	Component 3: Religion and Ethics **Theme 1: Ethical Thought** **This theme considers how the study of ethics has, over time, influenced and been influenced by developments in religious beliefs and practices and the philosophy of religion.**

Knowledge and understanding of religion and belief	

A	**A. Divine Command Theory:** **Meta-ethical theory** - God as the origin and regulator of morality; right or wrong as objective truths based on God's will/command, moral goodness is achieved by complying with divine command; divine command a requirement of God's omnipotence; divine command as an objective metaphysical foundation for morality. Robert Adams' 'Modified Divine Command Theory' (divine command based on God's omnibenevolence). **Challenges:** the Euthyphro dilemma (inspired by Plato); arbitrariness problem (divine command theory renders morality as purely arbitrary); pluralism objection (different religions claim different divine commands).
B	**B. Virtue Theory:** Ethical system based on defining the personal qualities that make a person moral; the focus on a person's character rather than their specific actions; Aristotle's moral virtues (based on the deficiency; the excess and the mean); Jesus' teachings on virtues (the Beatitudes). **Challenges:** virtues are not a practical guide to moral behaviour; issue of cultural relativism (ideas on the good virtues are not universal); virtues can be used for immoral acts.
C	**C. Ethical Egoism:** Normative agent focused ethic based on self-interest as opposed to altruism; ethical theory that matches the moral agent's psychological state (psychological egoism); concentration on long term self-interests rather than short term interests; Max Stirner, self-interest as the root cause of every human action even if it appears altruistic; rejection of egoism for material gain; union of egoists. **Challenges:** destruction of a community ethos; social injustices could occur as individuals put their own interests first; a form of bigotry (why is one moral agent more important than any other?).

Issues for analysis and evaluation will be drawn from any aspect of the content above, such as: • Whether morality is what God commands. • Whether being a good person is better than just doing good deeds. • Whether Virtue Theory is useful when faced with a moral dilemma. • The extent to which ethical egoism inevitably leads to moral evil. • The extent to which all moral actions are motivated by self-interest. • Whether one of Divine Command Theory, Virtue Theory or Ethical Egoism is superior to the other theories.

1A. Divine Command Theory

Divine command theory- actions are right or wrong depending on whether they follow God's commands or not.

Plato wrote a dialogue called Euthyphro, in which a character named Euthyphro takes his father to court, charging him with murder. His father failed in care and attention and allowed a worker to die. Socrates, a philosopher, is at the court awaiting his own trial, and so he engages Euthryphro in a dialogue about moral goodness. In the dialogue Socrates poses the question that has become known as the Euthyphro dilemma:

Euthyphro: 'Well, I should certainly say that what's holy is whatever all the Gods approve of, and that its opposite, what all the Gods disapprove of, is unholy . . . .'

Socrates: 'We'll soon be in a better position to judge, my good chap. Consider the following point: is the holy approved by the Gods because it's holy, or is it holy because it's approved?' (Plato)

In other words, Socrates is asking whether God commands things because they are good in themselves, or are things good because God commands and approves them?

Put simply, does good exist independently, and separate from approval, or does good exist as a consequence of it being approved?

1. **Write a simple summary of the Euthyphro dilemma.**

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Divine Command Theory (also known as theological voluntarism) is the first meta-ethical question for consideration.

Generally those who accept divine command ethics look to sacred texts to provide moral standards, such as the Decalogue (Ten Commandments) found in Exodus 20 in the Bible. According to divine command ethics, God's will alone decides what is right and wrong and human reason has no authority, **God has absolute authority**. All humans can do is accept and respond to God's revelation of what is right and wrong. As **Frankena** puts it, 'the standard of right and wrong is the will or law of God'.
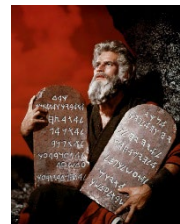
If God were to command things because they are good, then this implies that there is a standard of goodness independent of God. This would mean, then, that God is no longer the creator of everything. There would be a standard of values outside of his control and creatively. However, Divine Command proposes that the ethical template for what is good originates with God and cannot be external from God. The idea of a Divine Command Theory is a requirement of God's omnipotence.

JAT Robinson summarises this idea in his book Honest to God: 'They are the commandments which God gives, the laws which he lays down. . . They come down direct from Heaven, and are eternally valid for human conduct. . . Certain things are always 'wrong' and 'nothing can make them right'. And certain things are always 'sins', whether or not they are judged by differing human societies to be 'crimes''

A consequence of these claims is that if there is no God, then nothing is forbidden and nothing is obligatory either. Everything is morally permitted.

The view that without God nothing would be morally wrong/ impermissible is, of course, very difficult to sustain, because one does not have to believe in divine command ethics to believe that there are clear moral rules and restrictions in every society and moral actions that are correct. Nevertheless, divine command ethics has a long history e.g. the Old Testament and the Qur'an are both full of teachings that consist of God asserting his moral law and in the gospels Jesus teaches in the form of moral commands: 'love your neighbour as yourself' and 'blessed are those who hear the word of God and obey it'.

Judaism, Christianity and Islam offer good reasons why God's commands should be recognised as authoritative and why they should be obeyed. **Grayling** observes: 'Sin is disobedience to the commands of god; virtue is obedience to them or in the more graphic conception of Islam, submission'. He comments that the Old Testament offers a powerful reason to be obedient in the story of the expulsion from Eden (Genesis 2-3) and the punishments that follow. Punishment is the chief reason he suggests that supporters of divine command ethics argue that it is good to obey God's commands.

> **William of Ockham** championed divine command ethics in the Middle Ages stating: 'God cannot be obligated to any act. With Him a thing becomes right solely because He wants it so.'

2. Write a summary of the Divine Command Theory

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The Divine Command Theory

The 10 Commandments

And God spoke all these words:

2 "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. "

3 "You shall have no other gods before[a] me. "

4 "You shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. 5 You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, 6 but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments. "

7 "You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God, for the LORD will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name. "

8 "Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. 9 Six days you shall labour and do all your work, 10 but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your male or female servant, nor your animals, nor any foreigner residing in your towns. 11 For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy. "

12 "Honour your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the LORD your God is giving you. "

13 "You shall not murder. "

14 "You shall not commit adultery."

15 "You shall not steal."

16 "You shall not give false testimony against your neighbour. "ct - The Ten Commandments 17 "You shall not covet your neighbour's house. You shall not covet your neighbour's wife, or his male or female servant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbour."

18 When the people saw the thunder and lightning and heard the trumpet and saw the mountain in smoke, they trembled with fear. They stayed at a distance 19 and said to Moses, "Speak to us yourself and we will listen. But do not have God speak to us or we will die."

20 Moses said to the people, "Do not be afraid. God has come to test you, so that the fear of God will be with you to keep you from sinning." (NIV)

3. How absolute are the Ten Commandments? Can they ever be broken?

Problems with the Divine Command Theory

Joshua 5:13-15; 6:21-24 NIV

FALLING OF THE WALLS OF JERICHO.

