Two recent metaphysical divine command theories of ethics ROBERT WESTMORELAND Department of Philosophy. The UniversiO' of Mississippi The past quarter-century has seen a resurgence of interest in a topic suppos- edly laid to rest by Kant if not by Socrates: divine command theories of ethics.

General form[edit] Various forms of divine command theory have been presented by philosophers including William of Ockham , St Augustine , Duns Scotus , and John Calvin. The theory generally teaches that moral truth does not exist independently of God and that morality is determined by divine commands. It can be a plausible theory to Christians because the traditional conception of God as the creator of the universe supports the idea that he created moral truths. The theory is supported by the Christian view that God is all-powerful because this implies that God creates moral truths, rather than moral truths existing independently of him, which seems inconsistent with his omnipotence. He argued that to achieve this happiness, humans must love objects that are worthy of human love in the correct manner; this requires humans to love God, which then allows them to correctly love that which is worthy of being loved. However, unlike Plato, he believed that achieving a well-ordered soul had a higher purpose: His view of morality was thus heteronomous, as he believed in deference to a higher authority God , rather than acting autonomously. The last seven of the Ten Commandments do not belong to the natural law in the strictest sense. Scotus does note, however that the last seven commandments "are highly consonant with [the natural law], though they do not follow necessarily from first practical principles that are known in virtue of their terms and are necessarily known by any intellect [that understands their terms. And it is certain that all the precepts of the second table belong to the natural law in this second way, since their rectitude is highly consonant with first practical principles that are known necessarily". Hence, the last seven commandments do belong to the natural law, but not in the strictest sense, as they belong to the natural law by rectitude rather than by definition. Aquinas proposed a theory of natural law which asserted that something is moral if it works towards the purpose of human existence, and so human nature can determine what is moral. Clark and Poortenga argued that God created human nature and thus commanded a certain morality; hence he cannot arbitrarily change what is right or wrong for humans. Philosopher and theologian John E. Hare challenges this view, arguing that Kantian ethics should be seen as compatible with divine command theory. It is wrong to do X. In dealing with the criticism that a seemingly immoral act would be obligatory if God commanded it, he proposes that God does not command cruelty for its own sake. Adams does not propose that it would be logically impossible for God to command cruelty, rather that it would be unthinkable for him to do so because of his nature. It attempts to challenge the claim that an external standard of morality prevents God from being sovereign by making him the source of morality and his character the moral law. If God commanded what a believer perceived as wrong, the believer would not say it is right or wrong to disobey him; rather their concept of morality would break down. We have rights, dignity, freedom, and responsibility because God has designed us this way. Contemporary Discourses on Christian Apologetics [26] As an alternative to divine command theory, Linda Zagzebski has proposed divine motivation theory, which still fits into a monotheistic framework. He used the example of water not having an identical meaning to H2O to propose that "being commanded by God" does not have an identical meaning to "being obligatory". This was not an objection to the truth of divine command theory, but Wainwright believed it demonstrated that the theory should not be used to formulate assertions about the meaning of obligation. He suggested that, even if one accepts that being commanded by God and being morally right are the same, they may not be synonyms because they might be different in other possible worlds. He writes of the objection that a moral life should be sought because morality is valued, rather than to avoid punishment or receive a reward. This punishment and reward system of motivation could be seen as inadequate.

Chapter 2 : Theological Voluntarism (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy)

Divine Command Theories and Human Analogies. John L. Hammond - - Journal of Religious Ethics 14 (1) -

References and Further Reading 1. We may define metaethics as the study of the origin and meaning of ethical concepts. When compared to normative ethics and applied ethics, the field of metaethics is the least precisely defined area of moral philosophy. It covers issues from moral semantics to moral epistemology. Two issues, though, are prominent: Objectivism and Relativism Metaphysics is the study of the kinds of things that exist in the universe. Some things in the universe are made of physical stuff, such as rocks; and perhaps other things are nonphysical in nature, such as thoughts, spirits, and gods. The metaphysical component of metaethics involves discovering specifically whether moral values are eternal truths that exist in a spirit-like realm, or simply human conventions. There are two general directions that discussions of this topic take, one other-worldly and one this-worldly. Proponents of the other-worldly view typically hold that moral values are objective in the sense that they exist in a spirit-like realm beyond subjective human conventions. They also hold that they are absolute, or eternal, in that they never change, and also that they are universal insofar as they apply to all rational creatures around the world and throughout time. The most dramatic example of this view is Plato , who was inspired by the field of mathematics. Humans do not invent numbers, and humans cannot alter them. Plato explained the eternal character of mathematics by stating that they are abstract entities that exist in a spirit-like realm. He noted that moral values also are absolute truths and thus are also abstract, spirit-like entities. In this sense, for Plato, moral values are spiritual objects. Medieval philosophers commonly grouped all moral principles together under the heading of "eternal law" which were also frequently seen as spirit-like objects. In either case, though, they exist in a spirit-like realm. Sometimes called voluntarism or divine command theory , this view was inspired by the notion of an all-powerful God who is in control of everything. God simply wills things, and they become reality. He wills the physical world into existence, he wills human life into existence and, similarly, he wills all moral values into existence. God informs humans of these commands by implanting us with moral intuitions or revealing these commands in scripture. The second and more this-worldly approach to the metaphysical status of morality follows in the skeptical philosophical tradition, such as that articulated by Greek philosopher Sextus Empiricus, and denies the objective status of moral values. Technically, skeptics did not reject moral values themselves, but only denied that values exist as spirit-like objects, or as divine commands in the mind of God. Moral values, they argued, are strictly human inventions, a position that has since been called moral relativism. There are two distinct forms of moral relativism. The first is individual relativism, which holds that individual people create their own moral standards. Friedrich Nietzsche, for example, argued that the superhuman creates his or her morality distinct from and in reaction to the slave-like value system of the masses. In addition to espousing skepticism and relativism, this-worldly approaches to the metaphysical status of morality deny the absolute and universal nature of morality and hold instead that moral values in fact change from society to society throughout time and throughout the world. They frequently attempt to defend their position by citing examples of values that differ dramatically from one culture to another, such as attitudes about polygamy, homosexuality and human sacrifice. Psychological Issues in Metaethics A second area of metaethics involves the psychological basis of our moral judgments and conduct, particularly understanding what motivates us to be moral. We might explore this subject by asking the simple question, "Why be moral? Some answers to the question "Why be moral? Egoism and Altruism One important area of moral psychology concerns the inherent selfishness of humans. Even if an action seems selfless, such as donating to charity, there are still selfish causes for this, such as experiencing power over other people. This view is called psychological egoism and maintains that self-oriented interests ultimately motivate all human actions. Closely related to psychological egoism is a view called psychological hedonism which is the view that pleasure is the specific driving force behind all of our actions. However, Butler argued that we also have an inherent psychological capacity to show benevolence to others. This view is called psychological altruism and maintains that at least some of our actions are motivated by instinctive benevolence. Emotion and Reason A second area of moral psychology involves a dispute

