

PH1101E/GE1004M
Twelve Practice Questions on the “Euthyphro”

Passage 1:

"S: Is then the man your father killed one of your relatives? Or is that obvious, for you would not prosecute your father for the murder of a stranger.

E: It is ridiculous, Socrates, for you to think that it makes any difference whether the victim is a stranger or a relative. One should only watch whether the killer acted justly or not; if he acted justly, let him go, but if not, one should prosecute, even if the killer shares your hearth and table. The pollution is the same if you knowingly keep company with such a man and do not cleanse yourself and him by bringing him to justice." (4b-c)

1. In passage 1, Euthyphro advances a general claim about ethics. Which of the following is the best paraphrase of that claim?

- a) It is a more serious crime to kill strangers than family members.
- b) It is a more serious crime to kill family members than strangers.
- c) It is not possible to kill a human being justly.
- d) Murder causes moral ‘pollution’ to descend upon murderers, and also upon those who associate with them.
- e) In considering whether a killing is just or unjust, it is wrong to take account of the killer's relationship to oneself.

2. In passage 1, Euthyphro commits himself to the truth of which of the following propositions:

I. In assessing the justice of a killing, it is wrong to take account of the killer's relationship to oneself.

II. In assessing the justice of a killing, it is not wrong to take account of the victim's relationship to oneself.

III. It is worse to fail to prosecute your own father than to fail to prosecute a stranger, for your father will infect you with his moral pollution, whereas a stranger will not infect you.

IV. Those who associate with murderers and fail to prosecute them share, to some degree, in the moral pollution that afflicts the murderer.

V. Prosecuting murderers is always self-interested, in a sense, since you are concerned with maintaining one's own 'cleanliness' in the face of potential 'pollution'.

- a) I-IV.
- b) I-V.
- c) I, IV.
- d) I, IV, V.
- e) I, III and V.

Helpful Hint: There is a certain vagueness about passage 1 – an openness to interpretation – that makes this question a bit hard to answer definitively. Why? Why do you think? Anyway, I think there is a right answer – at any rate, a most plausible one – but you could legitimately dispute about it. So this wouldn't be a good exam question. (So why I am giving it to you? Because seeing what makes questions hard to answer will help you get good at answering them. It's just practice.)

3. In passage 1, Socrates' question and comment appear to presuppose the truth of which of the following?
- a. One would never prosecute one's father for murder.
 - b. One would prosecute one's father for murder only if the victim were another relative.
 - c. All killing of human beings is murder.
 - d. It is not murder to kill a human being who is not your relative.
 - e. Murder is always relative.
4. Which of the following claims is/are consistent with Euthyphro's stated views in passage 1? (Which might Euthyphro agree to without contradicting himself?)
- a. It is possible to kill a human being justly.
 - b. All killings of human beings must be punished; but murder must be punished severely, lest one suffer 'moral pollution'.
 - c. Murderers should always be punished.
 - d. Only the relatives of victims should prosecute their murderers.
 - e. Both a and c.

Passage 2:

Here Euthyphro has just asked Socrates about his accuser [Meletus] and about the charges brought against him. Socrates replies:

S: "[Meletus] says he knows how our young men are corrupted and who corrupts them. He is likely to be wise, and when he sees my ignorance corrupting his contemporaries, he proceeds to accuse me to the city as to their mother. I think he is the only one of our public men to start out the right way, for it is right to care first that the young should be as good as possible, just as a good farmer is likely to take care of the young plants first, and of the others later. So, too, Meletus first gets rid of us who corrupt the young shoots, as he says, and then afterwards he will obviously take care of the older ones and become a source of great blessings for the city, as seems likely to happen to one who started out this way."
(2c-d)

5. On the basis of your understanding of the dialogue as a whole, which of the following inferences about Socrates' attitude in passage 2 would be most reasonable?

- a) Socrates does not think that the youth of Athens have a serious need for someone to look out for them and to make sure they receive a proper upbringing. He thinks they can look out for themselves; Meletus is wrong to meddle in their private lives.
- b) Socrates thinks Meletus is genuinely concerned with the moral character of Athenian youth; this is why he has brought suit against Socrates, though the suit is in fact groundless.
- c) Socrates thinks Meletus is likely to be wise.
- d) Socrates is perhaps serious that the young need to be looked out for first; but he is being ironic in suggesting that Meletus is the man to do this.
- e) None of the above are reasonable inferences.

Passage 3

S: Come then, let us examine what we mean. An action or a man dear to the gods is pious, but an action or a man hated by the gods is impious. They are not the same, but quite opposite, the pious and the impious. Is that not so?

E: It is indeed.

S: And that seems to be a good statement?