13 Now when Joshua was near Jericho, he looked up and saw a man standing in front of him with a drawn sword in his hand. Joshua went up to him and asked, "Are you for us or for our enemies?"
14 "Neither," he replied, "but as commander of the army of the LORD I have now
come." Then Joshua fell facedown to the ground in reverence, and asked him, "What message does my Lord[e] have for his servant?"
15 The commander of the LORD's army replied, "Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy." And Joshua did so.
6 Now the gates of Jericho were securely barred because of the Israelites. No one went out and no one came in.
2 Then the LORD said to Joshua, "See, I have delivered Jericho into your hands, along with its king and its fighting men."
21 They devoted the city to the LORD and destroyed with the sword every living thing in it—men and women, young and old, cattle, sheep and donkeys.
22 Joshua said to the two men who had spied out the land, "Go into the prostitute's house and bring her out and all who belong to her, in accordance with your oath to her." 23 So the young men who had done the spying went in and brought out Rahab, her father and mother, her brothers and sisters and all who belonged to her. They brought out her entire family and put them in a place outside the camp of Israel.
24 Then they burned the whole city and everything in it, but they put the silver and gold and the articles of bronze and iron into the treasury of the LORD's house. 25 But Joshua spared Rahab the prostitute, with her family and all who belonged to her, because she hid the men Joshua had sent as spies to Jericho—and she lives among the Israelites to this day.

For discussion:
4. What issues does the story of the fall of Jericho raise for divine command theory?
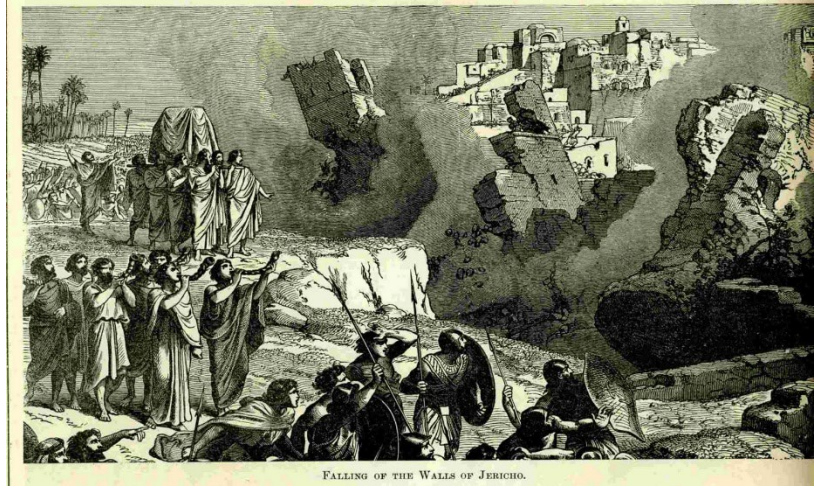
The Character of God –
Exodus 34: 1-14

1The LORD said to Moses, "Chisel out two stone tablets like the first ones, and
I will write on them the words that were on the first tablets, which you broke.
2Be ready in the morning, and then come up on Mount Sinai. Present yourself to me there on top of the mountain. 3No one is to come with you or be seen anywhere on the mountain; not even the flocks and herds may graze in front of the mountain."
4So Moses chiselled out two stone tablets like the first ones and went up Mount
Sinai early in the morning, as the LORD had commanded him; and he carried the two stone tablets in his hands. 5Then the LORD came down in the cloud and stood there with him and proclaimed his name, the LORD. 6And he passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, "The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, 7maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children and their children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation."
8Moses bowed to the ground at once and worshiped. 9"Lord," he said, "if I have found favour in your eyes, then let the Lord go with us. Although this is a stiff-necked people, forgive our wickedness and our sin, and take us as your inheritance."
10Then the LORD said: "I am making a covenant with you. Before all your people I will do wonders never before done in any nation in all the world. The people you live among will see how awesome is the work that I, the LORD, will do for you. 11Obey what I command you today. I will drive out before you the Amorites, Canaanites, Hittites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites. 12Be careful not to make a treaty with those who live in the land where you are going, or they will be a snare among you. 13Break down their altars, smash their sacred stones and cut down their Asherah poles.a 14Do not worship any other god, for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God."

Question:

5. What does this passage reveal about the character of God? Can a loving God also be a 'jealous God' inflicting punishments?

However, there are clear problems with this.

If humans obey God's moral commands simply because they fear punishment, they are acting out of self-preservation rather than morally. Despite offering a moral argument for the existence of God, **Kant** maintained that the fear of punishment or hope of reward should not be motivation for moral goodness: 'Morality must not lower herself. Her own nature must be her recommendation. All else, even divine reward, is nothing else behind her.'

Furthermore, 'if morally good' means 'what God has commanded' we end up with a circular and trivial claim: 'what God commands is right and good' means 'what God commands is what God commands'. This means that there is no separate and distinct character to morality that humans are able to recognise as morally good.

If a divine command comes from a supremely powerful being, how can humans even conceive of being able to assess whether it is morally good or not? Worship of such a being and obedience to his commands would be merely passive and there would be little scope for a personal relationship with him. Such a being must also be omniscient and know the consequences of our actions and choices in a way that we never can. This requires us to take on trust that such a God really does will what is best for us and what will bring that about.

Finally if obedience to divine commands is to be rewarded in the afterlife, there seems to be a dangerous inequality. Many apparent godly people are rewarded with material riches and happy lives in the world, while others endure great earthly suffering whilst waiting for their eschatological reward. The danger here is that believers will fall back on the qualifier 'God moves in mysterious ways'. This argument is used when there seems to be no rational justification for God's actions, but it leads believers into making what **Basil Mitchell** calls 'vacuous statements': statements that have no real meaning because they fail to offer a real solution to the problem of why bad things happen to good people.

6. **Write a summary of some of the problems facing Divine Command Theory – include scholars**

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Modified Divine Command Theory

Robert Adams (1987) has offered a modified version of the Divine Command Theory, which a defender of the theory can use in response to the Euthyphro Dilemma. Adams argues that a modified divine command theorist "wants to say...that an act is wrong if and only if it is contrary to God's will or commands (**assuming God loves us**)" (121). Moreover, Adams claims that the following is a necessary truth: "Any action is ethically wrong if and only if it is contrary to the commands of a loving God" (132). On this modification of Divine Command Theory, actions, and perhaps intentions and individuals, possess the property of ethical wrongness, and this property is an objective property. That is, an action such as torturing someone for fun is ethically wrong, irrespective of whether anyone actually believes that it is wrong, and it is wrong because it is contrary to the commands of a loving God.

One could agree with this modification of Divine Command Theory, but disagree with the claim that it is a necessary truth that any action is ethically wrong if and only if it is contrary to the commands of a loving God. One might hold that this claim is a contingent truth, that is, that in the actual world, being contrary to the commands of a loving God is what constitutes ethical wrongness, but that there are other possible worlds in which ethical wrongness is not identified with being contrary to the commands of a loving God. It should be pointed out that for the theist who wants to argue from the existence of objective moral properties back to the existence of God, Adams' stronger claim, namely, that an action is wrong if and only if it goes against the commands of a loving God, should be taken as a necessary truth, rather than a contingent one.

