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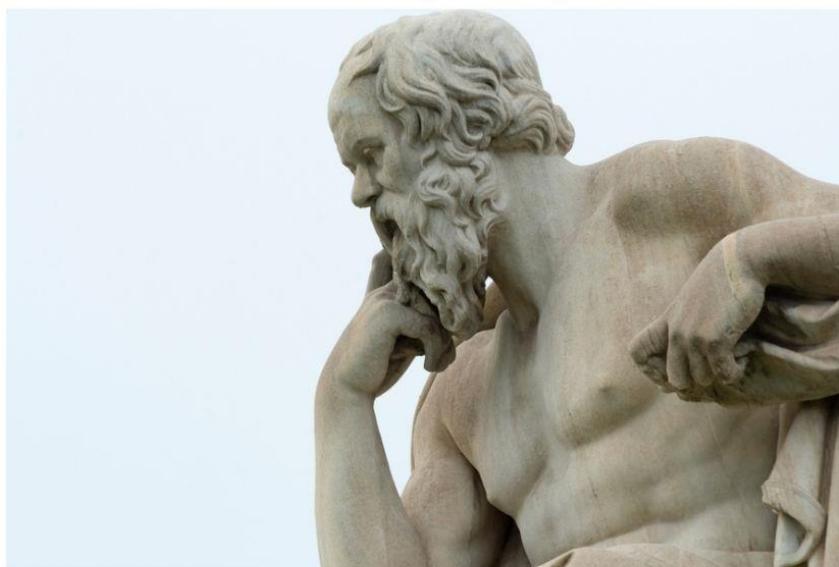
#AIMHIGH

# Transition Pack

## A Level

# Theology

Get ready for Level 3 qualifications!



2021



  
Trinity  
CATHOLIC SCHOOL



Deus Fortitudo Mea

# Ethical Thought: Introductory ideas

People have **values**.

Where do they get these values from?

If they follow “right” values consistently, they are considered to be a moral person.

- Is this simply social expectation?
- Or is there something real about goodness?

# Introduction to Ethics

- **Normative ethics**
  - From “nomos” – norms or laws.
  - What does a particular theory tell us about what we should do?
- **Applied ethics**
  - Applying a particular normative theory to moral problems
  - Evaluating effectiveness of that theory in solving moral problems
- **Meta-ethics**
  - Thinking about moral reasoning itself
  - What do we mean when we use words as “good”, “bad”?
  - What is morality based on? Feelings or reasoning? Social contract? Psychology?

# Your views on morality, in general...

**Are there moral facts/truths** Is something objectively right or wrong, no matter who, when, what, how?

**Is morality subjective?** Decided by our opinions or feelings?

**Does morality emerge from character, or is it about their actions?**

**Do moral facts only reflect the way we humans, are made?** Eg feeling pain, pleasure, having a sense of dignity?

**Does God decide what is right?**

**Does morality come from pressures in society?** Our duties as citizens, workers, family commitments?

Use these prompts to summarise your own thinking on morality.

Look at the table showing how moral theories may be different.

- Which ones decide right/wrong objectively?
- Which ones decide morality subjectively
- What is the difference between deontological and consequentialist?

# Divine Command Theory

What kind of theory is going to be?

- objective/  
subjective
- agent/ action  
centred
- consequentialist/  
deontological



DCT is an **objective, normative theory**.

The origin of moral values is from God, in a way that is absolute and objective. Deontological. Action centred.

In *The Brothers Karamazov* by Dostoevsky, a dim-witted servant kills the brothers' father.

**Ivan:** Did you kill him alone?

**Servant:** Only with you sir. I killed him with your help (Ivan seems bemused)

**Servant:** **Everything, you said, is permitted...** this you did teach me, sir, for you talked to me a lot about such things: for if there's no everlasting God, then there is no such thing as virtue and there's no need of it at all. Yes sir, you were right about that.

**Would the absence of God make all things permissible? Why?**

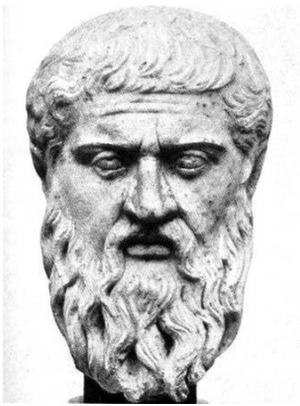


If God did not exist, there would be no morality:

- without a Creator, there is no objective goodness, or created order to respect
  - no divine being, to be answerable to.
  - no God-given laws to obey, and only man to decide them
- = there is nothing to "fix" what good is, objectively.