concerning the role of reason in motivating moral actions. If, for example, I make the statement "abortion is morally wrong," am I making a rational assessment or only expressing my feelings? On the one side of the dispute, 18th century British philosopher David Hume argued that moral assessments involve our emotions, and not our reason. We can amass all the reasons we want, but that alone will not constitute a moral assessment. We need a distinctly emotional reaction in order to make a moral pronouncement. Ayer, similarly denied that moral assessments are factual descriptions. For example, although the statement "it is good to donate to charity" may on the surface look as though it is a factual description about charity, it is not. Instead, a moral utterance like this involves two things. First, I the speaker I am expressing my personal feelings of approval about charitable donations and I am in essence saying "Hooray for charity! Second, I the speaker am trying to get you to donate to charity and am essentially giving the command, "Donate to charity! Although emotional factors often do influence our conduct, he argued, we should nevertheless resist that kind of sway. Instead, true moral action is motivated only by reason when it is free from emotions and desires. A recent rationalist approach, offered by Kurt Baier , was proposed in direct opposition to the emotivist and prescriptivist theories of Ayer and others. Baier focuses more broadly on the reasoning and argumentation process that takes place when making moral choices. All of our moral choices are, or at least can be, backed by some reason or justification. According to Baier, then, proper moral decision making involves giving the best reasons in support of one course of action versus another. Male and Female Morality A third area of moral psychology focuses on whether there is a distinctly female approach to ethics that is grounded in the psychological differences between men and women. Discussions of this issue focus on two claims: According to many feminist philosophers, traditional morality is male-centered since it is modeled after practices that have been traditionally male-dominated, such as acquiring property, engaging in business contracts, and governing societies. The rigid systems of rules required for trade and government were then taken as models for the creation of equally rigid systems of moral rules, such as lists of rights and duties. Women, by contrast, have traditionally had a nurturing role by raising children and overseeing domestic life. These tasks require less rule following, and more spontaneous and creative action. On this model, the agent becomes part of the situation and acts caringly within that context. This stands in contrast with male-modeled morality where the agent is a mechanical actor who performs his required duty, but can remain distanced from and unaffected by the situation. A care-based approach to morality, as it is sometimes called, is offered by feminist ethicists as either a replacement for or a supplement to traditional male-modeled moral systems. Normative Ethics Normative ethics involves arriving at moral standards that regulate right and wrong conduct. In a sense, it is a search for an ideal litmus test of proper behavior. The Golden Rule is a classic example of a normative principle: We should do to others what we would want others to do to us. Since I do not want my neighbor to steal my car, then it is wrong for me to steal her car. Since I would want people to feed me if I was starving, then I should help feed starving people. Using this same reasoning, I can theoretically determine whether any possible action is right or wrong. So, based on the Golden Rule, it would also be wrong for me to lie to, harass, victimize, assault, or kill others. The Golden Rule is an example of a normative theory that establishes a single principle against which we judge all actions. Other normative theories focus on a set of foundational principles, or a set of good character traits. The key assumption in normative ethics is that there is only one ultimate criterion of moral conduct, whether it is a single rule or a set of principles. Three strategies will be noted here: Virtue ethics , however, places less emphasis on learning rules, and instead stresses the importance of developing good habits of character, such as benevolence see moral character. Historically, virtue theory is one of the oldest normative traditions in Western philosophy, having its roots in ancient Greek civilization. Plato emphasized four virtues in particular, which were later called cardinal virtues: Other important virtues are fortitude, generosity, self-respect, good temper, and sincerity. In addition to advocating good habits of character, virtue theorists hold that we should avoid acquiring bad character traits, or vices, such as cowardice, insensibility, injustice, and vanity. Adults, therefore, are responsible for instilling virtues in the young. Aristotle argued that virtues are good habits that we acquire, which regulate our emotions. For example, in response to my natural feelings of fear, I should develop the virtue of courage which allows me to be firm when facing danger. Analyzing 11 specific virtues, Aristotle argued that most virtues fall at a mean between

more extreme character traits. With courage, for example, if I do not have enough courage, I develop the disposition of cowardice, which is a vice. If I have too much courage I develop the disposition of rashness which is also a vice. According to Aristotle, it is not an easy task to find the perfect mean between extreme character traits. In fact, we need assistance from our reason to do this. After Aristotle, medieval theologians supplemented Greek lists of virtues with three Christian ones, or theological virtues: Interest in virtue theory continued through the middle ages and declined in the 19th century with the rise of alternative moral theories below. In the mid 20th century virtue theory received special attention from philosophers who believed that more recent ethical theories were misguided for focusing too heavily on rules and actions, rather than on virtuous character traits. Alasdaire MacIntyre defended the central role of virtues in moral theory and argued that virtues are grounded in and emerge from within social traditions. Duty Theories Many of us feel that there are clear obligations we have as human beings, such as to care for our children, and to not commit murder. Duty theories base morality on specific, foundational principles of obligation. These theories are sometimes called deontological, from the Greek word deon, or duty, in view of the foundational nature of our duty or obligation. They are also sometimes called nonconsequentialist since these principles are obligatory, irrespective of the consequences that might follow from our actions. For example, it is wrong to not care for our children even if it results in some great benefit, such as financial savings. There are four central duty theories.

Chapter 3 : Divine Command Theory | Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy

Divine command theory (also known as theological voluntarism) is a meta-ethical theory which proposes that an action's status as morally good is equivalent to whether it is commanded by God.