At any rate, whichever option a modified divine command theorist chooses, the modification at issue is aimed at avoiding both horns of the Euthyphro Dilemma. The first horn of the dilemma posed by Socrates to Euthyphro is that if an act is morally right because God commands it, then morality becomes arbitrary. Given this, we could be morally obligated to inflict cruelty upon others. The Modified Divine Command Theory avoids this problem, because morality is not based on the mere commands of God, but is rooted in the unchanging omnibenevolent nature of God. Hence, morality is not arbitrary nor would God command cruelty for its own sake, because God's nature is fixed and unchanging, and to do so would violate it. It is not possible for a loving God to command cruelty for its own sake. The Modified Divine Command Theory is also thought to avoid the second horn of the Euthyphro Dilemma. God is the source of morality, because morality is grounded in the character of God. Moreover, God is not subject to a moral law that exists external to him. On the Modified Divine Command Theory, the moral law is a feature of God's nature. Given that the moral law exists internal to God, in this sense, God is not subject to an external moral law, but rather *is* that moral law. God therefore retains his supreme moral and metaphysical status. Morality, for the modified divine command theorist, is ultimately grounded in the perfect nature of God.

7. How has Adams modified the Divine Command Theory?

Challenges

The Euthyphro Dilemma - Activity

Is conduct right because the gods command it, or do the gods command it because it is right?

This became one of the most famous questions in the history of philosophy. The Twentieth Century British philosopher Antony Flew believed that 'one good test of a person's aptitude for philosophy is to discover whether he (we can assume he means she as well) can grasp its force and point'. See if you can grasp it with your partner.

In Plato's dialogue the Euthyphro, Socrates and Euthyphro discuss the following question which has fascinated thinkers down the ages and still challenges us today: 'Is conduct right because the gods command it, or do the gods command it because it is right? (Euthyphro's dilemma)- a question which goes to the heart of the relationship between ethics and religion.

The question suggests that to accept the Divine Command Theory put us in a dilemma. If we accept that God's laws are absolute (for example the reason we must not lie is because God commands it), we have a problem. WE could ask why doesn't God command laws which allow cruel actions as well as good actions? If HE commanded that we lie, for example, then lying, not truthfulness, would be regarded as being acceptable behaviour. Socrates, on the other hand, argues that God commands right behaviour because it is right, and God's commands are the result of omniscience and infinite wisdom. God is good, he can only command what is right. However, this assumes that there is a standard of goodness independent of God. God is no longer the ultimate standard of morality. We are saying that God sees that truthfulness is right, yet this is very different from his making it right. The idea of rightness exists prior to and independent of God's command. So if we want to know why we should try and be truthful the reply 'because God commands it' will not take us very far. We can still ask 'But why does God command it?' and the answer to that question will give us the underlying reasons why truthfulness is a good thing. However, theists, who see God as the Supreme Moral Governor, argue that God would never command anything evil because God is benevolent (all-loving). However, a father/mother can be loving but sometimes might decide to 'be cruel to be kind'. There is still the problem as to whether what is loving depends on God's will or whether there is an independent standard of what it is to be benevolent.

Theists would argue that goodness is not something external to God, but rather something with which he is fully identified. Goodness is what the word God means. He could no more cease to be good than he could cease to be God. In the Hebrew Bible, for example, God is constantly celebrated in terms of loving kindness and merciful compassion. This goodness does not mean that God cannot also be just, and He is sometimes portrayed in religious literature as a fierce judge, but never inconsistent with His loving nature either: 'The Lord is just in all his ways, and kind in his doings . . . Righteousness and justice are the foundations of the throne' (Psalms 145,89.)

The arbitrariness problem

What does arbitrary mean?

It seems that no satisfactory answer can be given to the dilemma: is an act right because God commands it, or does God command it because it is right? If an act is right simply because God commands it, then its being right is merely arbitrary. God could arbitrarily command a person to murder his or her own child) as in the Biblical story of Abraham and his son Isaac), and that would supposedly make it right. But would it? On the other hand, if God commands an act because it is right, then a standard of rightness exists independent of God's commands. It might be, say, the Principle of Utility. If so, then we could discover this principle without knowing God's commands. God's commands, therefore, are not necessarily a prerequisite for living a moral life. Robert Adams in his Modified Divine Command Theory, has addressed this matter in pointing out that both the arbitrariness and external objectivity issues are redundant when one considers Divine Command as an expression of God's omnibenevolence. However, not all are convinced. For some philosophers this just extends the problem and does not solve it. For example, Julian Baggini perceptively observes, 'This doesn't seem to work, however, because the dilemma can just be restated: is God's nature good because it is good or good because it is God's! The debate about Robert Adam's theory continues.

> 'The thought that God could just decree that all that we thought evil was in fact good and vice versa seems to make a mockery of the seriousness of ethics. It makes right and wrong ultimately arbitrary.' Baggini

The pluralism objection

There are also clear problems with Divine Command Theory when it comes to consider the relationship between religion and morality as there are very different ethical systems and principles that can be found within the religions of the world. The questions this raises include: 'which system is right?' and, 'are these systems compatible?'. It is very clear that although there may be some common moral ideas identified between religions, there are also differences.

In addition, not only do we have different systems by we also have the problem of identifying a specific religious ethic within a religion and then the variety of interpretations this may be given. For example, consider the conflicting interpretations of the Shari'a found in the different law schools within Islam, or, the variety of understandings and applications of the precepts within Buddhism, or, the different views on Old Testament law within Christianity. Many conflicts arise between some very respected and virtuous principles: for example, 'Thou shalt not kill' is directly challenged by the principle of agape when it comes to the issues of abortion and euthanasia. Can Gandhi's understanding and use of ahimsa as an absolute principle work in a time of war.

In addition, there are the more controversial aspects of conflict when a small minority group within a religion may propose specific interpretations of ethical principles based upon a particular reading of religious texts as Divine Command that other groups within that same religion may disagree with. There are a number of examples ranging from women's rights to matters of punishment for homosexuality.

For example, some Christians still condemn homosexuality, whether in terms of sexuality or the acts involved. They often refer to Biblical texts from both the Old and New Testaments.

Read Leviticus 20:13 – it states that if a man has sexual relations with another man they should be put to death – this raises several problems for Divine Command theorists.

If God commands it and homosexual men receive the death penalty this is contrary to 21st Century law.

Also, how should homosexual women be treated? They are mentioned in Romans 1:26-28 but it does not prescribe the death penalty. In addition, what about the wider Christian teachings of forgiveness, tolerance, love and compassion taught by Jesus? Are such wider teachings more important than the Leviticus text? If so, does that mean that the Divine Command can be relative to a particular historical and social context? If not, then Divine Command must support slavery as it is not criticised in the Bible along with many other view seen as unacceptable today. The main challenge, then, to Divine Command is that it has no flexibility to adapt to the changing views about morality that are accepted by most people today.

Chunking the Divine Command Theory

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Chunking the modified Divine Command Theory

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Background – notes from Mark Lambe

- Basically Divine Command Theory is an ethic that believes that an action's status as morally good or bad is completely commanded by God e.g. stealing is only seen as morally bad because God commanded it that way.
- Divine Command Theory is a meta-ethical theory. This simply means that this theory will tell us the nature of morality i.e. it will answer questions like "What is goodness?" and "How can we tell what is good from what is bad?". Basically Divine Command Theory will tell us that goodness is what God commands.