How could an atheist be moral?  
Does religious belief give *more* reason to be moral?

# The Euthyphro Dilemma



Plato, the famous ancient Greek philosopher from 400BC, is the first person to consider **whether morality is decided by God**. He wrote imaginary dialogues, between Socrates, a famous philosopher, and others representing different points of view.

In “Euthyphro”, Socrates meets Euthyphro, a young man who is taking his father to court for indirectly causing the death of a paid worker. Socrates commends Euthyphro for his confidence about right and wrong, if he can bring his father to judgement like that.

Plato is asking if morality is **objective** (exists independently on its own, as moral facts)

or if it is what it is, relative to the minds of the gods & what *they* judge to be good.

Euthyphro tells him that right and wrong are determined by **what the gods love**. Then Socrates asks the crucial question:

**“Is something good because the gods love it, or do the gods love it because it is good?”**

- Rephrase the question in your own words
- What would be your answer?
- What implications does your answer have, for morality?

### Other examples to help you decide..

Are these things good objectively, or because of subjective preference?

Do people love Beyoncé,  
because she is a good  
singer,  
or is she a good singer,  
because people love her?

Is school important for your  
education, because your  
parents command it,  
or do your parents command  
it, *because* it is important for  
your education?

- In each case, the **objective value** comes first, and is given recognition.
- Plato suggests the same about morality - the gods **recognize** goodness, which exists already as a fact, and don't just decide its goodness themselves (they love it *because* it is good)
- But this leads to a problem...



*"I just don't feel very omnipotent today."*

**Socrates: “Is something good because the gods love it, or do the gods love it because it is good?”**

The question presents a **dilemma**: it leads to 2 alternatives, neither of which are wholly satisfactory. You find that you are get “impaled” either on the first or on the second horn of the dilemma.

If you say:

It is good, **because the gods love it.**

- = The gods’ love determines a thing’s goodness.
- But the gods could have loved the opposite.
- If they loved evil instead, it makes morality **arbitrary** – what is good, is only so, by a whim of the gods.

Explain the dilemma.

**What is the problem with each alternative?**

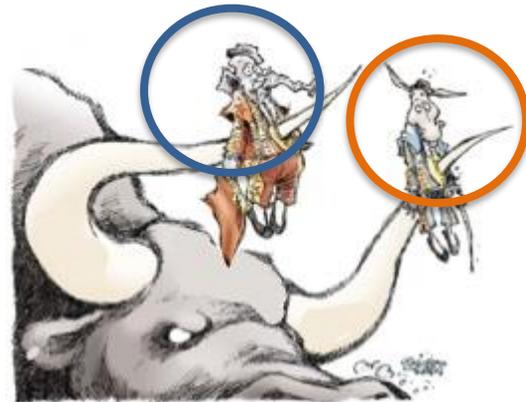
- Which side is more ‘solvable’?

If you say,

The gods love it, **because it is good...**

Then the gods simply recognize what is good/ bad –and that means that they have no power over such designations. The standard of “goodness” stands over the gods’ creative freedom.

- this means the gods are **not omnipotent.**
- it raises the problem of how/ where goodness (moral facts) **exists**, so that it should be recognised



Explain the Euthyphro dilemma.  
Which half of it would you  
support?



# The Euthryphro Dilemma: Solutions



# Christian responses 1

God decides morality  
– but this does not make morality  
arbitrary

God created the universe good

- The **goodness** things have, and how they are ordered towards each other, is a real quality, objective, and stands independently of God.

But is **derived from** God – so **relative** to him.

However – it is possible for God as the Creator – on rare occasions to demonstrate his **sovereignty** – and command what appears opposite to good.

The exceptional cases **prove the norm** - that morality is not whimsical or variable, but normally consistent – yet under God's sovereignty.



## EXAMPLES

Gen 22

God commanded Abraham to kill Isaac, in sacrifice. It was good for Abraham to follow this command.

Examples of ‘putting things under the ban’ in war – such commands for the total expunging of enemy peoples were given at times in Israel’s history when **the very existence** of the nation as God’s people was being established – and acts of brutality were not unusual.

