

The socratic method



What was the Socratic Method Answer with reference to Euthyphro

The Socratic Method is the process of questioning and answering used by Socrates whilst trying to either prove or disprove the prophecy he received which was dealt by the Oracle at Delphi. Socrates depended on this method to show people that they are ignorant to what they do not know.

Due to the nature of Socrates'™ conversations with his interlocutors it was unlike he would become popular. He repeatedly refuted the definitions which his interlocutors suggested; this became patronising and resulted in the state of *aporia*, meaning waylessness. Socrates'™ employment of this method is used effectively on Euthyphro as Socrates tries to find a definition for holiness. Socrates'™ *eidoi* begins as he places himself under Euthyphro as his student, by doing this Socrates causes Euthyphro to believe he is worthy of being a teacher, a form of *eirone*. This is ironic as Euthyphro is led to believe that he is the teacher, when Socrates is really teaching him that he does not know as much as he believes. After these statuses have been established Socrates begins his process of demanding a definition, analysing it, and refutation.

His questions string together to lead Euthyphro through various elements of his definition, and suggests new definitions; Socrates lends his newly formed definition to the ownership of Euthyphro and eventually proves his own definition wrong. As he does this Euthyphro becomes lost amongst the pressure Socrates puts him under, he cannot comprehend what Socrates is saying and becomes lost in his detailed examples and explanations. This part of the Socratic Method is effectively used and becomes a key component in

leading Euthyphro to the final state of aporia. Socrates' method of inquiry takes Euthyphro through a circular argument.

Euthyphro is led to believe that he is part of the process of discovering this circular pattern; however the conclusions which lead to one another are all drawn by Socrates, as they both contribute to the search for the definition of holiness, they discuss the gods, the roots of an object's holiness, and after much refutation on Socrates' part they return to the original question of what the holy is. To encourage some form of contribution from Euthyphro throughout his inquiry Socrates uses sarcasm to further establish Euthyphro's impression that he is the teacher and Socrates the student. "It's obvious you know, Euthyphro." The dialogue presents the reader with the clear indication of what the Socratic Method proves, we can see, as with Euthyphro; that being stubborn about what we believe can prevent us from finding out more, and keeps us from truly being able to know anything. As Euthyphro feels that he is an expert on religion, he believes that he knows best about religion and its conclusions, Socrates' use of his method proves to Euthyphro that he is not as enlightened as he once thought. The Socratic Method is the debate of a definition, Socrates uses this famously and relies on it as he sets out about his task of showing people that they do not actually know what they think they are experts on. The purpose of the Socratic Method is to improve understanding amongst humans; Socrates does this by using his interlocutors' own words, and leading them to believe that they know less than they originally thought.

Such is the case with Euthyphro as Socrates repeats the words Euthyphro uses and targets them as fundamentally wrong. "It was for this very

reason that I asked what you meant by “looking after the gods” because I didn’t believe you meant anything like that. The Socratic Method is used to make people think for themselves, through encouraging doubt of what they believe they are knowledgeable about they are then able to question the roots of such beliefs, the effect of the Method is lasting as the desire for explanation is introduced and the interlocutor is able to see things critically and develop their understanding further on their own. Throughout the Euthyphro we see Socrates effectively use the Socratic Method to teach his interlocutor that he does not know what he thought he did.

This establishment of *aporia* takes much adduction and use of *elenchus*. By creating this state in his interlocutor, Socrates has been able to improve Euthyphro’s understanding and taught him an important lesson as to what he does and does not know.