Divine Command Theory The divine command theory DCT of ethics holds that an act is either moral or immoral solely because God either commands us to do it or prohibits us from doing it, respectively. On DCT the only thing that makes an act morally wrong is that God prohibits doing it, and all that it means to say that torture is wrong is that God prohibits torture. Substituting "moral wrongness" for "holiness" raises the dilemma: Is torture wrong because God prohibits it, or does God prohibit torture because it is already wrong? While DCT takes the the first route, Euthyphro takes the last one: If a good God prohibits torture he does so because torture is intrinsicly wrong, not merely because he declares torture to be wrong by fiat. But if torture is intrinsicly wrong, then it is wrong regardless of whether or not God exists. DCT is thus a kind of moral relativism: The same point holds for moral propositions like "inflicting unnecessary suffering solely for fun is wrong. Whatever God commands becomes the standard of moral rightness, and there are no moral values external to God to constrain what he would or would not command. So if God commanded one person to rape another, DCT entails that that rape would be moral because "doing the right thing" is logically equivalent to "doing what God commands. The first option produces problems parallel to those for DCT. In addition to the articles below, see also related Debates , Reviews , and Links. To purchase related reading, go to the Secular Web Book Store. Theists complain that the world is in moral decay because of "moral relativism," and lament that only a divine power--i. However, although Martin does well in exposing some common mistakes of theistic moral arguments, he is less convincing when he argues for objective morality in a godless world. In this paper Ryan Stringer provides several examples of such absurdities and defends them against potential objections. Some of the moral absurdities considered include: Review of Finite and Infinite Goods by Stephen Sullivan In Finite and Infinite Goods Adams gives his defense of a modified divine command theory its fullest elaboration, defending it against a number of standard objections. This material is essential reading for anyone interested in whether morality does or could depend on religion. Moreover, Adams thoughtfully argues for the need for several forms of moral faith, including faith that morality "is not a massive socially induced delusion. Nevertheless, Sullivan concludes that intelligent nonbelievers and believers can only benefit from carefully and critically working their way through this important book. Wainwright provides a thorough, thoughtful, and generally rigorous and fair-minded discussion of the relationship between religion and morality. On the other hand, if what is right is right because God commands it, then there are no moral constraints on what God commands, rendering morality completely arbitrary: This modernized Euthyphro dilemma can be converted into an argument against the existence of the God of traditional monotheism, a sovereign creator.

Chapter 4 : Divine command theory - Wikipedia

Divine Command Theories (DCTs) comes in several different forms but at their core all of these theories claims that certain moral statuses (most typically the status of being obligatory) exist in virtue of the fact that God has commanded them to exist.

Metaethical and normative theological voluntarism To be a theological voluntarist is to hold that entities of some kind have at least some of their moral statuses in virtue of certain acts of divine will. But some instances of this view are metaethical theses; some instances of it are normative theses. Consider, for example, theological voluntarism about the status of acts as obligatory or non-obligatory. One might hold that there is a single supreme obligation, the obligation to obey God. This is a common version of divine command theory, according to which all of the more workaday obligations that we are under not to steal from each other, not to murder each other, to help each other out when it would not be inconvenient, etc. The view just described is a version of normative theological voluntarism. It is a normative view because it asserts that some normative state of affairs obtainsâ€"namely, the normative state of affairs its being obligatory to obey God. Metaethical theological voluntarist views, by contrast, do not assert the obtaining of any normative state of affairs. It is possible for one to be a metaethical theological voluntarist and to hold that no normative states of affairs obtain. Rather, metaethical theological voluntarists aim to say something interesting and informative about moral concepts, properties, or states of affairs; and they want to say something interesting and informative about them by connecting them to acts of the divine will. Metaethical theological voluntarists might claim that e. But note that none of these views asserts that there are any obligations. One can affirm normative theological voluntarism or metaethical theological voluntarism while failing to affirm theism; atheists and agnostics can be theological voluntarists of either stripe. With respect to normative theological voluntarism: One could believe that that there are no lieutenants while believing that privates ought to obey their lieutenants. With respect to metaethical theological voluntarism: One can affirm metaethical theological voluntarism while being a moral skeptic; one cannot affirm normative theological voluntarism while being a moral skeptic. A metaethical theological voluntarist might claim that no normative state of affairs could be made to obtain without certain acts of divine will, but because there is no God, or because there is a God that has not performed the requisite acts of will, no normative states of affairs obtain. A normative theological voluntarist cannot, however, be a moral skeptic. Because the normative theological voluntarist is committed to the obtaining of at least one normative state of affairsâ€"for example, its being obligatory to obey Godâ€"the conjunction of moral skepticism and normative theological voluntarism is not a coherent combination of views. My concern in the rest of this article will be with the metaethical version of theological voluntarism; any further references to theological voluntarism are, unless otherwise noted, to the metaethical version of the position. Theological voluntarism thus understood is consistent either with the affirmation or with the denial of theism and moral skepticism. Taking a negative stand on theism or a positive stand on moral skepticism should not prevent one from taking seriously theological voluntarism as a philosophical position. This is an important point, because it is often thought that theological voluntarism is only for theists, or only for moral nonskeptics. While it is true that some of the arguments for theological voluntarism take theism, or the existence of moral obligations, as premises, not all of them do. Metaethical theological voluntarism Metaethics is concerned with the formulation of interesting and informative accounts of normative concepts, properties, and states of affairs; and a metaethics that is a version of theological voluntarism will formulate such accounts in terms of some acts of divine will. This statement of the position is highly abstract, but it cannot be made less abstract without making difficult choices among rival formulations of the view. The considerations to be offered in favor of theological voluntarism are, at this level, similarly abstract. I will discuss three types of consideration: Historical considerations in favor of theological voluntarism Some of the considerations in favor of metaethical theological voluntarism are historical. Both theists and nontheists have been impressed by the extent to which at least some moral concepts developed in tandem with theological concepts, and it may therefore be the case that there could be no adequate explication of some moral concepts