AO1 Divine Command Theory: The Ethic

To help you understand Divine Command Theory it was been broken into 5 sections.

i. God as the origin and regulator of morality

- Divine Command Theorists believe that what is moral is determined by what God (the divine) commands. Therefore, Divine Command Theory believes that morality is ultimately completely dependent upon the commands of God. The specific content of these divine commands varies according to the particular religion but all versions of the theory hold in common the claim that morality and moral obligations ultimately depend on God.
- Generally those who accept divine command ethics look to sacred texts to ascertain God's commands.
- For example in Christianity God's moral commands can be found in the Bible e.g. the Decalogue (the Ten Commandments) can be found in Exodus 20 of the Bible. One of the Ten Commandments God commanded is 'You shall not murder'. Therefore humanity knows that murder is morally wrong because God has commanded this.

ii. Right and wrong as objective truths based on God's will

- One result of the above is that right and wrong (good and bad) are objective truths.
- This means that morality (right and wrong) are not influenced by humanities personal feelings, opinions or reasoning's about what is right or wrong e.g. it does not matter what humanity thinks about the issue of stealing; it is wrong because God has commanded it that way.
- Therefore, God's will alone decides what is right and wrong and human feelings etc. on morality has no authority, God has total authority. As **William Ockham** stated in the middle ages: "With Him (God) a thing becomes right solely because He wants it so."

iii. Moral Goodness is achieved by complying with divine command

- Therefore, if a person wishes to be moral the only way to do this is to follow God's commands i.e. moral obligation consists purely in been obedient to God's commands. The Qur'an is full of teachings that consist of God asserting His moral law e.g. in terms of adultery Qur'an 17:32 states: "And go not nigh to fornication; surely it is an indecency and an evil way." Therefore, moral goodness in Islam can only be achieved by not committing adultery.
- Religions such as Christianity, Judaism and Islam offer a good reasons why God's commands should be obeyed. For example, Adam and Eve were expelled from the Garden of Eden for not following God's command or eternal life in hell awaits those who do not follow his commandments.
- The idea that moral goodness is achieved by following divine commands is strongly supported in the Old Testament book of Deuteronomy. It states: "the Lord your God will be merciful if you listen and keep to all his commands."

iv. Divine command as a requirement of God's omnipotence

- Supporters of Divine Command Theory justify the theory by stating that it is a natural consequence of God's omnipotence (in terms of a characteristic of God, omnipotence means God is all-powerful).
- An omnipotent God by definition must have complete power over everything, including morality.
- On a basic level if God did not have complete power over morality this would suggest that God is not all-powerful.
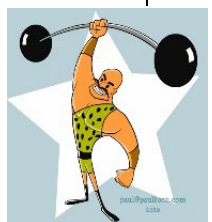
- This is because if God did not control morality, 'something else' must control what is right and wrong. This would make this 'something else' more powerful than God, destroying God's omnipotence.
- Therefore, God has to control morality or He wouldn't be omnipotent.

Divine Command Theorist: Robert Adams

- Over the centuries there have been many attempts to explain the divine command theory – your syllabus only wishes you to consider one of them: **Robert Adams (1937- …)** version called the "**modified divine command theory**"
- Adams' starts by restating the normal Divine Command Theory (as you've already seen above) e.g. 'X' is wrong because God has commanded 'X' to be wrong, therefore it is God's that commands moral truths e.g. God commands that stealing is wrong and therefore it is a moral truth that stealing is wrong; therefore it becomes our duty not to steal.
- However, there is a problem with this (called the **Euthyphro Dilemma**). Basically what happens if God were to command that 'X' is moral when human logic would conclude 'X' is immoral. Therefore, a seemingly immoral act would become good (a moral truth) and humanities duty would be to follow it. For example, if God commanded that murder was good, then Divine Command Theory would have to concede that this was a moral truth even though human logic would conclude murder is wrong. Ultimately Divine Command Theory allows God to command cruelty.
- Adam's concedes that it is logically possible for God to command cruelty because He is omnipotent (God can do anything). However, Adams' claims that it would be unthinkable for God to do so because of his omnibenevolent (all-loving) nature.
- Therefore, Adams proposes that an action is morally wrong <u>if and only if</u> it defies the commands of a loving God. If cruelty was commanded, he would not be loving; Adams argued that, in this instance, God's commands would not have to be obeyed.

Challenges to Divine Command Theory

There are 3 major challenges to the Divine Command Theory:

1. The Euthyphro Dilemma
- The Euthyphro dilemma was proposed by Ancient Greek philosopher Plato (through his character 'Euthyphro').
- You've seen this argument above: what if God were to command that 'X' is moral when human logic would conclude 'X' is immoral e.g. if God commands that murder was moral, then Divine Command Theory would have to concede that this was a moral truth. Therefore, ultimately Divine Command Theory allows God to command cruelty.

2. The Arbitrariness Problem
- The arbitrariness problem is the problem that divine command theory appears to render the content of morality arbitrary (arbitrary means based on random choice or personal whim, rather than any reason or system). If divine command theory is true, it seems, then what is good and what bad depends on nothing more than God's whims. Whims, though, even God's whims, are not an adequate foundation for morality.

3. The Pluralism Objection
- In a world of religious pluralism (many different religions) it is impossible to know which god's or religion's commands should be followed, especially because some religions contradict each other, making it impossible to accept all of them e.g. in Islam it is seen that God commands that divorce is morally acceptable but in Christianity it is not. Moreover, even if a person believes that one religion is correct, there remains a plurality (lots) of understandings within specific religious traditions with respect to what God commands us to do e.g. Catholic Christians believe that God commands contraception is wrong but Protestant Christians believe God does not command this.

AO2 – Divine Command Theory

8. There is only one Part B question associated with Divine Command Theory: complete this plan

'**Whether morality is what God commands' Discuss**

Agree: Morality is what God Commands	Disagree: Morality is not what God Commands
1. God has to command morality because of his omnipotent (see above).	1. **Euthyphro Dilemma (see above)**
2. Robert Adams: supports God's omnibenevolent nature (see above)	2. **Arbitrariness Problem (see above)**
	3. **Pluralism Objection (see above**

b. Virtue Theory

Virtue ethics goes back to Plato and Aristotle and does not focus on actions being right or wrong, but on how to be a good person. It looks at what makes a good person and the qualities or virtues that make them good. Virtue ethics is agent-centred morality rather than act-centred- it asks 'What sort of person should I be?' rather than 'How should I act?'

Plato and Virtue

Plato's moral theory is not one of judging particular actions. It centres on the achievement of man's highest good, which involves the right cultivation of his soul (inner well-being) and the harmonious well-being of his life (eudaimonia or happiness). Happiness must be attained through the pursuit of virtue and actions are good when they help to achieve this. Plato seemed to consider certain virtues central: temperance, courage, prudence and justice (later called the Cardinal Virtues). Plato thought that when these virtues are in balance a person's actions will be good. However, there was no agreement among the Greek philosophers about which virtues were central and Aristotle gives a very different account of the virtues.

Aristotle and Virtue

Aristotle was influenced in his thinking by his conviction that all things and all human beings have a purpose or function- i.e. a telos. He saw two types of virtues: the first were intellectual virtues developed by training and education and the second were moral virtues developed by habit. For human beings Aristotle maintained that the ultimate goal is developing those characteristics best suited to produce a virtuous human being. His emphasis was not on what people do but on what kind of person they are, although being a kind person, for example is essentially accomplished by practising acts of kindness until the habit of being kind is firmly established in a person's character.

Aristotle maintained that virtues are those qualities that lead to a good life- such as courage, compassion, honesty and justice. The person who aims to cultivate these qualities is maximising his/her potential for a happy life- a quality of happiness described as **eudaimonia**, which involves being happy and living well. It is of intrinsic value, not as a means to an end, and should be desired for its own sake, not only for individuals but also for the society of which they are members. Individuals who develop the virtues will be able to act in an integrated way, deriving satisfaction from doing the right thing because it is the right thing and not for any external reasons or goals. They will not act in a particular way either because they ought to do so or because they want to do so, but simply because they have identified the right way to act.