- In response to **rebellion in the Sinai desert**, Moses commanded those who were ‘on the side of the Lord’ to slay fellow-Jews who were against following the Lord. Exodus 32:26
- “Only **in the cities that the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance**, you shall not leave alive anything that breathes” . Deut 29:16
- In his early victories, **the first King Israel** was commanded to completely destroy his enemies and take nothing from them for himself “**Spare no one. Kill men and women, children and infants, oxen and sheep, camels and donkeys.**” 1 Sam 15
- Likewise **Joshua, on entering the Promised Land** was to destroy the city of Jericho, killing all living things, human, animal, young and old, without exception. Josh. 5:17-21

# Christian responses

## 1

God as Creator is  
Sovereign, but not  
whimsical



Explain and evaluate Christian responses to the view that God decides morality.

How would you respond to the challenge that such examples of commanding 'evil' are *not* consistent with a good God – and do prove him to be **whimsical**?

Examples are **exceptional** ... to establish the very existence of the Jewish people in obedience to God, and separate from other cultures.

**God as the Creator**, to whom all creation and creatures belong, has sovereignty to decide the fate – and **due 'rights'** of each person eg. even commanding their death – for His own, greater, purposes.  
(Aquinas, Swinburne)

### Moral Suspension View

God's commands do not change the morality of an action, but may **suspend** its wrongness  
(Augustine)

### Extreme View

Whatever God commands, ceases to be evil and is always good. (W. Ockham)

## Christian response 2

God decides morality  
– but this does not make morality  
arbitrary

### Adams' Modified DCT

God exists, morality comes from God, as God is the creator of everything. God is the necessary, omnipotent being, there is no other moral "standard" apart from him.

God also establishes morality itself by revealing His will eg 10 Commandments.

But what about the **arbitrariness** of God's commands?

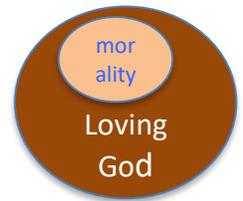
Is **Ockham** right, when he argues that:  
*"Whatever God commands, ceases to be evil and is always good"*?



Adams is concerned to show that the possibility of God **commanding evil is excluded**.

He does this, by referring to God's good and perfect **nature**.

# Adams' Modified DCT: God's nature



- ⇒ DCT is only acceptable “if **God has the character of loving his human creatures**”.
- ⇒ Something is wrong if, and only if, it goes against the commands of a loving God.

Adams appeals to **God's nature**, to 'fix' morality on an objective moral basis. God's commands are rooted in God's character – expressions of **who He essentially is**: a loving, benevolent, God would not randomly command murder or theft.

So God's commands are **not arbitrary**, because they are rooted in the unchanging, omnibenevolent **nature** of God. Logically, God could not command, something that was **in contradiction** to His own nature, as good and loving.

So morality exists **internal** to God, dependent on who God is

It preserves God's omnipotence, as God is not subject to an external moral law. It depends on him.

How does Adams' modify DCT?

- How does he protect God's omnipotence?
- How does he prevent moral arbitrariness?
- How is it an improvement on classical DCT? Why might it still not work?

# Challenges to Morality being decided by God 1

- God does not decide morality
- Morality exists independently of God.

## Julian Baggini

By saying that morality is internal to a benevolent God, we are **just restating the dilemma**

– is God good because He is God, or because He is good?

- Is **God choosing to be that** goodness himself (arbitrary) or is he good because good is an independent perfection that it behoves God to be?

Baggini's challenge is a problem for any theory placing morality within God. Therefore, it is better to consider morality as existing independently of God.

- **The problems this raises can be solved:**

## No problem of existence of moral facts (Julia Driver)

Moral truths can “exist”

- like numbers “exist”
- They exist as necessary truths
- No one expects to ‘find’ prime numbers anywhere in physical space, but the created world is impossible without them.

01234<sup>01234</sup>  
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So the standard of goodness can exist independently as part of the natural order that exists in the world. We can recognize its presence/ absence intellectually .

## No Problem of Omnipotence

- Something is only a limitation on omnipotence, if it was logically possible to be done in the first place
  - something **contradictory** is **not** logically possible (logical law of non-contradiction)
    - squaring a circle, making a stone so heavy that an OP being cannot lift
    - a perfect being re-designating good as evil
- God's omnipotence is not reduced by Him *not* doing such things.

# Response to defend DCT

If morality does exist independently outside of God (and is not a problem for his OP)

Yet...how come it does exist?

