

# Answers for some questions for discussion

## 1. When was the dialogue written? Was it written soon after Socrates' trial?

Plato wrote the \*Euthyphro\* around 380 BCE<sup>23</sup>. This dialogue is set just before the trial of Socrates in 399 BCE and explores themes of piety and justice. Plato was alive during c. 427 – 348 BCE. So the dialogue was written when Plato was possibly around 47 years old.

Source: Conversation with Copilot, 12/08/2024

(1) The Internet Classics Archive | Euthyphro by Plato.

<http://classics.mit.edu/Plato/euthyphro.html>.

(2) Euthyphro: Study Guide | SparkNotes.

<https://www.sparknotes.com/philosophy/euthyphro/>.

(3) Euthyphro - Wikipedia. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Euthyphro>.

(4) The Essence of Plato's Euthyphro: Summary, Themes and Famous Notions.

<https://philosophylight.com/platos-euthyphro-brief-summary-and-analysis/>.

## 2. Do you think the dialogue is fictional?

Yes, Plato's \*Euthyphro\* is a fictional dialogue. It features a conversation between Socrates and a character named Euthyphro, who is likely a fictional creation by Plato<sup>34</sup>. The dialogue explores the nature of piety and is set just before Socrates' trial for impiety<sup>2</sup>.

Source: Conversation with Copilot, 12/08/2024

(1) Euthyphro: Study Guide | SparkNotes.

<https://www.sparknotes.com/philosophy/euthyphro/>.

(2) Euthyphro - Wikipedia. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Euthyphro>.

(3) Summary and Analysis of Plato's 'Euthyphro' - ThoughtCo.

<https://www.thoughtco.com/platos-euthyphro-2670341>.

(4) Plato's Euthyphro: An Overlooked Comedy - World History Encyclopedia.

<https://www.worldhistory.org/article/54/platos-euthyphro-an-overlooked-comedy/>.

(5) The Essence of Plato's Euthyphro: Summary, Themes and Famous Notions.  
<https://philosophylight.com/platos-euthyphro-brief-summary-and-analysis/>.

### 3. What are the main philosophical concepts being explored?

Plato's \*Euthyphro\* delves into several key philosophical concepts:

1. **Nature of Piety**: The central theme is the nature of piety or holiness. Socrates questions Euthyphro to define piety, leading to multiple definitions, each of which Socrates critiques<sup>12</sup>.
2. **Euthyphro Dilemma**: This famous dilemma arises when Socrates asks whether something is pious because the gods love it, or do the gods love it because it is pious. This question challenges the relationship between divine command and moral objectivity<sup>2</sup>.
3. **Moral Relativism vs. Objective Morality**: The dialogue explores whether moral truths are relative to the gods' whims or if there are objective moral standards that even the gods must follow<sup>2</sup>.
4. **Socratic Method**: The dialogue is a prime example of the Socratic method, where Socrates uses questioning to stimulate critical thinking and illuminate ideas<sup>1</sup>.

These themes not only address ancient religious and ethical concerns but also lay the groundwork for later philosophical discussions on morality and ethics.

Source: Conversation with Copilot, 12/08/2024

(1) Summary and Analysis of Plato's 'Euthyphro' - ThoughtCo.

<https://www.thoughtco.com/platos-euthyphro-2670341>.

(2) The Essence of Plato's Euthyphro: Summary, Themes and Famous Notions.

<https://philosophylight.com/platos-euthyphro-brief-summary-and-analysis/>.

(3) Euthyphro: Philosophical Context: The Three Periods of Plato's ....

<https://www.sparknotes.com/philosophy/euthyphro/context-philosophical/>.

(4) Euthyphro: Full Work Summary | SparkNotes.

<https://www.sparknotes.com/philosophy/euthyphro/summary/>.

(5) goodreads.com. <https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/811970.Euthyphro>.

## 4. What rhetorical devices are demonstrated in the dialogue?

Plato's \*Euthyphro\* employs several rhetorical devices to enhance the philosophical dialogue:

1. **Socratic Irony**: Socrates pretends to be ignorant and eager to learn from Euthyphro, while actually leading him to expose his own lack of understanding<sup>35</sup>.
2. **Elenchus (Socratic Method)**: This method involves asking a series of questions to draw out contradictions in the interlocutor's beliefs, leading them to a deeper understanding or realization of their ignorance<sup>4</sup>.
3. **Analogies and Examples**: Socrates often uses analogies and specific examples to clarify complex ideas and challenge Euthyphro's definitions of piety<sup>2</sup>.
4. **Reductio ad Absurdum**: Socrates uses this technique to show that Euthyphro's definitions lead to absurd or contradictory conclusions, thereby refuting them<sup>2</sup>.
5. **Dialectical Method**: The dialogue is structured as a back-and-forth conversation, allowing for the exploration of ideas through reasoned argument and counterargument<sup>4</sup>.

These devices not only make the dialogue engaging but also serve to illustrate the philosophical method and the pursuit of truth.

Source: Conversation with Copilot, 12/08/2024

(1) Euthyphro: About Socrates & Plato | SparkNotes.

