

Problem of Evil

<u>Sub-topics</u> Problem of evil and suffering • The nature of the problem across a range of religious traditions, types of evil and suffering, moral and non-moral. • The challenge to religious belief posed by the inconsistency of the nature of God and the evident existence of evil and suffering challenging belief in the existence of God. With reference to the ideas of D Hume and J Mackie. Theodicies and solutions to the problem of suffering. With reference to the ideas of Augustine and Irenaeus. • Belief that creation was good; evil and suffering is a privationof good due to the fall of the angels and man because of the misuse of free will, soul-deciding, significance of reconciliation. • Process theodicy: God is not responsible for evil and suffering, but he is co-sufferer and cannot coerce the free will of human agents. • Strengths and weaknesses of theodicies and solutions: compatibility or otherwise with modern views about origins of life, nature of God, innocent suffering, hypothesis of life after death.	<u>Key words</u> Evil: that which produces suffering; the moral opposite of good Moral evil: events in which responsible actions by human beings cause suffering or harm Natural evil: events caused by nature that cause suffering but over which humans beings have little or no control e.g. earthquakes Theodicy: an argument or defence of the God when faced with the existence of evil and suffering in the world Inconsistent triad: from Mackie describing how the premises of evil existing cannot logically cohere with statements about the all-powerful and all-loving nature of God Privato boni: privation of good. It is the absence of good. It is not a substance, so God cannot have created it. E.g. disease is the absence of health. Ex nihilo: creation ‘out of nothing’. This concept holds that God did not create the world out of anything existing. The Fall: when Adam and Eve committed the first sin and disobeyed God. Evil as ‘seminally present in the loins of Adam’: all human beings share Adam’s guilt and sin Soul-making: how suffering can help humans to spiritually develop from the ‘image’ to the ‘likeness’ of God Eschatological justification: the pain endured is justified by spiritual union in Heaven Epistemic distance: Human created at a distance of knowledge from God to allow for free will	<u>Key scholars</u> Irenaeus J. L. Mackie St Augustine John Hick
<u>Possible H/WK/Questions</u> <u>8 mark</u> Explore ideas about the Problem of Evil. <u>12 mark</u> Assess the strengths and weaknesses of one critique of religious belief. <u>20 mark</u> Analyse the claim that the problem of non-moral (natural) evil is greater than the problem of moral evil. <u>30 mark</u> Evaluate the claim that critiques of religious belief provide decisive challenges to religion.	<u>Starting point- Important key facts</u> - How can an all-loving, all-knowing and all-powerful God allow evil and suffering to exist? Can God still exist in the face of evil and suffering in the world? This is the central question. - This is summed up by Epicurus, a Greek philosopher who died in 270BC. He wrote: ‘Either God wants to abolish evil, and cannot, or he can, but does not want to. If he wants to, but cannot, he is impotent. If he can, but does not want to, he is wicked. If God can abolish evil, and God really wants to do it, why is there evil in the world?’ - Some scholars argue that God cannot exist because of the existence of evil and suffering. They often use example of horrendous evil to demonstrate this such as the events of the Holocaust. - However, other scholars have defended God. These arguments which defend God despite the existence of evil and suffering are called theodicies. They have been developed by scholars such as St Augustine, Irenaeus, John Hick and Process Theologians and you need to be able to explain these theodicies using quotes and key terms. - St Augustine: ‘Privations of the good which we call health – are accidents. Just in the same way, what we are called vices in the soul are nothing but privations of natural good’ - Irenaeus: ‘And the harder we strive, so much is it the more valuable.’ - Genesis 1:26: ‘Then God said, ‘Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness.’ - John Hick: ‘...human goodness slowly built up through personal histories of moral effort has a value in the eyes of the Creator.’ - You need to understand the different formulations of the problem of evil such as the logical (Mackie) and evidential arguments (Hume) - You also need to explain the theodicies of Process theologians who state that God is not omnipotent. Process theologians view God as a ‘co-creator’ and ‘fellow sufferer’ who attempts to influence creating by leading it into greater harmony rather than discord.	
<u>Stretch and challenge/Suggested further reading</u> John Hick, ‘Evil and the God of Love’ John Hick, ‘Philosophy of Religion’.		

