

5. (a) Explain the challenges to Divine Command Theory.

[AO1 25]

**Candidates could include some of the following, but other relevant responses should be credited.**

Candidates can start this essay with an overview of what the Divine Command Theory is. However, the emphasis of this essay is on the challenges to the Divine Command Theory.

- There are several challenges to the Divine Command Theory:

#### **The Euthyphro Dilemma**

- The Euthyphro dilemma was proposed by Ancient Greek philosopher Plato (through his character 'Euthyphro').
- There are two aspects to the dilemma:
  - (i) The argument states that if God were to command that 'X' is moral when human logic would conclude 'X' is immoral.
    - For example, 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.
  - (ii) If good is good because it is an objective standard then God is not in control. Good exists independently of God.

#### **The Arbitrariness Problem**

- The arbitrariness problem is the issue that Divine Command Theory appears to render the content of morality arbitrary i.e. morality just becomes a random choice or personal whim, rather than a system based on reason etc.
- Therefore, if Divine Command Theory is correct, 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.

#### **The Pluralism Objection**

- In a world of religious pluralism it is impossible to know which of God'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 if the husband feels he cannot live harmoniously with his wife but in Christianity it is seen that God demands that divorce can only occur if one of the partners has committed a sexual sin.
- Moreover, even if a person believes that one religion is correct, there remains a plurality 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 some Anglicans believe God does not command this.

**This is not a checklist, please remember to credit any valid alternatives.**