

Emptiness problem

- Divine command theory appears to entail that the standard moral claims about God are empty tautologies.

Emptiness problem

- A tautology is
 - A statement that is true simply by its logical form (on any valuation).
 - For example: “If it’s a Gator, then it’s a Gator.”
 - Think of other paired words to fill in the blank:
 - “If it’s a ____X____, then it’s a ____X____.”
 - redundant language that adds no information

Emptiness problem

- The emptiness objection says that typical “God-talk” is trivially true, but has zero content:
 - “God is good”
 - “God’s commands are good”
 - “God’s actions are good”

Emptiness problem

- To say that God's commands are good is like saying:

“God commands what he wants to command.”

Emptiness problem

- To say that God's actions are good is like saying:

“God doesn't forbid God from doing anything that God doesn't forbid himself from doing.”

- There's more to moral goodness than this. It can't be this empty.

Emptiness problem

But these are pretty lame statements!

There's got to be more to morality than this.
Moral statements can't be this vacuous or empty.

Arbitrariness problem

- If morally good acts are morally good because they are commanded by God, then they've got to be commanded by God **BEFORE** they're determined to be morally good. It must be that God makes his decision what to command in a moral vacuum.

Arbitrariness problem

- It must be that God makes his decision what to command in a moral vacuum.

Arbitrariness problem

- If there were any moral facts before God decided what to command, and those facts INFLUENCED God's decision, then those facts would be independent of God's commands.
- (Remember: we've already rejected the "independence" claim)

Arbitrariness problem

- Those facts can't be independent of God's commands, though, if the divine command theorist is correct in saying that all moral facts depend upon God. God decides what to command, then, in a moral vacuum.
- His decision is morally arbitrary.

Abhorrence problem

- The problem of abhorrent commands is the problem that divine command theory appears to entail that even morally abhorrent acts such as rape, murder and genocide could possibly be morally good.

Abhorrence problem

- God, being all-powerful, could possibly command rape, murder and genocide. As it happens, he chooses not to, the theist will say, but it does seem to follow from God's omnipotence that he could issue such commands.

Characteristics of God

- OMNI
- Omniscient = all knowing
- Omnipotent = all powerful
- Omnipresent = everywhere present
- Omnibenevolent = all good

Characteristics of God

If you accept an “omni” God, and you admit that there’s evil in the world, then you have a BIG problem reconciling the existence of OMNI.

This is known as “the problem of evil”.

Abhorrence problem

- If God were to command murder and genocide, then divine command theory appears to imply that murder and genocide would be morally praiseworthy.

Abhorrence problem

- The fact that it is possible for God to command such acts indicates that it is possible for such acts to be morally praiseworthy.

Abhorrence problem

But just a second!

- It simply can't be the case that if God commands abhorrent acts as murder and genocide then those acts would be perfectly moral.

Abhorrence problem

- Think of other examples:
- “What if God were to command _____?”
- If it’s something *BAD* and God commands it and people have to obey God commands are willing to obey This shows that divine command theory is false.

Abhorrence problem

- Suppose there's something *BAD* and God commands it. Suppose further that people are supposed to obey God's commands.
- Critics say this is an untenable situation. It shows that divine command theory is false.

Review: The Euthyphro Dilemma

- (A) morally good acts willed by God because they are morally good
 - *Theists reject this because it makes morality not dependent on God*

Review: The Euthyphro Dilemma

- (B) morally good acts are morally good because they are willed by God
 - *Theists accept, but critics show that things entailed by Option B are simply unacceptable (3 problems)*

Euthyphro Dilemma

- What we've done today is look at ONE side of the debate, the critics' side.
- Online is a discussion of ways for theists or defenders of divine command theory to refute the critics' arguments.
- Homework: Begin reading King *Part I*.