For Aristotle the right way to act was the golden mean. This is a perfect balance between two extremes, such as cowardice and foolhardiness, which are both vices; in this example the golden mean is courage- a virtue which human beings are not born with but which they should cultivate in the way that they might cultivate good health or fitness. People should learn from good role models, train and exercise this virtue, until it becomes an automatic way of living and behaving and part of their character, which they can exercise without conscious effort or will. In this way they will become courageous people. It may involve performing courageous acts but, more importantly their character will acquire virtue of courage and their actions will be motivated by courage.

ARISTOTLE ON THE FLOURISHING LIFE

'Everything has an aim. Therefore, there is one goal, the Good, to which every aim is directed. Happiness, then, is something final and self-sufficient, and is the end of action.
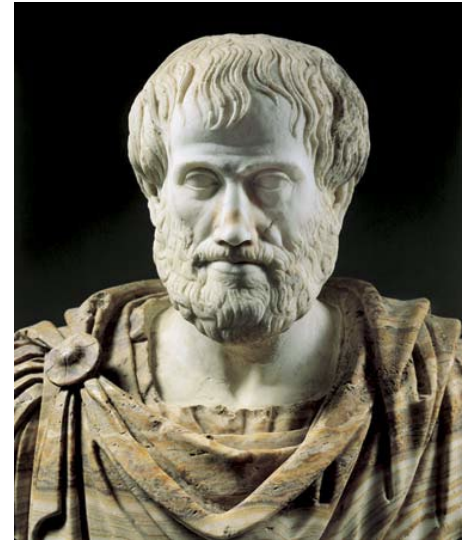
The function of man is to live a certain kind of life, and this activity implies a rational principle, and the function of a good man is the good and noble performance of these, and if any action is well performed it is performed in accord with the appropriate excellence: if this is the case, then happiness turns out to be an activity of the soul in accordance with virtue. But we must add 'in a complete life.' For one swallow does not make a summer, nor does one day; and so too one day, or a short time, does not make a man blessed and happy.

Since happiness is an activity of the soul expressing virtue, we must examine virtue; for that will perhaps also be a way to study happiness better. In another way also it appears that complete happiness is some activity of study. For we traditionally suppose that the gods more than anyone are blessed and happy. Argument and teaching are not effective in all cases; the soul of the listener must first be conditioned by habits to the right kind of likes and dislikes, just as the land must be cultivated before it is able to bring forth the seed. For a man whose life is guided by emotion will not listen to an argument that dissuades him, nor will he understand it.

However, the happy person is a human being, and so will need external prosperity also; for his nature is not self-sufficient for study, but he needs a healthy body, and needs to have food and the other services provided. The true student of politics, too, is thought to have studied virtue above all things, for he wishes to make his fellow citizens good and obedient to the laws.

So, he is happy who lives in accordance with complete virtue and is sufficiently equipped with external goods, not for some chance period but throughout a complete life.'
(Nichomachean Ethics)

9. What is Virtue Theory? Use previous and the following pages

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Summary - Ethic based on character

What is virtue theory?

- Virtue Theory is a very different type of ethical theory.
- Most ethical theories try to work out 'right' and 'wrong' based on our actions e.g. the deontological **Natural Law** judges our actions and the teleological **Situation Ethics** judges the consequence of our actions.
- Virtue Theory rejects both of these approaches. Instead of concentrating on the action, it is interested in defining what are good people and the virtues that make them good. Therefore, this theory has more to do with looking at our character (the flourishing of the human character) rather than with the rights and wrongs of specific actions.
- One's character is made up of virtues and vices:
- ♣ Virtues = good characteristics we have such as kindness, patient, friendly etc.
- ♣ Vices = bad characteristics we have such as greed, selfishness, jealousy etc.
- Virtue Theory concentrate on developing a person's virtues and reducing their vices. This, according to Virtue Theorists, would automatically make the person become a 'good' person. This is because a person of good character would automatically do good actions.

Example of virtue theory in practice

- We will consider lying as our example:
- ♣ A deontologist might argue that the action of lying is always wrong, regardless of any potential 'good' that might come from lying
- ♣ A teleologicalist would argue that the action of lying is bad because of the negative consequences produced by the act of lying.
- ♣ A virtue ethicist would focus less on the action/consequences of lying but instead concentrate on what a decision to lie says about a person's character i.e. was the lie associated with a virtuous or vice characteristic. If it was associated with a virtue (caring) then it when be seen as good but if done for a vice (greed) then it would be bad.
- Therefore, Virtue Theory is not so much interested in the question "What actions should I do?" but rather the question "What sort of character do I have?"   If we can develop our virtues and reduce our vices we will become an ethical person because all our actions will be based on virtuous characteristics.

Developing the Virtues

- Virtue theory seeks to determine whether there are any key virtues that underpin the life of these admirable/hero human beings e.g. what virtues did Martin Luther King have. Once we have discovered the virtues of Martin Luther King (such as compassion) we could develop (through practice) those virtues in our own life.

Versions of Virtue Theory

Your syllabus wants you to consider two versions of virtue theory: Aristotle Virtue Theory & Jesus' teachings on virtues

Version 1: Aristotle's Virtue Theory

- Aristotle was an ancient Greek philosopher (born in 384 B.C.). The book '***Nicomachean Ethics'*** is a collection his lectures on Ethics, compiled by his son 'Nicomachus'.
- Aristotle reasoned out a set of virtues that he claimed will help a moral agent to be a successful member of their community (which Aristotle believed would bring them happiness / eudiamonia).
- Aristotle created the moral virtues for us to follow. According to Aristotle there are **12 moral virtues** (or qualities of character). They can only be cultivated (developed) through habit/practice.
- Fortunately your examiner does not expect to learn all 12 Moral Virtues: just a couple as examples are needed plus a description of how they work.
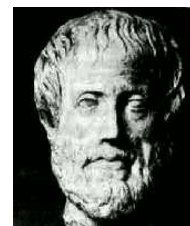
Excess Vice	Virtue	Deficiency Vice
Rashness	**Courage**	Cowardice
Buffoonery	**Wittiness**	Boorishness

- The moral virtues are in the middle column. You will notice that each of the virtues (in the middle) are surrounded by excess of the virtue (on the left) and the deficiency of the virtue (on the right). These are the vices (or the wrong way to achieve the virtue). Aristotle does this so that not only does he tell us what the good moral virtues are but also explains how to follow them (how to be become good at them):
- Aristotle does this with his '**Doctrine of the mean' (a.k.a. the golden mean)**
- According to the Aristotle we all have the potential to develop these moral virtues. The way we do this is to ensure that we keep away from either the excess or deficiency of the virtue; so we hit the 'mean' or midway point. He argued the good virtues were a matter of balance between the extremes.
- **Example: Wittiness** – The way to achieve this virtue is to avoid the two extremes. No one likes 'hanging around with' someone who is boorish (boring) and therefore they will not be a successful member of a group. On the other extreme no likes to 'hanging around with' a buffoon because they quickly become irritating and thus they too will not be a successful member of a group. Therefore, the way to develop the virtue of wittiness is to take the **golden mean (middle way)** between the two extremes of boorishness and buffoonery. If you can do this (with practice) you will become happy because you will be a successful (popular) member of a group because people like to 'hang around with' witty people.
- If we could do this with practice, so it becomes habit, we would be achieving the virtue and this will help us achieve our aim of happiness (eudiamonia).
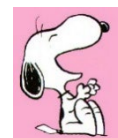
Version 2: Jesus' teachings on virtues