without appeal to theological ones. On this view, it is not merely historical accident that at least some moral concepts had their origin in contexts of theistic belief and practice; rather, these concepts have their origin essentially in such contexts, and become distorted and unintelligible when exported from those contexts see, for example, Anscombe Theological considerations in favor of theological voluntarism Some of the considerations in favor of theological voluntarism have their source in matters regarding the divine nature. Several such arguments are summarized in Idziak pp. Some appeal to omnipotence: Even if individually insufficient as justifications for adopting theological voluntarism, collectively they may suggest some desiderata for a moral view: It seems that any moral theory that met these desiderata would count as a version of theological voluntarism. Metaethical considerations in favor of theological voluntarism A third set of considerations in favor of theological voluntarism has its source in metaethics proper, in the attempt to provide adequate philosophical accounts of the various formal features exhibited by moral concepts, properties, and states of affairs. One might claim, that is, that theological voluntarism makes the best sense of the formal features of morality that both theists and nontheists acknowledge. Consider first the normativity of morals. Both theists and nontheists have been impressed by the weirdness of normativity, with its very otherness, and have thought that whatever we say about normativity, it will have to be a story not about natural properties but nonnatural ones cf. Moore , section John Mackie, an atheist, and George Mavrodes, a theist, have both drawn from this the same moral: As Robert Adams has suggested, given the serious difficulties present in understanding moral properties as natural properties, it is worthwhile taking seriously the hypothesis that morality is not just a nonnatural matter but a supernatural one Adams , p. For the standard objections against understanding normativity as a nonnatural property concern our inability to say anything further about that nonnatural property itself and about our ability to grasp that property see, e. Consider next the impartiality of morals. The domain of the moral, unlike the domain of value generally, is governed by the requirements of impartiality. But, to remark on the perfectly obvious, the Universe does not have a point of view. Various writers have employed fictions to try to provide some sense to this idea: Consider next the overridingness of morals. The domain of the moral, it is commonly thought, consists in a range of values that can demand absolute allegiance, in the sense that it is never reasonable to act contrary to what those values finally require. One deep difficulty with this view, formulated in a number of ways but perhaps most memorably by Sidgwick , pp. But if the domain of the moral is to be understood in terms of the will of a being who can make it possible that, or even ensure that, the balance of reasons is always in favor of acting in accordance with the moral demand, then the overridingness of morals becomes far easier to explain. Consider next the content of morals. There is a strong case to be made that moral judgments cannot have just any content: Theological voluntarism has a ready explanation for the content of morals being what it is: So there are some general reasons to think theological voluntarism promising. The reasons are stronger yet when one is proceeding from theistic starting points. This is not trivial, since a number of theistic philosophers reject theological voluntarism. But these reasons, while suggestive, are rather generic: So there are at least three choices that have to be made. We need to say something about what are the relevant acts of divine will. And we need to say something about what the dependence relation is supposed to be. These are not independent questions, of course. A metaethical view can be more or less comprehensive, aiming to cover more or fewer evaluative statuses. A metaethical view might claim to provide an account of all evaluative notions, or of all normative notions, or of all moral notions, or or some set of moral notions. Roughly, and taking the notion of an evaluative property as fundamental: No one claims that theological voluntarism provides an account of all evaluative notions. The real contenders are the latter three. Adams, for example, understands some notions of goodness in terms of likeness to God, an understanding that is unquestionably theocentric though not voluntaristic Adams , pp. Most of the current debate over the evaluative statuses to be explained by theological voluntarism, then, concerns whether the entire set or only some proper subset of moral statuses is to be understood in both theological and voluntaristic terms. But Adams rejects this view, and Quinn, following Adams and Alston , now rejects it as well. Call their view the restricted moral view; call the view that all moral statuses are to be understood in voluntarist terms the unrestricted moral view. The restricted moral view has been defended with more and less impressive arguments. But these considerations are not,

after all, entirely persuasive. For one might well explain the notion that God is good and account for the intelligibility of divine commands by appeal to normative notions that are nonmoral. See Section 3 below for further discussion of these arguments. More plausible are arguments that suggest that there is something in particular about obligation that makes it fit for a theological voluntarist explanation, some feature that is not shared with notions like moral virtue and moral good. Adams suggests, with some plausibility, that the notion of obligation is ineliminably social, that it must involve a relationship between persons, a relationship in which a demand is made Adams b, p. This feature of obligation makes it different from notions of goodness and virtue, which do not seem to have this essentially social element. That obligation is special in this way does not, of course, show that notions of moral virtue and moral goodness do not also need to be treated in a theological voluntarist way. It could be that even if obligation most obviously requires this treatment, the points made earlier about the promise of theological voluntarism also extend to other moral notions, even if in a less pressing way. There are at present no decisive reasons for the theological voluntarist to adhere to either the restricted or the unrestricted moral view. But theological voluntarists want to say that at least that the properties in the obligation family are to be accounted for in terms of this view. In the remainder of this article, it will be assumed that theological voluntarism is about properties in the obligation family, though we will occasionally consider how the view could be extended to other moral properties as well. Assume, then, that theological voluntarism is an account of obligation-type properties. A second issue concerning the proper formulation of the view concerns the relevant act of divine will. Is the requisite act of divine will to be understood as an act of commanding, or instead as some mental act like choosing, intending, preferring, or wishing? And if one holds that the act of the divine will is a mental act, should the mental act to which the theological voluntarist appeals in order to account for obligation be one whose object is the action that is made obligatory, or one whose object is the state of affairs that the action is obligatory? We have, to simplify matters, three options: One might think that the central issue here would be to decide between the speech-act view 1 and the mental acts views 2 and 3 ; it might be thought to be less important, an issue of intramural interest only, to decide between 2 and 3. But this is not right. The important debate is between 1 and 2. For 3 is, understood in one way, no competitor with either 1 or 2 ; and understood differently, it has little argumentative support. The dispute between 1 and 2 There is an ongoing debate whether 1 or 2 is the better formulation of theological voluntarism about obligation. There are initially plausible points on both sides of the issue. In favor of 1 , one might appeal to the centrality of the image of God as commander in the Abramic faiths. With only these initial points, there can be no resolution, and so defenders of these two formulations of theological voluntarism have sought other argumentative routes. One might try to reduce 2 to absurdity.

Divine Command Theory. Philosophers both past and present have sought to defend theories of ethics that are grounded in a theistic framework. Roughly, Divine Command Theory is the view that morality is somehow dependent upon God, and that moral obligation consists in obedience to God's commands.

What is Divine Command Theory? Thus, to say that it is good to love our neighbors is semantically equivalent to saying God commands us to love our neighbors. Similarly, it is evil to commit murder because God forbids murder. Now, right away someone can object to Divine Command Theory on the grounds that good and evil become arbitrary to the whim of God. This is the approach that Plato takes in his dialogue Euthyphro. The so-called Euthyphro Dilemma can be stated thus: However, saying that God commands something because it is morally good threatens the sovereignty and independence of God. If an external principle, in this case the objective ground of morality, is outside of God, then God is obligated to adhere to this standard, and thus He is not sovereign. Thus, we are caught on the horns of a dilemma. Neither alternative is palatable to the Christian worldview. God is certainly not arbitrary in His moral actions, nor is God subject to some external standard of morality that governs His decisions. In the former case, we can say that God is not good, and in the latter we can say that God is not God. Blessed is the man who takes refuge in him Psalm Even with this definition of the Divine Command Theory, there are two objections that can be anticipated. Therefore, because God is immutable Malachi 3: Second, what about the times when God commands the Israelites to slaughter their enemies down to the very last man, woman and child? God is good—immutably good—but He is also holy, righteous, and just. God is a God who must punish sin and wickedness. The Canaanites were wicked and rebellious and under the just condemnation of God for their sin. We know that the wages of sin is death Romans 6: Therefore, God commands certain actions as good and therefore to be done and forbids certain other actions as evil and therefore not to be done. What is good is not good simply because God commands it. It is good because it is reflective of His divine nature.