E: I think so, Socrates.

S: We have also stated that the gods are in a state of discord, that they are at odds with each other, Euthyphro, and that they are at enmity with each other. Has that, too, been said?

E: It has.

S: What are the subjects of difference that cause hatred and anger? Let us look at it this way. If you and I were to differ about numbers as to which is the greater, would this difference make us enemies and angry with each other, or would we proceed to count and soon resolve our difference about this?

E: We would certainly do so.

S: Again, if we differed about the larger and the smaller, we would turn to measurement and soon cease to differ.

E: That is so.

S: And about the heavier and the lighter, we would resort to weighing and be reconciled.

E: Of course.

S: What subject of difference would make us angry and hostile to each other if we were unable to come to a decision? Perhaps you do not have an answer ready, but examine as I tell you whether these subjects are the just and the unjust, the beautiful and the ugly, the good and the bad. Are these not the subjects of difference about which, when we are unable to come to a satisfactory decision, you

and I and other men become hostile to each other whenever we do?

E: That is the difference, Socrates, about those subjects.

S: What about the gods, Euthyphro? If indeed they have differences, will it not be about these same subjects?

E: It certainly must be so.

S: Then according to your argument, my good Euthyphro, different gods consider different things to be just, beautiful, ugly, good, and bad, for they would not be at odds with one another unless they differed about these subjects, would they?

E: You are right.

S: And they like what each of them considers beautiful, good, and just, and hate the opposites of these?

E: Certainly.

S: But you say that the same things are considered just by some gods and unjust by others, and as they dispute about these things they are at odds and at war with each other. Is that not so?

E: It is.

S: The same things then are loved by the gods and hated by the gods, and would be both god-loved and god-hated.

E: It seems likely.

S: And the same things would be both pious and impious, according to this argument?

E: I'm afraid so." (7a-8a)

6. Which of the following is the best summary of Socrates' argument against Euthyphro, in passage 3?

- a) Socrates tries to prove that the gods, since they are much like humans, must agree about mathematics but disagree about the beautiful, the good, and so forth. This shows that the only truly pious activity is mathematics, whether one is a mortal or a god, since it is the only thing that everyone can agree upon, and agreement – as Euthyphro himself admits – is the essence of piety.
- b) Socrates exploits Euthyphro's admission that the gods fight among themselves to prove that some gods love things that are hated by other gods. It turns out that some things are both pious and impious, which Euthyphro will not wish to grant.
- c) Socrates tries to prove that it is absurd to look to the gods for any sort of moral guidance, since many of them obviously have rather low moral standards and characters.
- d) Socrates tries to prove that it is absurd to suppose, as Euthyphro does, that the gods fight among themselves, since this is inconsistent with their divine status.
- e) Socrates tries to prove that everything must be both pious and impious, since every act is loved by some god and hated by some other. Therefore, it is impossible to do wrong, since every act is also right.

7. In passage 3, when Euthyphro grants Socrates that gods, like men, agree about mathematics but fight about right and wrong, the good, the beautiful and so forth, he does so for the following reason:

- a) Socrates has shown that it would be contradictory to suppose anything else is the case.
- b) Socrates has advanced this as a hypothesis, and Euthyphro has accepted it as such, pending further investigation.
- c) Socrates has suggested that this view of things is supported by a Greek religious tradition that Euthyphro, being a priest, is bound to accept uncritically.
- d) Euthyphro does not really agree with Socrates about this. Socrates merely proceeds as though Euthyphro had granted him this point.
- e) Euthyphro simply grants the point, evidently regarding it as plausible.

8. In passage 3, Euthyphro could get out of his immediate logical fix (at least for the moment) while preserving his basic view about the nature of piety, by making which of the following changes to his argumentative position?

- a) He could deny that it is possible to be absolutely certain about what individual gods love and hate, since it is not even possible to be certain about what individual men love and hate.
- b) He could deny that it is possible for different gods to love and hate different things, at least when it comes to judging the actions of mortals.
- c) He could deny that piety really is a function of what the gods love and hate.
- d) He could just admit that many, and perhaps all, acts are both pious and impious.
- e) He could assert that it is possible that the gods in fact disagree with each other about mathematics and such things.

Helpful Hint: Here again we have a question whose correct answer might be legitimately disputed. Not a good exam question, then. Why would you say that is?

