

EUTHYPHRO 2A-5C

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EUTH. What novelty, Socrates, has come to pass, that leaving your occupations [διατριβαί] in the Lyceum you now spend time [διατριβεῖν] here around the stoa of the King-Archon? For surely you do not have a lawsuit [δίκη] before the King-Archon as I do. 2a

Soc. The Athenians call it, Euthyphro, not a lawsuit but an indictment [γραφή].

EUTH. What's this you say? Someone has brought an indictment against you, it seems. For I will not lay this charge against you,¹ that you have indicted another. b

Soc. Certainly not.

EUTH. Rather someone else has indicted you?

Soc. Yes, certainly.

EUTH. Who is it?

Soc. I do not actually know the man myself, Euthyphro, for he appears to me to be someone young and unknown. However, they call him Meletos, as I think. He is of the deme Pittheus, if you have in mind some Pitthean Meletos, a long-haired sort of man and not well bearded at all, and hook-nosed.

EUTH. No one comes to mind, Socrates. But, now, what indictment has he brought against you? c

Soc. What indictment? Not an ignoble one, it seems to me at least. For it is no low² thing, being young, to know an affair so great. For he says he knows by what route the young are corrupted, and who those corrupting them are. And he may perchance be someone wise, and perceiving my ignorance as corrupting his peers, is going to accuse me [κατηγορεῖν] before the city, as before his mother. And he appears to me alone among the statesmen to begin rightly [ὀρθῶς]. For to begin rightly is to take care [ἐπιμελεθῆναι]³ d of the young first, in such a manner that they will be the best, just as it is reasonable that the good farmer take care first of the young plants, and after this the others. And moreover Meletos probably first is clearing 3a away we who corrupt the growth of the young, as he says. Then after this it is clear that, having taken care of the elders, he will become the cause of the most and the greatest goods in the city, as is likely to ensue through having begun with such a beginning.

EUTH. I hope so, Socrates, but I fear lest the opposite should come to pass. For he seems to me to begin artlessly, to work ill on the city from the hearth, in attempting injustice against you. And tell me, what does he say that you do to corrupt the young?

Soc. Strange things, wondrous man, when heard thus. For he says that I am a maker [ποιητής] of gods, b and he indicted me for these things: making [ποιεῖν] new gods and not believing in the old, as he says.

EUTH. I understand, Socrates. It is plainly because you often say that the *daimonion* comes to you. And so he has brought this indictment against you for making innovations concerning divine things, and is plainly going to court to slander you, knowing that such things admit easily of slander before the many. Why, whenever I speak in the assembly concerning divine things, foretelling to them things to come, they laugh c

1. Euthyphro's word — καταγνώσομαι, from καταγνώσκω — is one of many used in this dialogue which has both a commonplace meaning and a finer legal sense. Euthyphro seems to be teasing Socrates.

2. 'Ignoble' and 'low', ἀγεννή and φαῦλον respectively, both refer to birth or social class. Socrates may with these word choices be responding to Euthyphro's attempt to orient the dialogue around his and Socrates' social positions by proposing Meletos' opinion as noble.

3. Socrates' word plays on Meletos' name.

me down too for a madman. And yet I have said nothing that is not true among those things I foretold. Nevertheless, they envy us all who are of this sort. But it is not needful to pay them any mind; rather, it is needful to advance against them.⁴

Soc. Friend Euthyphro, to be laughed down is perhaps no matter. For to the Athenians, as it seems to me, it is no great care if they should think someone is clever [δεινός], yet not a teacher of his own wisdom [σοφία]. But if they think he is someone who makes others so, they become angry, either actually due to envy, as you say, or due to something else. d

EUTH. I do not desire at all to make a test of how they are towards me in this regard.

Soc. Perhaps you seem to make yourself available infrequently, and not to wish to teach your own wisdom. But I fear lest by philanthropy I seem to them to speak unreservedly whatever I have to every man, not only without pay, but also giving enjoyment if someone wishes to listen to me. If, then, as I was just saying, I am going to be laughed down just as you say of yourself, it would not be unpleasant to pass time sporting and laughing in the court. But if they are going to be serious, the way in which this will turn out is presently unclear, save to you diviners [μάντις]. e

EUTH. But perhaps, Socrates, it will be no matter, and you will contend the suit [δίκη]⁵ just as you intend, as I think I will my own.

Soc. Whatever is this lawsuit of yours, Euthyphro? Are you defending it or prosecuting?

EUTH. I am prosecuting.

Soc. Whom?

EUTH. He whom in prosecuting I again seem to be mad. 4a

Soc. What? Are you prosecuting someone flying?

EUTH. He is far from flying; he happens to be very old.⁶

Soc. Who is this?

EUTH. My father.

Soc. Your father, best of men?

EUTH. Very much so.

Soc. What is the charge, and for what the suit?⁷

EUTH. For murder, Socrates.

