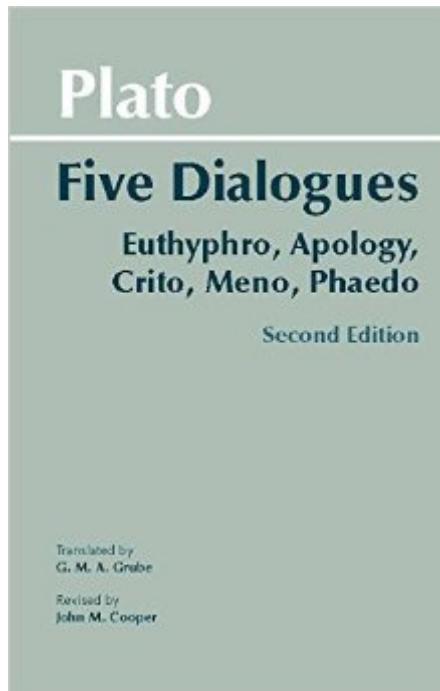


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Plato: Five Dialogues: Euthyphro, Apology, Crito, Meno, Phaedo (Hackett Classics)



Synopsis

The second edition of Five Dialogues presents G. M. A. Grube's distinguished translations, as revised by John Cooper for Plato, Complete Works. A number of new or expanded footnotes are also included along with an updated bibliography.

Book Information

Series: Hackett Classics

Paperback: 168 pages

Publisher: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc.; 2 edition (October 1, 2002)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0872206335

ISBN-13: 978-0872206335

Product Dimensions: 0.2 x 5.8 x 8.5 inches

Shipping Weight: 5 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.5 out of 5 starsÂ See all reviewsÂ (103 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #1,013 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #2 inÂ Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Philosophy > Greek & Roman #2 inÂ Books > Textbooks > Humanities > Philosophy > History & Surveys #334 inÂ Books > Reference

Customer Reviews

Many are the college students who have read the Platonic discourses collected in this volume. Along with The Republic, these dialogues form the most basic core of Platonic philosophy and are required reading for anyone interested in the art of philosophy. In the Euthyphro dialogue, Socrates is on his way to court to answer the charges of Meletus that he creates his own gods and does not believe in the gods of society. On his way, he meets Euthyphro, a lawyer-priest of some sort who tells Socrates that he is prosecuting his own father for the murder of a slave (a slave who had himself committed murder). Socrates compels the learned Euthyphro to explain to him the truth about what is pious and what impious; if he can tell the court what he has learned from the knowledgeable Euthyphro, he will have no trouble countering Meletus' charges. Euthyphro tries to define what is pious as that which is pleasing to the gods, but Socrates shows him that his definition is really just an effect of piety, and Euthyphro bows out of the circular conversation without ever giving Socrates a satisfactory definition of true piety. In The Apology, Socrates defends himself from both the recent charges of Meletus for impiety as well as the host of charges long leveled at him as being a corrupter of the youth. He cites a pronouncement of the Delphic oracle that he is the wisest

of all men and explains how he has spent his life trying to vindicate the god's pronouncement by seeking out the wisest men in society and testing them. The wisest men, he says, turn out to be not wise at all. He himself knows he is not wise, while the supposedly wise think they are wise when they are not, and he has concluded that the gods believe that the wisest man is the man who knows how much he does not know.

I roomed with a philosophy major in my first year of college who loved to make my head spin with Plato. He'd come back from class bustling with excitement over the latest breakthrough he'd had and try to explain its significance to me, only to have it go in one ear and out the other since my priorities at the time were decidedly more down-to-earth. Luckily, I've not been content to stay that way. It occurred to me after graduation that my education was deficient in many 'classics' - novels, poetry, history, philosophy, and so on - and that it would be to my advantage to learn them, so I sat down and made a list of things to read. Plato happened to be near the top for his influence on western philosophy. When his turn came, a friend recommended I start with the dialogues associated with Socrates' trial since they provide a solid foundation for understanding the Republic and other later Platonic dialogues. A quick search of readily available translations yielded three candidates: Grube (Hackett), Rowe (Penguin Classics), and Jowett (too many to count). I evaluated each of them on my standard book criteria: 1) I like to think of my books as lasting investments, so I'm very keen on acid-free paper and hardcover editions. 2) I expect notes of some sort. 3) Any translations must strike a good balance between faithfulness to the text and readability, erring more to the former. No anachronisms! The Jowett translation was by far the most abundant, likely because it's out of copyright and thus free to use. There wasn't much difference between the various editions - they were mostly paperbacks printed on cheap acidic paper without any notes. A leather-bound Easton Press edition featured superior binding and fanciful illustrations but still no notes.

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