- Jesus' teachings on virtues generally occurred in his influential 'Sermon on the Mount' which can be found in the Bible book of Matthew (chp 5-7). The sermon of the mount was Jesus' longest preach in the Bible and is dominated by moral teachings. However, it is not all about virtues; the virtuous part is called the 'Beatitudes' (short for beautiful attitudes) found in Matthew 5.
- Generally the Beatitudes encourage positive transformation of the inner character (virtues) with particular emphasis on humility (modesty), charity, and brotherly/sisterly love.
- Specifically Jesus highlighted 8 virtues in the beatitudes. Two example are below:
1. "Blessed are the meek" i.e. those who support others without making a scene about it e.g. an individual feeds a homeless person without boasting about it.
2. "Blessed are they who hunger for righteousness" e.g. a student stands up for an individual who is being bullied.
3. "Blessed are the pure of heart" e.g. a person who has no bias or prejudice towards others.

Jesus' teaching on virtues in more detail

Joseph J. Kotva argues in his book" The Christian Case for Virtue Ethics" that Christianity and Virtue Theory are compatible and this can be seen in Biblical passages for instance, he argues that "the most obvious similarity between (St.) Matthew and virtue theory is Matthew's concern with the "internal" qualities of human action, not just the overt acts themselves. The importance of feelings, dispositions, and inclinations is a repeating theme in the first Gospel."

He asks us to :-

"Consider, for example, the Sermon on the Mount. The Beatitudes depict the kinds of people and actions that will receive a full share in God's coming kingdom. In pronouncing blessings on the "poor in spirit" (5:3), on those who "hunger and thirst for righteousness" (5:6), and on those who are "pure of heart" (5:8), Matthew's Jesus promises God's reign to those who are humble before God, who yearn for and desire God's justice, and who live from a position of genuineness and integrity.' While these and other blessings presuppose action, they also commend a posture reflecting certain attitudes and feelings.

Similarly, in at least two of the six "antitheses" (5:21-48), we see a change in focus from external action to internal dispositions.' Jesus never denies that killing is wrong, but he explicitly warns about anger (5:21-22). Jesus assumes that adultery is illicit, but he makes a point of condemning lust (5:27-28). While the teachings about retaliation and love of enemies probably also involve dispositions and feelings, Jesus' words about anger and lust emphatically move the spotlight from overt actions to dispositions and feelings."

He states *"Like Matthew's concern with the internal, virtue theory focuses on tendencies, feelings, and dispositions. Like Matthew's understanding of the connection between internal and external, virtue theory sees an intimate lint, between states of character and action, between "being" and "doing."*

He also states that the writings of St. Paul are compatible with Virtue Ethics -

"*Paul, like Matthew, is concerned with both specific actions and internal qualities. This concern is evident, for instance, in Paul's appropriation of "virtue" and "vice" lists (Romans 1:29-31; 13:13; 1 Corinthians 5:10-11; 6:9-10; 2 Corinthians 12:20-21; Galatians 5:19-23;The "virtues" include love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, faithfulness, and purity, among others. The "vices" include idolatry, sorcery, meanness, arrogance, insolence, selfishness, envy, jealousy, greed, strife, sexual immorality, drunkenness, and carousing……..Paul depicts or portrays both the kind of people Christians are called to be and the kinds of actions appropriate to those people."*

Aquinas developed Aristotle's ideas and came up with the traditional Catholic virtues, four "cardinal" virtues (prudence, temperance,justice, and fortitude), and three "theological" virtues (faith, hope, and

    10. Create a mind map of the two versions of Virtue Theory.

Challenges to Virtue Theory

1. **Virtues are not a practical guide to moral behaviour:**
* Ethics ought to give us a clear system for making moral choices. An ethic should enable moral agents to clearly know what actions are right and which ones are wrong. Unlike the divine command theory gives a clear command on what is right and wrong.
* Therefore, virtue theory gives no specific guidance about how we are to act. We have to decide for ourselves whether to genetically modify animals, clone humans, go to war, abort etc.
* William Frankena argues: "virtues without principles are blind".
2. **Issues of cultural relativism (ideas on the good virtues are not universal):**
* The key virtues differ from culture to culture e.g. Al Qaeda thinks it is virtuous to be a suicide bomber, other would see this as a vice.
* Therefore, one person's terrorist is another person's freedom fighter and hero...so goodness must depend on something else other than virtue.
3. **Virtues can be used for immoral acts:**
* Ethics based on virtues, like courage, can led to evil. This is because criminals can use these virtues to become powerful and/or rich e.g. a bank robber needs courage to rob a bank.

Challenges to Virtue Theory – in detail

ONE – Action-guiding (source: http://www.iep.utm.edu/virtue/#H4)

Moral philosophy is concerned with practical issues. Fundamentally it is about how we should act. Virtue ethics has criticized consequentialist and deontological theories for being too rigid and inflexible because they rely on one rule or principle. One reply to this is that these theories are action guiding. The existence of "rigid" rules is a strength, not a weakness because they offer clear direction on what to do. As long as we know the principles, we can apply them to practical situations and be guided by them. Virtue ethics, it is objected, with its emphasis on the imprecise nature of ethics, fails to give us any help with the practicalities of how we should behave. A theory that fails to be action-guiding is no good as a moral theory.

The main response to this criticism is to stress the role of the virtuous agent as an exemplar. Virtue ethics reflects the imprecise nature of ethics by being flexible and situation-sensitive, but it can also be action-guiding by observing the example of the virtuous agent. The virtuous agent is the agent who has a fully developed moral character, who possesses the virtues and acts in accordance with them, and who knows what to do by example. Further, virtue ethics places considerable of emphasis on the development of moral judgment. Knowing what to do is not a matter of internalizing a principle, but a life-long process of moral learning that will only provide clear answers when one reaches moral maturity. Virtue ethics cannot give us an easy, instant answer. This is because these answers do not exist. Nonetheless, it can be action-guiding if we understand the role of the virtuous agent and the importance of moral education and development. If virtue consists of the right reason and the right desire, virtue ethics will be action-guiding when we can perceive the right reason and have successfully habituated our desires to affirm its commands.

TWO – Cultural Relativism

"Homer, Sophocles, Aristotle, the New Testament and medieval thinkers differ from each other in too many ways. They offer us different and incompatible lists of the virtues; they give a different rank order of importance to different virtues; and they have different and incompatible theories of the virtues. If we were to consider later Western writers on the virtues, the list of divergences and incompatibilities would be enlarged still further; and if we extended our inquiry to Japanese, say, or American Indian cultures, the difference would become greater still. It would be all too easy to conclude that there were a number of rival and alternative conceptions of the virtues, but, even within the traditions which I have been delineating, no single core conception."(source: Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue*)

Different replies have been made to this charge. One—the *tu quoque*, or "partners in crime" response— exhibits a quite familiar pattern in virtue ethicists' defensive strategy. They admit that, for them, cultural relativism is a challenge, but point out that it is just as much a problem for the other two approaches [deontological and consequentialist ethics]. The cultural variation in character traits regarded as virtues is no greater—indeed markedly less—than the cultural variation in rules of conduct, and different cultures have different ideas about what constitutes happiness or welfare. That cultural relativity should be a problem common to all three approaches is hardly surprising…

A bolder strategy involves claiming that virtue ethics has less difficulty with cultural relativity than the other two approaches. Much cultural disagreement arises, it may be claimed, from local understandings of the virtues, but the virtues themselves are not relative to culture.