Soc. Heracles. Certainly, Euthyphro, it is not known by the many whatever way is upright [ὀρθῶς]. For I at least do not think that to do this belongs to any chance person, but to someone already far advanced in wisdom [σοφία]. b

EUTH. Far indeed, Socrates, by Zeus.

Soc. Now is the man killed by your father someone of your household? Or are these things obvious? For

4. This speech of Euthyphro's is somewhat more rhetorically sophisticated than his others. He explicitly conjoins himself and Socrates with "us all who are of this sort", but that link is refigured by subtleties in the syntax of preceding lines that are difficult to translate into idiomatic English. The sentence I have translated "Why, whenever I speak ..." begins καὶ ἐμοῦ γὰρ τοι, in which a first-person pronoun (ἐμοῦ) is conjoined with a particle (τοι) which sounds the same as a second-person pronoun. In the previous sentence, Socrates was indicted ὡς ... κεινοτομοῦντος σου; here, Euthyphro uses the same grammatical structure to express why the people laugh at him, ἐμοῦ ... ὡς μαινομένου.

5. Euthyphro has dropped the distinction between his own suit and Socrates' indictment.

6. Socrates plays on διώκω, 'prosecute' or 'pursue'. If Euthyphro notices the wordplay, he does not respond to it.

7. In this exchange, Socrates and Euthyphro reverse the dialectical positions they held at the outset of the dialogue, in which Euthyphro played interrogator and Socrates interlocutor in discussing the latter's lawsuit.

surely you are not prosecuting him for murder on behalf of a stranger.

EUTH. It is absurd, Socrates, that you think anything differs, whether the man killed was a stranger or of the household, but not that it is necessary to look out for this alone, whether the killer killed with justice or not, and if with justice, to let him be, but if not, to prosecute him, if indeed the killer should be of the same hearth with you and the same table. For the pollution is equal if you should knowingly associate with such a one and not purify yourself and him by prosecuting him. Moreover, the man who died was a dependent of mine, and, when we were farming on Naxos, worked for us as a laborer there. Being wild with drink, he becomes angry with one of our household slaves and cuts his throat. Then my father, having bound his feet and hands and thrown him down in a ditch, sends two men to learn from the exegete what he ought to do. During this time he paid little heed to the bound man and neglected him, as he was a murderer and it was no matter if he should die, which indeed happened. He dies from hunger and cold and his bonds before the messenger from the exegete arrives. My father and the other members of the household are angry, then, about these things: that I am prosecuting my father for murder on behalf of a murderer, my father either not having killed him, as they say, or, if he did indeed kill him, they say that as the deceased was a murderer it is not necessary to consider such a one, and that it is impious for the son to prosecute the father for murder — they knowing [οἶδα] badly, Socrates, how the divinity holds concerning the pious [δσίου] and the impious. e

SOC. Before Zeus, Euthyphro, do you indeed think that you know so precisely in what way [the divinity] holds concerning divine things,⁸ both pious and impious, that having done these things as you say, you should not fear lest in taking your father to court you should in turn happen to be doing an impious deed?

EUTH. It would be no advantage to me, Socrates, nor in this case would Euthyphro differ from the many, if I were not to know precisely all such things. 5a

SOC. Would it not, marvelous Euthyphro, be the strongest course for me to become your student, and in defense before the indictment of Meletos' side to challenge him on these grounds, saying that I always considered [ποιέομαι] it valuable to know [οἶδα] divine things, and since now he says that I err in speaking carelessly and making innovations concerning divine things, I have become your student — “and if, Meletos,” I can say, “you agree that Euthyphro is wise about such matters and believes rightly, hold that I do also and do not go to court. But if not, file [λαγχάνω] a lawsuit [δίκη] first against my teacher rather than against me, for corrupting the elders, both me and his own father, in teaching me, and in rebuking and punishing the latter.” — and should he not obey me either by dropping the lawsuit [δίκη] or indicting [γράφομαι] you instead of me, to say these things in court on which I challenged him?⁹ b

EUTH. By Zeus, Socrates, if he should then attempt to indict me, I would find, as I think, in what way he is unsound, and our speech in the court would be much more about him than about me. c

SOC. And I, friend and comrade, recognizing these things, desire to become your student, knowing that this Meletos, and anyone else at all, does not seem to see you, but discerns me so sharply and easily as to indict me for impiety [ἀσεβεία].¹⁰ ...

8. This phrase and “the divinity” in Euthyphro's speech are forms of same word (θεῖος).

9. Socrates changes the legal terminology here, introducing the new verb λαγχάνω and, as Euthyphro earlier did, abandoning or blurring the distinction he made in the first lines of the dialogue between a lawsuit and an indictment. Euthyphro, conversely, sticks with “indict”.

10. Socrates here continues the shift in terminology, here introducing ἀσεβεία, which will be used along with and in unclear contrast to δσίου throughout the remainder of the dialogue.