This question leads us *back* to a Creator God – and morality as coming, ultimately, from Him.

So which side of the Euthyphro dilemma wins out?

- Morality comes from God
- Morality is independent from God





Evaluating DCT  
as a normative  
theory to follow

Strengths &  
Weaknesses

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## PROS?

- Explains the source of morality – God as the creator
- Gives morality an objective basis – in the goodness of God. Non-negotiable (killing can never become good).
- makes morality easy – clear-cut laws, don't need to work it out.
- explains the force of the moral law on us - imbued with God's authority
- makes sense of heroic morality : as God is the ultimate judge/rewarder



## CONS?

- Adams' solution does not really work (Baggini)
- Possible that morality could be relativistic – to what God wants.
- Removes individual responsibility
- Morality is selfish – for reward from God, so not truly moral
- Intolerant/ inflexible, simplistic answers to complex problems
- Fails to explain atheist morality
- Challenge of religious pluralism

# Add in the responses to the challenges.

DCT offers key moral precepts that ought to take priority in moral thinking - not try to prevent moral thinking (eg do not kill)

Given human capacity for self-delusion, clear moral precepts do not oversimplify, but offer clear guiding principles to morality.

DCT is a system of interlocking precepts - rejecting sin is qualified by commands to 'love your neighbour' and 'forgive others' - so hatred is never justified.

There is more moral agreement between different religions than disagreement. Disagreement is an invitation to work together to further insights.

Adams' theory raises the Euthyphro dilemma again: why should God be like good? Does he choose to be? The relation between God's nature and his goodness is a mystery.

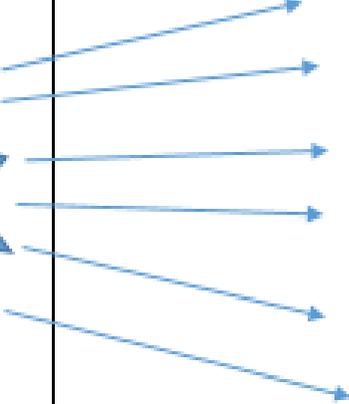
Moral atheists and naturalists have "imbibed" God's law as part of civilized society. By following their conscience, they in fact recognize the moral order that God created, even if they do not identify it as coming from God.



How good is DCT as a theory of morality?

## Different Types of Normative Ethics

Normative ethics is the study of ethical action. It is the branch of philosophical ethics that investigates the set of questions that arise when considering how one ought to act, morally speaking.

Person	Motive	Action	Consequences
			
Focus on the person	Focus on motives conforming to certain rules	Focus on actions conforming to certain rules	Focus on the consequences of the action
<b>Virtue Ethics/ Ethical Egoism</b>	<b>Deontological Ethics</b> (eg Natural Law, Divine Command Theory)		<b>Consequentialist Ethics</b> (eg Utilitarianism, Situation Ethics)
'Roles'	'Rules'		'Goals'
Prioritises what's virtuous/ self-interested	Prioritises whether motive or act is right in itself		Prioritises consequences of the act
<b>Agent-centred</b>	<b>Action-centred</b>		

# Evaluation of DCT as a moral theory

## Match & write in the points on your table

Challenges to the theory	Responses to the Challenges
<p>If morality is based on obedience to divine commands, then complex situations eg abortion become very simple to solve and this approach may not do justice to the many complex issues involved in the situation.</p>	
<p>Different religious traditions put emphasis on different moral precepts and this leads to moral disagreement (eg women's rights). Morality cannot be based on religion, where there are too many different religious traditions.</p>	
<p>If morality comes from God, because God is the creator and omnipotent, it is relative to him, and he could command whatever he wanted, whenever he wanted. Basing morality on God's internal loving nature (Adams) doesn't solve this, as maybe he still chooses what he is. (Baggini)</p>	
<p>Obedience to divine commands prevents individuals from considering ethical issues for themselves, as they are given a ready answer. This can lead to moral immaturity.</p>	
<p>If morality comes from obedience to God's commands, then how can atheists or naturalists be moral? But there are moral atheists so this proves that morality cannot only come from knowing God's commands</p>	
<p>Right and wrong are determined by the command of a divine being, and could have been otherwise. Conceivably, God might have commanded killing to be morally right, and morality has no objective basis.</p>	
<p>DCT is deontological, absolutist and objective theory. Commands must be obeyed without qualification. This can lead to intolerance and hatred eg against homosexuals or the divorced.</p>	