(source: http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/ethics-virtue/)

THREE: Virtue and Immorality (source: http://www.iep.utm.edu/anci-mod/#SH3c)

According to ancient ethics, a completely virtuous person, who is the bearer of all ethical virtues, is unable to act in a non-virtuous way. If a person bears one virtue, he thereby bears all other virtues as well (that is the thesis of the unity of the virtues). The practically wise person – according to Ancient ethicists - will always act in accordance with the ethical virtues. In other words, the virtuous person is always master of her emotions and, in general, will never be swamped by her emotions, which otherwise might have led her to act in a non-virtuous way.

Generally speaking, this is a quite demanding line of argumentation since it can be the case, at least according to our modern way of thinking, that a brave person who has the virtue of courage might not be able to show the virtue of liberality. However, even if one acknowledges that person A is a virtuous person, one might not be convinced that this person will never be able to act in a non-virtuous way. This particular problem has to do with the famous hypothesis of 'the unity of the virtues'.

In modern morality, utilitarianism, for example, convincingly distinguishes between the evaluation of the character of a person and his or her actions. It can easily be the case, according to utilitarianism, that a morally bad person performs a morally right action or that a morally good person performs a morally wrong action. This distinction is impossible to draw for proponents of (classic) virtue ethics because an ethically right action always presupposes that the person has an ethically good character.

11. **Make detailed notes on challenges to Virtue Theory.**

AO2 – Virtue Theory

12. There are **two** Part B questions associated with Virtue Theory: Complete these plans

♣ Whether being a good person is better than just doing good deeds.

♣ Whether virtue theory is useful when faced with a moral dilemma.

Strengths	Weaknesses
• Virtue Theory concentrate on developing a person's virtues and reducing their vices. This, according to Virtue Theorists, would automatically make the person become a 'good' person. This is because a person of good character would automatically do good actions.	• Issues of cultural relativism (ideas on the good virtues are not universal)
• Virtue Theory regards human relationships as important and stresses the need to look after those close to you.	• Virtues are not a practical guide to moral behaviour.
• Aristotle reasoned that virtues help moral agents to be a successful member of their community (which Aristotle believed would bring them happiness / eudiamonia).	• Virtues can be used for immoral acts:

c. Ethical Egoism
AO1

Altruism
(n) Selfless concern for the welfare of others - altruist (n), altruistic (adj.), altruistically (adv.)

Common good
(n) Involves people having the commitment and motivation to promote the welfare of the community (even if they must sacrifice their own time, personal preferences or money) to work together with other members for the greater benefit of all.

Cooperate
(v) To work together toward a common cause – cooperation (n), co-operator (n)

Empathy
(n) Identification with and understanding the feelings of another person – empathetic (adj.), empathic (adj.)

Egoism
the habit of valuing everything only in reference to one's personal interest; selfishness (opposed to altruism.)

Ethical decision-making
(n) Using a set of morals/values when problem-solving

Background
- Ethical Egoism is a normative ethic (an attempt to give moral agents a guide to what is right and what is wrong).
- Basically states that moral agents, when faced with a moral dilemma, ought to do what is in their own self-interest.

Ethical Egoism in detail

1. How Ethical Egoism works

- An Ethical Egoist should consider the consequences of their actions, if a particular action would create a beneficial consequence for the moral agent then this can be considered ethically good.

- For example, if a student was faced with the moral dilemma of telling the truth or lying to a teacher about a missed piece of homework; Ethical Egoism would guide the student to do the action whose consequences are in the best interests of the student.

2. Contrast with Altruism

- As we have seen Ethical Egoism concentrates on the needs of the individual and good is defined as what benefits the individual moral agent; the only obligation an ethical egoists has is to themselves. In contrasts altruism holds that moral agents have an obligation to help others.

- Altruism is an ethical principle that holds that the right and wrong of a moral agents actions depend on whether the consequences of their actions positively (good) or negatively (bad) impact other individuals, regardless of the consequences for the moral agent e.g. when deciding whether to potential sacrifice our life by running into a burning building to try and save a group of trapped people, altruism would encourage the moral agent to consider the benefit to others (saving the trapped people) regardless of our own safety (potential putting our own life in danger). Auguste Comte's defined altruism as living for the sake of others.

3. Matches Human Psychological Needs

- As far back as Ancient Greece it has theorised that humans live to maximize pleasure e.g. Philosopher Epicurus argued that human behavior was motivated by pleasure alone. The psychological terms for this type of behaviour is Psychological Egoism.

- Psychological Egoism is the view that humans are always motivated by self-interest, even if it seems to be an act of altruism i.e. when moral agents choose to help others, they do so ultimately because of the personal benefits that they expect to gain, directly or indirectly e.g. giving money to a charity to impress a potential girlfriend/boyfriend.

- Therefore, Ethical Egoism is the ideal normative ethic to follow because it supports are natural psychological state (psychological egoism). Ethic.

4. Long term interests not just short term interests

- Ethical Egoism does not necessarily always entail the moral agent pursuing short term self-interests e.g. I'll miss all my lessons at college because I enjoy lazing around in bed more. The Ethical Egoist needs to also consider long term self-interests because the fulfillment of short-term desires may prove detrimental to the self e.g. because I missed all my lessons at college I failed my A-levels and now I have a 'boring/poorly paid job'.

- Therefore, fleeting pleasure takes a back seat to longer term aims that benefit the moral agent. As James Rachels states "Ethical egoism endorses selfishness, but it doesn't endorse foolishness."

13. Make you own notes on Ethical Egoism.

Max Stirner's version of Egoism

EXTRACT MAX STIRNER VERSUS MORALITY

Since Stirner identifies the self as that which is radically unique in him, it is impossible for the self to be good or bad. 'Good' and 'bad' are universal concepts,
but the self is that which cannot be categorized under any universal. We might call
it haeccitas ("thisness") or unicity ("oneness"), if we can excuse the contradiction of
terming the unique ("this", "one") as though it were a universal ("-ness").
If the self, as Stirner insists, is "all in all," then it has no necessary concern with anything other than itself. Thus it has no concern with universals, concepts or species as such. It may be concerned with these only incidentally, insofar as their use may facilitate the pursuit of selfish interests.
The divine is God's concern; the human, man's. My concern is neither the divine nor the human, not the true, good, just, free, etc., but solely what is mine, and it is not a general one, but is—unique, as I am unique.
Nothing is more to me than myself! [p.6.]
My concern is only what pertains to me, that is, to what is radically unique in me. I do not care about any universals such as truth, justice, and freedom, except insofar as they pertain to me.
My concern or interest cannot be expressed as a general principle, not even egoism—which is why Stirner is a genuine nihilist—but it is as unique as me. That which is most truly mine or pertaining to me is myself, for I alone exemplify the uniqueness necessary to truly pertain to me, the unique one.
This radical anti-universalism is at the heart of Stirner's thought. If we lose sight of it for a moment, we run the risk of reducing him to just another egoist, such as have existed throughout history.