Divine Command Theory (DCT) is the Christian/theistic ethical system whereby whatever God commands is rendered morally good and right on account of God commanding it.

In that case, there is a morality higher than god, which even he must follow. C Pass the Ketchup. This is the only possible response for a true believer. And if they answer this, then run. Luke Breuer Sadly, this is not a hypothetical scenario; there is archaeological evidence that the Canaanites practiced child sacrifice. To some extent, the question seems to be what God, or at least God-concept, one wishes to follow. The following was not in any way academic: And if it is evil in your eyes to serve the LORD, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your fathers served in the region beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD. Perhaps a secular way to phrase this is: In After Virtue, Alasdair MacIntyre argues that without a unifying, communal telos, morality is simply a Nietzschean imposition of the will, of the few on the many. So, will you serve a god who demands that children be sacrificed? Sadly, the Israelites did end up worshipping that god. I think it is extremely likely that some people in that geographical area actually did sacrifice people to Gods because else it would make no sense to come up with laws against it this however implies not necessarily the Canaanites, it could also mean that the hebrews used to do it in pre-OT times or early-OT times before they came up with laws against it. Christians bring this up all the time as a defense when skeptics point to the atrocities described in the OT, but this is rarely backed up by citations. I remember a recent case where a Christian provided a citation from an alleged historian, this historian however turned out to have no actual credentials in history or acheaoogy he was a theologian and he simply lied about the archaeological studies he cited, there was one study that implied child sacrifice going on and a later study that examined the same site and concluded that it was much more likely that children were buried at this site, not sacrificed. So even in theory DCT fails to justify why it was wrong for the Canaanites to permit child sacrifice â€" they had no command from god forbidding it. Jonathan MS Pearce Yes, one would have to ad hoc argue that that command was relevant only to those people at that time. Which is why morality is a should be secular. The Thinker Even WLC argues that OT morality was only for the ancient Israelites at that time and place and was not intended to be a universal code of ethics for all people. Even he knows to pick his battles, which rather shows the fragility of his position. He does claim the first thing to go would be the truth of such OT claims, without actually saying he would or does do this, so to remain onside with his literalist followers. He recommends minimalism, but still argues for inerrancy. Luke Breuer Not all Christians hold to this. This advances the state of the conversation, and allows for nucleation points for deeper discussion and investigation. Oh, I doubt WLC actually agrees with your analysis. I was making a generalized statement about the implications for DCT that most Christians believe and drawing out the logical conclusions of the ethical theory that religions like Christianity requires. So the point I was making was to show how stupid DCT is when you consider its logical conclusion. Excellent use of the fallacy tu quoque. For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and with the measure you use it will be measured to you. For they preach, but do not practice. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted. For if anyone thinks he is something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself. But let each one test his own work, and then his reason to boast will be in himself alone and not in his neighbor. For each will have to bear his own load. So perhaps we both have logs in our eyes. For you to claim that you have no such problem, no log in your eye, is just fallacious. As long as you have a log, A applies: See the mind projection fallacy and psychological projection. The truth of Aâ€"at least important partsâ€"has been established, scientifically. Next, you routinely do B. You tell me what to do differently, but you do not lift a finger to help me. It is extremely hard for someone to learn from B-technique. An articulation on A can be found in C. What is this law? Think of the apprentice model, whereby the teacher helps the student along, showing him excellent examples and helping the student get better and better at reproducing those examples. You, The Binary Thinker, do not do this. This is the B-protocol, not the C-protocol. The B-protocol is a shitty way to treat people. The C-protocol is so much better that the difference is night and day. If all you can bring yourself to

do is B, then go do it to someone else. The Thinker This unfortunately does nothing to refute my argument that you quoted me saying above. Try criticizing that for once, and without crying a river. What evidence are you basing this off of? I actually have no idea what the traditional view is, or even if there is one traditional view. Umm, your favorite book, the Bible. You know, the book that you hold tightly in your arms every night when you go to sleep. Christianity, along with all the other Abrahamic religions, is based on DCT. Offer me an alternative if you can. Luke Breuer Umm, your favorite book, the Bible. Oh, so the fact that you see DCT as the only plausible model for biblical morality means that it is the sole, mainstream, traditional Christian view? And this is even assuming that there is one, single meta-ethical framework undergirding all of the library that is the Bible, which is a big question in and of itself. You sound like a fundamentalist in how you interpret the Bible. You know that no single theology accurately describes it, right? As I pointed out , in your original comment you made no such indication, that you were talking about a specific subset of Christianity. Burden of proof is on you to show that DCT is the single, mainstream, traditional view of morality in the Bible, not on me. Support your positive claims or stop making them. You seem to take issues with the things that every mainstream Christians has no problem with. And then you flat out refuse to offer an alternative view. I once thought that you might have had a more sophisticated take on Christianity, but now it turns out I was wrong. If I understand it correctly, it goes like this, and has a very ID unfalsifiable feel: Just like guided vs unguided evolution with IDers, Luke has us discovering a guided morality in the way God intended. Is that about right, Luke? I think I agree with this! You might like my later comment , where I argue that DCT is for children. That seems a little implausible, no? Given my observations of society today, with all the available collected wisdom see As We May Think , especially the last two paragraphs , it is not the slightest bit implausible. I will note that there are hints of non-DCT well before the prophets. Deut 5 can be seen as God resigning himself to the fact that the general populace is not yet read for non-DCT. Perhaps I take a darker view of human nature than you? Can you fully account for i Stanford prison experiment; ii Milgram experiment; iii The Third Wave, in your model of humans? Take 1 John 3: Legalism is a degenerate form of not-lawlessness. The Pharisees had degenerated into legalism, as did Israel many times in the OT. The book of Amos includes fantastic mockery and satire on this very point. But there is a way to read the OT which is not legalist. This is the solution to the Charybdis of lawlessness and Scylla of legalism. We think that finite systems of law can completely capture 1 and 2 ; I hold this to be false. However, there are many ways for this to fail, as we all know very well. It is easy to get stuck at local maxima, unable to jump out of those into higher and higher maxima. I think our worldviews explain that, prima facie, fairly similarly, given your morality thesis. Given mine is absent of a creator god, the notion that we are as close to stark darkness as we seem to be is of no surprise, given the viciousness of the animal kingdom of which we are a part. When you see chimps ripping other chimps and monkeys to bits over power, resources and in group out group psychology, it all makes sense. With your extra entity, you have to contrive a whole host of extra reasons why that is 1 allowed and 2 designed into the system. If God turned up and face to face told me that slavery and exploitation of others was properly bad, I would understand that. You know, face to face. Luke Breuer With your extra entity, you have to contrive a whole host of extra reasons why that is 1 allowed and 2 designed into the system. For example, do you mean in order to have a complete explanation, or merely a viable explanation? The Greeks lived after much of OT history, and they were relatively rare.