Passage 4:

“S: It is indeed most important, my admirable Euthyphro, that I should become your pupil, and as regards this indictment challenge Meletus about these very things and say to him: that in the past too I considered knowledge about the divine to be most important, and that now that he says that I am guilty of improvising and innovating about the gods I have become your pupil. I would say to him: "If, Meletus, you agree that Euthyphro is wise in these matters, consider me, too, to have the right beliefs and do not bring me to trial. If you do not think so, then prosecute that teacher of mine, not me, for corrupting the older men, me and his own father, by teaching me and by exhorting and punishing him." (5b)

9. Which of the following is the most accurate summary of passage 4?

- a) Socrates declares himself eager to become Euthyphro’s pupil on the grounds that this will help him defend himself against charges of impiety. He reasons that Meletus will consider Euthyphro to be either wise or unwise. If Meletus considers Euthyphro to be wise, he will not prosecute his pupil. If Meletus considers Euthyphro unwise, he will not blame the pupil but rather the teacher.
- b. Socrates declares his intention to become Euthyphro’s pupil, since he is charged with improvising and innovating about the gods. Euthyphro, who declares himself wise in such matters, will no doubt help Socrates perfect his spiritual improvisations and innovations, thereby immunizing him from prosecution.
- c. Socrates declares that he wishes to become Euthyphro’s pupil, but then he ironically points up an inconsistency in Euthyphro’s position: by setting himself up as a teacher, he is committed to the view that he is both wise and not wise.
- d. Socrates ironically deflects Euthyphro’s invitation to become his pupil in spiritual matters. Socrates points out that becoming Euthyphro’s pupil would only make it more difficult to defend himself in court, whether his prosecutor, Meletus, regards Euthyphro as wise or not.
- e. Socrates explains to Euthyphro why, much as he would like to become his pupil, doing so would not help him defend against prosecution for impiety. For either Meletus will regard Euthyphro as wise, in which case he will not believe Socrates has the same views as Euthyphro; or Meletus will regard Euthyphro as unwise, in which case Socrates will not have helped himself by publicly associating with him.

Passage 5:

“S: Tell me then, what is the pious, and what the impious, do you say?”

E: I say that the pious is to do what I am doing now, to prosecute the wrongdoer, be it about murder or temple robbery or anything else, whether the wrongdoer is your father or your mother or anyone else; not to prosecute is impious.” (5b)

10. Which of the following is the most accurate summary of passage 5?

- a. Socrates offers a definition of piety; Euthyphro offers an alternative definition.
- b. Socrates asks for an illustration of piety; Euthyphro offers one.
- c. Socrates asks what piety and impiety are; Euthyphro states that his own present acts, and other similar acts, are pious.
- d. Socrates points out that Euthyphro has not yet defined piety or impiety. Euthyphro attempts a definition.
- e. Socrates asks for a definition of piety; Euthyphro objects to Socrates' implication that shielding family members from prosecution could be justified.

Passage 6:

“E: . . . These people themselves believe that Zeus is the best and most just of the gods, yet they agree that he bound his father because he unjustly swallowed his sons, and that he in turn castrated his father for similar reasons. But they are angry with me because I am prosecuting my father for his wrongdoing. They contradict themselves in what they say about the gods and about me.” (6a)

11. In passage 6, Euthyphro’s argument runs as follows:

- a. It is inconsistent to believe that Zeus is the ‘best and most just of the gods’, since he bound his father for unjustly swallowing his sons. No just person would do such a thing.
- b. It is inconsistent to believe that Zeus is the ‘best and most just of the gods’, since he bound his father for unjustly swallowing his sons. Therefore, those who say Euthyphro is wrong to prosecute his own father contradict themselves.
- c. It is inconsistent to believe both that Zeus is the ‘best and most just of the gods’, and also to believe all the stories told about him. The proof of this is that it would be wrong of Zeus both to bind and castrate his father for a single crime. Yet Zeus is said to have done this.
- d. It is just for Euthyphro to prosecute his father for murder since it was just for Zeus to punish his father for murder.
- e. It is inconsistent for people to criticize Euthyphro for prosecuting his father since they also believe Zeus is ‘the best and most just of the gods’. For, in effect, Zeus prosecuted his own father. Therefore, it cannot always be wrong to prosecute one’s father.

Passage 7:

S: What then do we say about the pious, Euthyphro? Surely that it is loved by all the gods, according to what you say?

E: Yes.

S: Is it loved because it is pious, or for some other reason?

E: For no other reason.

S: It is loved then because it is pious, but it is not pious because it is loved?

E: Apparently.” (10d)

12. In passage 7, Socrates gets Euthyphro to admit which of the following?

- a) That which the gods love must be both pious and impious.
- b) Pious things must be so independently of the gods' love of them, since it is this property of being pious that explains the gods' love.
- c) Pious things are made pious by the gods' love of them.
- d) It would be possible for the gods to hate pious things, as well as love them, since it is not the gods' love that makes things pious.
- e) The gods have no reason to love anything unless it is pious.