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“Implicit Characterization in Plato’s *Euthyphro*”

### ***Euthyphro* setting**

399, shortly before Socrates’ trial and death, at the King’s Stoa

### **Subject**

What is piety?

### **Important figures**

Socrates

Euthyphro (his own father’s prosecutor)

Meletus (Socrates’ prosecutor)

### **Development of the Dynamic between Euthyphro, Socrates, and Meletus**

- Euthyphro aligns himself with Socrates as Socrates describes his court case
- Socrates gently distinguishes his work from Euthyphro’s.
- Euthyphro describes his case; as a prosecutor, he is clearly distinguished from Socrates, and implicitly compared to Meletus.
- Socrates asks Euthyphro to defend him in court, seemingly placing Meletus and Euthyphro in opposition to one another.
- This apparent opposition openly invites comparison between the two men of who would win in court; this comparison shows that the two men are more alike than they are different.

### **Books to note: Primary literature**

Plato, *Apology* (Meletus present as Socrates’ accuser)

Plato, *Cratylus* (Euthyphro mentioned as a religious expert in 396a and 396d)

Plato, *Crito* (Socrates defends the justice of the Athenian legal system)

Plato, *Euthyphro*

Plato, *Meno* (Anytus, another Socrates’ accusers, walks away from a conversation just as Euthyphro does)

### **Books to note: Secondary literature**

S. M. Cohen ‘Socrates on the Definition of Piety: Euthyphro 10A-11B’, *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 9 (1971), 1-13; reprinted in Vlastos (ed.), *Socrates*

This article attempts to find a positive definition of piety within the *Euthyphro*.

W.K.C. Guthrie *Socrates*,. London: Cambridge UP, 1971. Print.

This text discusses the *Euthyphro* specifically in chapter 2; the parallel is used as part of a larger argument.

M.L. McPherran *The Religion of Socrates*. University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State UP, 1996. Print.

This book mentions the parallel between Euthyphro and Meletus as part of a larger argument on the relationship between Euthyphro and Socrates.

M.L. McPherran 'Socratic Piety in the Euthyphro', *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 23 (1985), 283-309; reprinted in Benson (ed.), *Essays on the Philosophy of Socrates*

This article discusses the possibility of a positive definition of piety within the *Euthyphro*.

W.G. Rabinowitz 'Platonic Piety: An Essay toward the Solution of an Enigma', *Phronesis* 3 (1958), 108-20

This article attempts to find a positive definition of piety within the *Euthyphro*.

Wolfsdorf, David. *Trials of Reason: Plato and the Crafting of Philosophy*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2008. Print.

This text discusses the *Euthyphro*; it assumes the parallel between Euthyphro and Meletus and uses it as a basis for argumentation about the realism of Socrates as a literary character.