Chapter 7 : What is Divine Command Theory?

The alternative to Divine Command Theory is the assertion that the basis for morality lies outside of God, rather than at the mercy of His whim. This is the approach that Plato takes in his dialogue Euthyphro.

Meta-ethical questions[edit] According to Richard Garner and Bernard Rosen, [1] there are three kinds of meta-ethical problems, or three general questions: What is the meaning of moral terms or judgments? The second category includes questions of whether moral judgments are universal or relative , of one kind or many kinds , etc. Questions of the third kind ask, for example, how we can know if something is right or wrong, if at all. Garner and Rosen say that answers to the three basic questions "are not unrelated, and sometimes an answer to one will strongly suggest, or perhaps even entail, an answer to another. An answer to any of the three example questions above would not itself be a normative ethical statement. Semantic theories[edit] These theories mainly put forward a position on the first of the three questions above, "What is the meaning of moral terms or judgments? Cognitivist theories hold that evaluative moral sentences express propositions that is, they are "truth apt" or "truth bearers", capable of being true or false , as opposed to non-cognitivism. Most forms of cognitivism hold that some such propositions are true, as opposed to error theory , which asserts that all are erroneous. Meta-ethical theories are commonly categorized as either a form of realism or as one of three forms of " anti-realism " regarding moral facts: Realism comes in two main varieties: Ethical naturalism holds that there are objective moral properties and that these properties are reducible or stand in some metaphysical relation such as supervenience to entirely non-ethical properties. Most ethical naturalists hold that we have empirical knowledge of moral truths. Ethical naturalism was implicitly assumed by many modern ethical theorists, particularly utilitarians. Ethical non-naturalism , as put forward by G. Ethical subjectivism is one form of moral anti-realism. Most forms of ethical subjectivism are relativist , but there are notable forms that are universalist: Ideal observer theory holds that what is right is determined by the attitudes that a hypothetical ideal observer would have. An ideal observer is usually characterized as a being who is perfectly rational, imaginative, and informed, among other things. Though a subjectivist theory due to its reference to a particular albeit hypothetical subject, Ideal Observer Theory still purports to provide universal answers to moral questions. Divine command theory holds that for a thing to be right is for a unique being, God, to approve of it, and that what is right for non-God beings is obedience to the divine will. This view was criticized by Plato in the Euthyphro see the Euthyphro problem but retains some modern defenders Robert Adams , Philip Quinn, and others. Like ideal observer theory, divine command theory purports to be universalist despite its subjectivism. Error theory , another form of moral anti-realism, holds that although ethical claims do express propositions, all such propositions are false. Thus, both the statement "Murder is morally wrong" and the statement "Murder is morally permissible" are false, according to error theory. Mackie is probably the best-known proponent of this view. Since error theory denies that there are moral truths, error theory entails moral nihilism and, thus, moral skepticism ; however, neither moral nihilism nor moral skepticism conversely entail error theory. Non-cognitivist theories hold that ethical sentences are neither true nor false because they do not express genuine propositions. Non-cognitivism is another form of moral anti-realism. Most forms of non-cognitivism are also forms of expressivism , however some such as Mark Timmons and Terrence Horgan distinguish the two and allow the possibility of cognitivist forms of expressivism. Emotivism , defended by A. Ayer and Charles Stevenson , holds that ethical sentences serve merely to express emotions. Ayer argues that ethical sentences are expressions of approval or disapproval, not assertions. So "Killing is wrong" means something like "Boo on killing! Quasi-realism , defended by Simon Blackburn , holds that ethical statements behave linguistically like factual claims and can be appropriately called "true" or "false", even though there are no ethical facts for them to correspond to. Projectivism and moral fictionalism are related theories. Universal prescriptivism , defended by R. Hare , holds that moral statements function like universalized imperative sentences. Centralism and non-centralism[edit] Yet another way of categorizing meta-ethical theories is to distinguish between centralist and non-centralist theories. The debate between centralism and non-centralism revolves around the relationship between the so-called "thin"

and "thick" concepts of morality. Thin moral concepts are those such as good, bad, right, and wrong; thick moral concepts are those such as courageous, inequitable, just, or dishonest. That is, centralists argue that one must understand words like "right" and "ought" before understanding words like "just" and "unkind. Allan Gibbard , R. Moral universalism or universal morality is the meta-ethical position that some system of ethics, or a universal ethic , applies universally, that is to all people regardless of culture , race , sex , religion , nationality , sexuality , or other distinguishing feature. The source or justification of this system may be thought to be, for instance, human nature , shared vulnerability to suffering, the demands of universal reason , what is common among existing moral codes, or the common mandates of religion although it can be argued that the latter is not in fact moral universalism because it may distinguish between Gods and mortals. Moral universalism is the opposing position to various forms of moral relativism. Universalist theories are generally forms of moral realism , though exceptions exists, such as the subjectivist ideal observer and divine command theories, and the non-cognitivist universal prescriptivism of R. Value monism is the common form of universalism, which holds that all goods are commensurable on a single value scale. Value pluralism contends that there are two or more genuine scales of value, knowable as such, yet incommensurable, so that any prioritization of these values is either non-cognitive or subjective. A value pluralist might, for example, contend that both a life as a nun and a life as a mother realize genuine values in a universalist sense , yet they are incompatible nuns may not have children , and there is no purely rational way to measure which is preferable. A notable proponent of this view is Isaiah Berlin. Moral relativism maintains that all moral judgments have their origins either in societal or in individual standards, and that no single objective standard exists by which one can assess the truth of a moral proposition. Meta-ethical relativists, in general, believe that the descriptive properties of terms such as "good", "bad", "right", and "wrong" do not stand subject to universal truth conditions, but only to societal convention and personal preference. Given the same set of verifiable facts, some societies or individuals will have a fundamental disagreement about what one ought to do based on societal or individual norms , and one cannot adjudicate these using some independent standard of evaluation. The latter standard will always be societal or personal and not universal, unlike, for example, the scientific standards for assessing temperature or for determining mathematical truths. Some philosophers maintain that moral relativism entails non-cognitivism. Some but not all relativist theories are forms of moral subjectivism , although not all subjectivist theories are relativistic. Moral nihilism , also known as ethical nihilism, is the meta-ethical view that nothing has intrinsic moral value. For example, a moral nihilist would say that killing someone, for whatever reason, is intrinsically neither morally right nor morally wrong. Moral nihilism must be distinguished from moral relativism , which does allow for moral statements to be intrinsically true or false in a non-universal sense, but does not assign any static truth-values to moral statements. Insofar as only true statements can be known, moral nihilists are moral skeptics. Most forms of moral nihilism are non-cognitivist and vice versa, though there are notable exceptions such as universal prescriptivism which is semantically non-cognitive but substantially universal. Justification theories[edit] These are theories that attempt to answer questions like, "How may moral judgments be supported or defended? Most moral epistemologies posit that moral knowledge is somehow possible, as opposed to moral skepticism. Amongst them, there are those who hold that moral knowledge is gained inferentially on the basis of some sort of non-moral epistemic process, as opposed to ethical intuitionism. Empiricism is the doctrine that knowledge is gained primarily through observation and experience. Meta-ethical theories that imply an empirical epistemology include ethical naturalism , which holds moral facts to be reducible to non-moral facts and thus knowable in the same ways; and most common forms of ethical subjectivism , which hold that moral facts reduce to facts about individual opinions or cultural conventions and thus are knowable by observation of those conventions. There are exceptions within subjectivism however, such as ideal observer theory , which implies that moral facts may be known through a rational process, and individualist ethical subjectivism , which holds that moral facts are merely personal opinions and so may be known only through introspection. Empirical arguments for ethics run into the is-ought problem, which asserts that the way the world is cannot alone instruct people how they ought to act. Moral rationalism , also called ethical rationalism, is the view according to which moral truths or at least general moral principles are knowable a priori , by reason alone.

