dilemma,” Socrates asks, “[I]s the pious being loved by the gods because it is pious, or is it pious because it is being loved by the gods?” This quotation, when simplified, is asking is something holy because God says it is holy, or is something holy because God sees it as holy? At one side, you’re arguing that God declares and commands what is pious, and the opposing argument is that the pious is already pious and God just recognizes and approves of the piety. This dilemma holds great significance in the fact that it was a time where somebody asked whether morality or God existed first. This paradox is also believed to be important because it disagrees with the divine command theory. This theory, in a nutshell, describes morality as originating from God, and the “ Euthyphro Dilemma” challenges this theory’s validity.

If presented this paradox, I personally believe Descartes would not hesitate in answering it is pious because it is being loved by the Gods. Descartes thought of God as a perfect, flawless divine being. I would consider Descartes’ thoughts of God, symbolically holding the throne of all thoughts and ideas, to be an influential factor deciding between morality being produced and commanded by God, or morality being simply recognized and praised by God. Descartes would hold God to the highest standards and <https://assignbuster.com/the-euthyphro-dilemma-and-descartes-philosophy-essay/>

believe he is the foundation and creator of all the good, righteous, and holy in this world. Because of these claims and beliefs René Descartes had towards a higher power, and that the entirety of this world rested on God, I believe Descartes would recognize God as being the creator of the pious. According to this French philosopher, there is nothing external that has governance over God, and the almighty deity can challenge the laws regarding reasoning because he constructed them. Consequently, there is nothing pious outside of God's will, and all piety can be credited to God.

To conclude this question, asking how Descartes would answer the "Euthyphro Dilemma," one can infer that the "Father of Modern Philosophy" would respond to Socrates, saying that God controls and created the piety of the world. Descartes' observations proving God's existence and prominence support this hypothetical response. Taking a realistic approach to his observations, Descartes would hold God over principle, and ultimately believe the origin of religiousness comes from the all-powerful creator.