

## Morality and Religion

### Attempts to Ground Morality in Religion

- There is a widely held view that there is an **intimate connection** between **morality and religion**.
  - This implies that if there is no god, then there is no morality.
- Even if there is a connection between **morality and religion**, attempts to **understand** this connection so far have **failed**.
- Two **popular** attempts to **understand the connection** between **morality and religion** are **Divine Command Theory**, and **Natural Law Theory**.

### Divine Command Theory (DCT)

- The **roots** of **DCT** have their origin in the writings of **Plato** in a dialogue called **The Euthyphro**.
- The basic ideas of **DCT** can be summarized as follows:
  1. An act is **obligatory** if God commands it (tells you to do it).
  2. An act is **permissible** if God permits it.
  3. An act is **forbidden** if God forbids it (tells you to not do it).
- This raises the question: "How do you know what God commands?"
  - Some people believe that it is found in **religious scripture**.
- An **ontological problem** (a problem in the study of existence) that relates to **DCT** is: how do we know that God exists?
  - There is an ontological proof that goes as follows: God's essence is perfection. It is more perfect to exist than to not exist. Thus, God exists.
  - However, not everyone accepts theological proofs of God's existence.
- Some defenders of **DCT** believe that it is **not necessary to believe in God** to adhere to **DCT**. They would instead argue that **only if God exists**, morality is possible. So they are giving an account of what morality would be if there were a God.
- An **epistemological problem** (a problem about how we know something) with **DCT** is: even if God exists, how do we **know** what **God's commands are**?
  - Some would argue that we know through **scripture, prayer, meditation, and religious experiences**.
  - Adams claims that all **wrong actions** have one thing in common; they are **contrary** to the **commands** of a **loving God**.

### The Major Problem with DCT

- The **major problem** with **DCT** was put forward by **Plato** in **Euthyphro**. The **problem** is known as the **Euthyphro dilemma**.
- The **Euthyphro dilemma is as follows**: Does god command an action because it is right, or is the action right because God commands it?
  - Suppose an action X is right, simply because God commands it. Doesn't that make morality arbitrary? It can be whatever God wants? He can change the commands at any time. God could command us to do something that we think is immoral.

- Suppose an action X is right, then God will command it. But this means, that religion is based on morality instead of morality being based on religion. God is essentially acting as a messenger for something above him.
- This dilemma leads us to **abandon DCT**. Though there have been attempts to resuscitate it.
  - One theory that attempted to save DCT is **A New Device Command Theory** by **Robert Adams**. To get around the **Euthrphro dilemma** it modifies **DCT** as follows: An act is morally right if is commanded by a **loving God**; a loving god would never command us to do something that is morally wrong by our moral intuitions.

## Natural Law Theory (NLT)

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