Some prominent figures in the history of philosophy who have defended moral rationalism are Plato and Immanuel Kant. Perhaps the most prominent figures in the history of philosophy who have rejected moral rationalism are David Hume and Friedrich Nietzsche. Recent philosophers who defended moral rationalism include R. A moral rationalist may adhere to any number of different semantic theories as well; moral realism is compatible with rationalism, and the subjectivist ideal observer theory and noncognitivist universal prescriptivism both entail it. Ethical intuitionism , on the other hand, is the view according to which some moral truths can be known without inference. That is, the view is at its core a foundationalism about moral beliefs. Such an epistemological view implies that there are moral beliefs with propositional contents; so it implies cognitivism. Ethical intuitionism commonly suggests moral realism , the view that there are objective facts of morality and, to be more specific, ethical non-naturalism , the view that these evaluative facts cannot be reduced to natural fact. However, neither moral realism nor ethical non-naturalism are essential to the view; most ethical intuitionists simply happen to hold those views as well. Ethical intuitionism comes in both a "rationalist" variety, and a more "empiricist" variety known as moral sense theory. Moral skepticism is the class of meta-ethical theories all members of which entail that no one has any moral knowledge. Many moral skeptics also make the stronger, modal , claim that moral knowledge is impossible. Forms of moral skepticism include, but are not limited to, error theory and most but not all forms of non-cognitivism.

Chapter 8 : Philosophy - Robert B. Westmoreland

Divine Command Theory. The divine command theory (DCT) of ethics holds that an act is either moral or immoral solely because God either commands us to do it or prohibits us from doing it, respectively.

References and Further Reading 1. On a law conception of ethics, conformity with the virtues requires obeying the divine law. A divine law requires the existence of God, as the divine lawgiver. Since we have given up belief in God, we should also give up the moral understanding that rests on such belief, and engage in moral philosophy without using such terms. For Anscombe, this meant that we should abandon talk of morality as law, and instead focus on morality as virtue. Alan Donagan argues against these conclusions. First, he rejects her claim that we can only treat morality as a system of law if we also presuppose the existence of a divine lawgiver. Second, Donagan contends that neither must we abandon law-based conceptions of morality for an Aristotelian virtue ethic. Given this, if we assume that human reason is at least in principle adequate for directing our lives, then the substance of divine law that is relevant to human life can be appreciated with human reason, apart from any reference to a divine being. Moreover, according to Donagan, even if we conceive of morality as Aristotle did, namely, as a matter of virtue, it is quite natural to think that each virtue has as its counterpart some moral rule or precept. And if we can apprehend the relevant moral virtue via human reason, then we can also apprehend the relevant moral law by that same reason. Given the foregoing points raised by Anscombe and Donagan, a divine command theorist might opt for a conception of morality as virtue, as law, or both. Before looking at some possible advantages of Divine Command Theory, it will be helpful to clarify further the content of the view. Edward Wierenga points out that there are many ways to conceive of the connection between God and morality. A strong version of Divine Command Theory includes the claim that moral statements x is obligatory are defined in terms of theological statements x is commanded by God. At the other end of the spectrum is the view that the commands of God are coextensive with the demands of morality. Wierenga opts for a view that lies between these strong and weak versions of Divine Command Theory. In what follows, I will, following Wierenga, take Divine Command Theory to include the following claims: According to Kant, we must believe that God exists because the requirements of morality are too much for us to bear. We must believe that there is a God who will help us satisfy the demands of the moral law. With such a belief, we have the hope that we will be able to live moral lives. However, if there is a God and an afterlife where the righteous are rewarded with happiness and justice obtains, this problem goes away. That is, being moral does not guarantee happiness, so we must believe in a God who will reward the morally righteous with happiness. Kant does not employ the concept of moral faith as an argument for Divine Command Theory, but a contemporary advocate could argue along Kantian lines that these advantages do accrue to this view of morality. Another possible advantage of Divine Command Theory is that it provides an objective metaphysical foundation for morality. For those committed to the existence of objective moral truths, such truths seem to fit well within a theistic framework. That is, if the origin of the universe is a personal moral being, then the existence of objective moral truths are at home, so to speak, in the universe. By contrast, if the origin of the universe is non-moral, then the existence of such truths becomes philosophically perplexing, because it is unclear how moral properties can come into existence via non-moral origins. Given the metaphysical insight that ex nihilo, nihilo fit, the resulting claim is that out of the non-moral, nothing moral comes. Objective moral properties stick out due to a lack of naturalness of fit in an entirely naturalistic universe. This perspective assumes that objective moral properties exist, which is of course highly controversial. Not only does Divine Command Theory provide a metaphysical basis for morality, but according to many it also gives us a good answer to the question, why be moral? William Lane Craig argues that this is an advantage of a view of ethics that is grounded in God. On theism, we are held accountable for our actions by God. Those who do evil will be punished, and those who live morally upstanding lives will be vindicated and even rewarded. Good, in the end, triumphs over evil. Justice will win out. Moreover, on a theistic view of ethics, we have a reason to act in ways that run counter to our self-interest, because such actions of self-sacrifice have deep significance and merit within a theistic framework. On Divine Command

