The Euthyphro Dilemma
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I. The Origin of the Euthyphro Dilemma

A. The name Euthyphro comes from the dialogue of Plato by that title.

B. This issue has come down to us today as the Euthyphro Dilemma.

C. Remember, it is of the nature of a dilemma that it offers two alternatives, both of which are seemingly problematic.

II. The Euthyphro Dilemma for Contemporary Theism

A. The first option says "X is good because God wills it."

B. The second option says "God wills X because X is good."
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III.A Look at the First Option

A. This option has taken on a name of its own: The Divine Command Theory

1. The Divine Command Theory states that something is good because it is willed (commanded) by God.

2. Most Christians who have embraced the Divine Command Theory are found in the Reformed tradition, i.e., that tradition of Christianity that grew out of the Protestant Reformation.
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III.A Look at the First Option

A. This option has taken on a name of its own: The Divine Command Theory

3. Obviously, because they have embraced this option, they find no real dilemma in the Euthyphro Dilemma.

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III.A Look at the First Option

B. For others who have not embraced the Divine Command Theory, this first option poses two problems.

1. The first problem is that if X is good because God wills it, then this would seem to mean that if God willed rape (or racism, or murder, or any other sin) then it would be good.
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III.A Look at the First Option

B. For others who have not embraced the Divine Command Theory, this first option poses two problems.

2. The second problem is that if X is good because God wills it, then this would make the statement "God's will is good" to be "God's will is what God wills" which is an empty claim; what philosophers call "trivially true."

3. Thus, because of these two problems the first option seems untenable for those Christians who have not embraced the Divine Command Theory.
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IV. A Look at the Second Option

A. The second option says God wills X because X is good.

B. The problem with this option is that it seems to imply a standard of good that is outside of and above God.

C. Thus, because of this problem the second option seems untenable.

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V. A Third Option for Evangelical Theism: Splitting the Horns of the Dilemma

A. Some theists claim that the Euthyphro Dilemma is in fact a false dilemma.

B. Thus, according to some theists, there is a third option available which says that the notion of good is grounded in the nature (essence, being) of God rather than the will of God.
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VI. Grounding the Good in the Nature of God

A. This solves the problem the Divine Command Theory.

B. This solves the problem of claiming that there is a standard of good outside of and above God. Rather, the standard of good is God Himself.

C. However, the problem of being trivially true and empty of moral content seems to remain.

1. This is so because if one says that good is that which is grounded in or according to God’s nature then the statement "God's nature is good" would translate into "God's nature is grounded in or according to God's nature" which is trivially true.
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VI. Grounding the Good in the Nature of God

C. However, the problem of being trivially true and empty of moral content seems to remain.

2. Some theists would claim that this raises an important philosophical point that is relevant to resolve this problem.

3. To solve this problem, some theists argue that there is a difference between the order of knowing and the order of being.
VI. Grounding the Good in the Nature of God

C. However, the problem of being trivially true and empty of moral content seems to remain.

3. To solve this problem, some theists argue that there is a difference between the order of knowing and the order of being.

(map to Johannesburg example)

4. Thus, in the order of knowing, the map is first but in the order of being Charlotte is first.
VI. Grounding the Good in the Nature of God

C. However, the problem of being trivially true and empty of moral content seems to remain.

5. In other words, one may need to know what "good" means before one can apply the word to God, but God has to exist before there can be "good."

VII. Conclusion

A. The dilemma says that good is good either because God commands it or because of some standard outside and above God.

B. The "horns" of the dilemma can be "split" by opting for a third alternative, viz., good is grounded in the nature of God.
VII. Conclusion

C. Further, this option can avoid the problem of the "trivially true" (viz., "God is good." amounts to nothing more that "God is according to God’s nature.") by maintaining that one can understand the notion of 'good' apart from understanding of the notion of 'God.' without denying that, metaphysically, the good is grounded in God.