<https://www.sparknotes.com/philosophy/euthyphro/context/>.

(2) Euthyphro: Study Guide | SparkNotes.

<https://www.sparknotes.com/philosophy/euthyphro/>.

(3) Euthyphro Analysis - eNotes.com. <https://www.enotes.com/topics/euthyphro>.

(4) Summary and Analysis of Plato's 'Euthyphro' - ThoughtCo.

<https://www.thoughtco.com/platos-euthyphro-2670341>.

(5) Euthyphro Study Guide | Literature Guide | LitCharts.

<https://www.litcharts.com/lit/euthyphro>.

## 5. What is the Euthyphro dilemma?

See later discussion.

## 6. When did Plato write the early, middle and late dialogues?

Plato's dialogues are typically divided into three periods: early, middle, and late. Here's a general timeline for when these were likely written:

1. **Early Dialogues**: These were written shortly after Socrates' death in 399 BCE, likely during the 390s and 380s BCE<sup>1</sup>. They focus on Socratic questioning and often end in aporia (a state of puzzlement). Examples include *Apology*, *Crito*, and *Euthyphro*<sup>1</sup>.
2. **Middle Dialogues**: Written between the late 380s and mid-360s BCE, these dialogues reflect Plato's own philosophical ideas more prominently. They include works like *Phaedo*, *Republic*, *Symposium*, and *Phaedrus*<sup>2</sup>.
3. **Late Dialogues**: Composed from the mid-360s until Plato's death in 347 BCE, these dialogues showcase his mature thought and more complex philosophical theories. Notable examples are *Theaetetus*, *Parmenides*, *Sophist*, *Statesman*, *Philebus*, and *Laws*<sup>2</sup>.

These periods illustrate the evolution of Plato's philosophical ideas over time.

Is there a specific dialogue or concept from these periods you're particularly interested in?

Source: Conversation with Copilot, 12/08/2024

(1) Plato - Philosopher, Dialogues, Ideas | Britannica.

<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Plato/Early-dialogues>.

(2) The Platonic Dialogues - Philosophy Light.

<https://philosophylight.com/the-platonic-dialogues/>.

(3) Approaching Plato: A Guide to the Early and Middle Dialogues.

<https://philpapers.org/rec/ANDAPA-2>.

(4) Plato - The Socratic Dialogues : Plato : Free Download, Borrow, and ....

<https://archive.org/details/platsd>.

## 7. Does Natural Law Theory solve the problem presented by the Euthyphro Dilemma?

According to one interpretation of natural law moral theory, the moral standards that govern human behaviour are, in some sense, objectively derived from the nature of human beings and the nature of the world. One interpretation is that God creates these

objective moral standards. This interpretation should resolve the challenge presented by the Euthyphro Dilemma.

## 8. What might Socrates and Euthyphro represent in terms of our self reflection?

Socrates often mentions that he is guided by a daemon, a kind of divine spirit, oracle, or “sign,” that takes the form of an inner voice or non-vocal nudge. The guide never tells Socrates what to do. It only indicates when Socrates is not to do something.

Perhaps Socrates can be our inner voice or critic who questions and challenges our beliefs, helps us to recognise our fallibility, and improves our understanding of things.

Euthyphro represents us. We often believe we know things, but upon investigation, fail to truly know.

## 9. What might piety mean in our lives today, and will we be able to answer Socrates' question?

Pious means marked by or showing reverence for deity and devotion to divine worship. Socrates and Euthyphro explore further what being pious means.

If we consider the concept from a secular viewpoint, being pious could be interpreted as being a good person. If we, like Euthyphro, consider ourselves to be good, can we answer Socrates' question?

Socrates might ask what ‘being good’ and ‘not being good’ mean for a person?

Answer:

- Do no harm.
- Treat neighbours as you would have them treat you.
- Follow your conscience.
- Do more good than bad.
- Doing good for themselves.
- Follow the ten commandments.
- Follow standards of morality.

Do you think the above answers will survive challenges from Socrates?

## 10. Given the Euthyphro Dilemma and other challenges to the Divine Command Theory, do you think the theory is still a reasonable theory for one to adopt?

Possible answer:

I believe many religious organisations accept some form of human reasoning to work out what is right and wrong, while also accepting the Divine Command Theory. Accepting human reasoning means that morality is not arbitrary.

If one adopts a strict version of the Divine Command Theory such that only commands from God is good, and goodness is arbitrary, then those who adopt this approach need to respond to the practical issue brought up by Plato in the Euthyphro:

- There are situations where it is not clear what God's view might be. Socrates asks in the dialogue how Euthyphro could prove what he plans to do is pious. There are many such difficult situations where it is not clear what God's command would be. The Divine Command theorist must address how he would decide on the morality of these issues.
- One possible approach would be to do what Euthyphro's father did — to seek advice from a diviner. Some people seek advice from gods, fortune tellers etc. when making decisions. Some Christians claim they would pray and seek answers from God. Such approaches could be deemed superstitious or haphazard. Nevertheless, given the fallibility of human reasoning, such approaches may be considered not entirely unreasonable.