Theory it is therefore rational to sacrifice my own well-being for the well-being of my children, my friends, and even complete strangers, because God approves of and even commands such acts of self-sacrifice. An important objection to the foregoing points is that there is something inadequate about a punishment and reward orientation of moral motivation. That is, one might argue that if the motive for being moral on Divine Command Theory is to merely avoid punishment and perhaps gain eternal bliss, then this is less than ideal as an account of moral motivation, because it is a mark of moral immaturity. Should we not instead seek to live moral lives in community with others because we value them and desire their happiness? In response to this, advocates of Divine Command Theory may offer different accounts of moral motivation, agreeing that a moral motivation based solely on reward and punishment is inadequate. For example, perhaps the reason to be moral is that God designed human beings to be constituted in such a way that being moral is a necessary condition for human flourishing. Some might object that this is overly egoistic, but at any rate it seems less objectionable than the motivation to be moral provided by the mere desire to avoid punishment. Augustine see Kent, develops a view along these lines. Augustine begins with the notion that ethics is the pursuit of the supreme good, which provides the happiness that all humans seek. He then claims that the way to obtain this happiness is to love the right objects, that is, those that are worthy of our love, in the right way. In order to do this, we must love God, and then we will be able to love our friends, physical objects, and everything else in the right way and in the right amount. However, even if these points in defense of Divine Command Theory are thought to be satisfactory, there is another problem looming for the view that was famously discussed by Plato over two thousand years ago. The Euthyphro Dilemma The dialogue between Socrates and Euthyphro is nearly omnipresent in philosophical discussions of the relationship between God and ethics. Charges have been brought against Socrates by Miletus, who claims that Socrates is guilty of corrupting the youth of Athens by leading them away from belief in the proper gods. In the course of their conversation, Socrates is surprised to discover that Euthyphro is prosecuting his own father for the murder of a servant. Euthyphro maintains that his family fails to understand the divine attitude to his action. This then sets the stage for a discussion of the nature of piety between Socrates and Euthyphro. In this discussion, Socrates asks Euthyphro the now philosophically famous question that he and any divine command theorist must consider: A defender of Divine Command Theory might respond that an action is morally right because God commands it. However, the implication of this response is that if God commanded that we inflict suffering on others for fun, then doing so would be morally right. We would be obligated to do so, because God commanded it. This is because, on Divine Command Theory, the reason that inflicting such suffering is wrong is that God commands us not to do it. However, if God commanded us to inflict such suffering, doing so would become the morally right thing to do. Most advocates of Divine Command Theory do not want to be stuck with the implication that cruelty could possibly be morally right, nor do they want to accept the implication that the foundations of morality are arbitrary. By taking this route, the divine command theorist avoids having to accept that inflicting suffering on others for fun could be a morally right action. More generally, she avoids the arbitrariness that plagues any Divine Command Theory which includes the claim that an action is right solely because God commands it. However, two new problems now arise. If God commands a particular action because it is morally right, then ethics no longer depends on God in the way that Divine Command Theorists maintain. God is no longer the author of ethics, but rather a mere recognizer of right and wrong. As such, God no longer serves as the foundation of ethics. Moreover, it now seems that God has become subject to an external moral law, and is no longer sovereign. John Arthur puts the point this way: God is no longer sovereign over the entire universe, but rather is subject to a moral law external to himself. The notion that God is subject to an external moral law is also a problem for theists who hold that in the great chain of being, God is at the top. Here, there is a moral law external to and higher than God, and this is a consequence that many divine command theorists would want to reject. Hence, the advocate of a Divine Command Theory of ethics faces a dilemma: Responses to the Euthyphro Dilemma a. Bite the Bullet One possible response to the Euthyphro Dilemma is to simply accept that if God does command cruelty, then inflicting it upon others would be morally obligatory. Most people find this to be an unacceptable view of moral obligation, on the grounds that any theory of ethics that leaves open the possibility that such actions are morally praiseworthy is fatally

flawed. That is, even if it is logically possible that God could command cruelty, it is not something that God will do, given his character in the actual world. Given this, Ockham himself was surely not prepared to inflict suffering on others if God commanded it. Even with this proviso, however, many reject this type of response to the Euthyphro Dilemma. Human Nature Another response to the Euthyphro Dilemma which is intended to avoid the problem of arbitrariness is discussed by Clark and Poortenga , drawing upon the moral theory of Thomas Aquinas. If we conceive of the good life for human beings as consisting in activities and character qualities that fulfill us, then the good life will depend upon our nature, as human beings. Given human nature, some activities and character traits will fulfill us, and some will not. For example, neither drinking gasoline nor lying nor committing adultery will help us to function properly and so be fulfilled, as human beings. God created us with a certain nature. Once he has done this, he cannot arbitrarily decide what is good or bad for us, what will help or hinder us from functioning properly. God could have created us differently. That is, it is possible that he could have made us to thrive and be fulfilled by ingesting gasoline, lying, and committing adultery. But, according to Aquinas, he did no such thing. We must live lives marked by a love for God and other people, if we want to be fulfilled as human beings. The defender of this type of response to the Euthyphro Dilemma, to avoid the charge of arbitrariness, should explain why God created us with the nature that we possess, rather than some other nature. What grounded this decision? Alston formulates the Euthyphro dilemma as a question regarding which of the two following statements a divine command theorist should accept: We ought to love one another because God commands us to do so. God commands us to love one another because that is what we ought to do. But this trivialization is not what we mean when we assert that God is morally good. Alston summarizes his argument for this claim as follows: On this view, moral obligations attach to all human beings, even those so saintly as to totally lack any tendency, in the ordinary sense of that term, to do other than what it is morally good to do. And no moral obligations attach to God, assuming, as we are here, that God is essentially perfectly good.

Chapter 9 : Divine Command Theory

Divine Command Theory (Part 2) Various forms of divine command theory have been presented by philosophers including William of Ockham, St Augustine, Duns Scotus, and John Calvin. The theory generally teaches that moral truth does not exist independently of God and that morality is determined by divine commands.