Daniel Castellano 2013
http://www.arcaneknowledge.org/philtheo/stirner.htm

THOMAS HOBBES

"During the time that men live without a common power to keep them all in awe, they are in that condition called war and such a war as is every man is against another man, and consequently, nothing can be unjust. The ideas of right and wrong justice and injustice have no place. In such condition, there is no place for industry; because the fruit thereof is uncertain: and consequently no Culture of the earth… no knowledge of the face of the earth; no account of time; no arts; no letters'. And so, as a result, our lives will be solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short."
(Leviathan, Ch. 14)

Max Stirner's version of ethical egoism

- Max Stirner (1806-1856) was a German Philosopher who is seen as one of the forerunners of Ethical Egoism. His main work on egoism was in his book: 'The Ego and Its Own'.

All our actions are done for Self Interest
- Stirner states self-interest to be the root cause of an individual's every action, even when he or she is apparently doing "altruistic" actions, he states "I am everything to myself and I do everything on my account."
- He argues even love is an example of selfishness because love makes me happy. In fact he sees all other people purely as a means for self-enjoyment, as he states "For me you are nothing but my food."
- Stirner justifies the above by claiming all individuals are unique and should reject any attempts to restrict or deny their uniqueness. Individuals, in order to maximise their uniqueness, must concentrate all their actions on themselves. We must treat ourselves as the 'highest being'.

Rejection of Material Gain
- Stirner rejects that Ethical Egoism is about monetary gain. Stirner has nothing but contempt for this type of egoist.
- This is because greed is just one part of the ego and to spend one's life pursuing only that part of our ego is to deny all other parts of our ego e.g. self-development, love for self-satisfaction, critical thought etc. Stirner called the pursuit of monetary gain "one-sided, narrow egoism".
- (Optional: Moreover, Stirner claims that the drive for money is not really even based on egoism, it is forced upon the individual by the workings of the capitalist market (a form of authority) that forces individuals to claim monetary reward for their labour.)

Union of Egoists
- Stirner ends his theory on Ethical Egoism by considering the idea of 'union of egoists'. The union of egoists is Stirner's alternative way of organising modern society but on egoist principles.
- People would unite in 'unions' based on free agreement (members cannot be forced to join), equality of all members (they do not involve the subordination of the individual) and the mutual self-interest of those involved (the union exists purely to help each individual in the union to achieve their own goals).
- Therefore, unions would exist to ensure they maximise an individual's self-enjoyment, pleasure, freedom, and individuality, as well as ensuring that those involved sacrifice nothing while belonging to them e.g. a type of Union of Egoists could be a marriage but as long as it was only based on mutual pleasure and self-enjoyment. Once one of the people in the union (marriage) felt they no longer gain anything from it, they could just walk away.

14. **Describe Stirner's version of Ethical Egoism.**

Challenges to Ethical Egoism

1. **Destruction of Community Ethos:**
- Ethical Egoism will inevitably lead to the destruction of a community ethos.
- A community ethos can be seen as a group of people working together for the greater good of their community. For example, a homeless charity that helps those less fortunate within a community. This is because moral agents will instead concentrate only upon their own self-interests and thus ignore community needs which rely on altruism.

2. **Social Injustices:**
- Ethical Egoism encourages the pursuit of an individual's own interests. However, an individual's pursuit of their own self-interest could lead to other individuals suffering.
- For example, a particular egoist's pursuit could be for the selfish accumulation of money e.g. Phillip Green (ex-owner of BHS). However, there is only a limited amount of money within a society therefore as one individual accumulates money it means other individuals have less. Therefore, Ethical Egoism could create the social injustice of poverty for some and mega-richness for others.

3. **Ethical Egoism as a form of bigotry:**
- Ethical Egoism encourages bigotry. A bigot is a prejudiced person, especially one who is intolerant towards different groups of people i.e. different racial, sexual or cultural groups. Bigots tend to believe their group is superior to other groups of people, therefore they divide people into themselves (and like-minded people) and others (people not like them). Forms of bigotry include racism, sexism etc.
- Ethical Egoism is a form of bigotry because it too divides people e.g. ourselves and everyone else who I can use for my own pleasure. This can lead to discrimination against 'the others' on the basis of this disparity.

AO2 Ethical Egoism

1. We cannot make an empirical generalisation that all act out of self interest as we can never accurately verify this.

2. There is some Biblical basis for this teaching – Treat others as you would like to be treated – this suggests reciprocity should be our motivation rather than the intrinsic nature of the act.

3. Moral decisions based on reason rather than emotional self interest are more likely to be accurate.

4. To reduce moral decisions to one single cause – our own self interest – belies the complexity of making moral decisions.

5. It allows for a flexible approach to moral decision making.

6. Not all our desires are in our own self interest – eg gluttony.

7. It is a theory which is based on empirical evidence.

8. To determine morality we should concentrate on acts rather than motivation; as long as the act is good, that is all that matters.

9. Often our own self interests are intermingled with the interests of others. Also, it is possible to act in our own self interest, whilst not diminishing the interests of others

10. It links with scientific understandings of human nature – Richard Dawkins "The Selfish Gene"

11. Long term interests are impossible to calculate and foresee. The future is unknowable and unpredictable.

AO2 Ethical Egoism

- We cannot make an empirical generalisation that all act out of self interest as we can never accurately verify this.

- Moral decisions based on reason rather than emotional self interest are more likely to be accurate.

- To determine morality we should concentrate on acts rather than motivation; as long as the act is good, that is all that matters.

- Long term interests are impossible to calculate and foresee. The future is unknowable and unpredictable.

- To reduce moral decisions to one single cause – our own self interest – belies the complexity of making moral decisions.

- Often our own self interests are intermingled with the interests of others. Also, it is possible to act in our own self interest, whilst not diminishing the interests of others.

- Not all our desires are in our own self interest – eg gluttony.

- It is a theory which is based on empirical evidence.

- It links with scientific understandings of human nature – Richard Dawkins "The Selfish Gene"

- It allows for a flexible approach to moral decision making.

- There is some Biblical basis for this teaching – Treat others as you would like to be treated – this suggests reciprocity should be our motivation rather than the intrinsic nature of the act.

AO2 – Ethical Egoism

♣ **11. The extent to which ethical egoism inevitably leads to moral evil (strengths and weaknesses question).**

Strengths	Weaknesses
• Supports our natural psychological state (see notes above)	• Destruction of Community Ethos (see challenges above)
• Encourages long term goals (see notes above)	• Social Injustices (see challenges above)
• Rejects material gain (see above notes)	• Ethical Egoism as a form of bigotry (see challenges above)

♣ **12. The extent to which moral decisions are motivated by self-interest.**

Decisions are motivated by self interest	Decisions are not motivated by self interest
• Our natural psychological state is egoist (see notes above)	Decisions are motivated by our virtues (see Virtue Theory notes above)
• Stirner: self-interest is needed to develop our uniqueness (see notes above).	Decisions are motivated by God (see Divine Command Theory notes above)

13. Overall AO2 for Ethics topic 1a, b and c

There is one last overall Part B to consider:

♣ Whether one of Divine Command Theory, Virtue Theory or Ethical Egoism is superior to the other theories:

To answer this question you need to use the strengths and weaknesses of all 3 theories and then come to a conclusion.