

PHIL 101

The Euthyphro Dilemma

Euthyphro Dilemma

- The “*Euthyphro Dilemma*” is based on one of Euthyphro’s answers:
 - What the gods love is pious

Euthyphro Dilemma

- (A) Are morally good acts willed by God because they are morally good, or
- (B) are they morally good because they are willed by God?

Divine Command Theory

The general view is that the Euthyphro Dilemma refutes divine command theory.

Divine command theory says that:

Things are morally good or bad, or morally obligatory, permissible, or prohibited, solely because of God's will or commands.

Euthyphro Dilemma

The Euthyphro dilemma seems expose fatal flaws with divine command theory.

Each option under consideration are show to lead to contradictions and unwanted consequences.

Here's an argument against the divine command theory position.

Euthyphro Dilemma

(1) If divine command theory is true then either

- (option a) morally good acts are willed by God *because* they are morally good

or

- (option b) morally good acts are morally good *because* they are willed by God.

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(2) If (option a) morally good acts are willed by God because they are morally good, then such are morally good independent of God's will.

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(3) But it isn't the case that morally good acts are morally good independent of God's will.

(4) Thus, it isn't the case that (option a) morally good acts are willed by God simply because they are morally good.

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(5) If (option b) morally good acts are morally good because they are willed by God, then there seems to be no reason either to care about God's own moral goodness or to have good reasons to worship God.

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(6) But there are reasons to care about God's moral goodness and to worship him.

(7) Thus, it isn't the case that (option b) morally good acts are morally good simply because they are willed by God.

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(8) Therefore, divine command theory should be rejected as false.

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Based on this argument, why do we reject divine command theory?

Answer: Because we've shown that **NEITHER** option works.

Analysis

The two options:

OPTION A: morally good acts are willed by God because they are morally good

OPTION B: morally good acts are morally good because they are willed by God.

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Disjunctive syllogism:

$$P \vee Q$$
$$\sim Q$$

Thus, P

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Disjunctive syllogism:

OPTION A or OPTION B

NOT-OPTION B

Therefore, we're stuck with OPTION A

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Disjunctive syllogism:

OPTION A or OPTION B

NOT-OPTION A

Therefore, we're stuck with OPTION B

But OPTION B is rejected, too.

Euthyphro Dilemma

The divine command theorist is therefore forced to choose one of the options to affirm. But neither option works out.

Euthyphro Dilemma

- Theists will not accept the independence claim: it isn't the case that morally good acts are willed by God because they are morally good in and of themselves, i.e., because they are good independent of God.
- So theists have to make the other option work. Unfortunately, for them, it doesn't.

Euthyphro Dilemma

Critics claim divine command theory seems to offer either no good reason to care about God's own moral goodness or offer no good reasons to worship God.

But why? Critics typically point to three main problems with the theory.

Problems with divine command theory

1. Emptiness
2. Arbitrariness
3. Abhorrent