

Key Concepts

Goodness

The quality of being like God. Putting the needs of others first.

Free Will

The God given ability to choose right from wrong freely and without being controlled.

Evil

The absence of good that results in suffering.

Incarnation

Means 'made flesh'. The belief that God became human in the person of Jesus.

Suffering

The pain or loss that harms human beings.

Natural Law

A belief that there are universal laws of right and wrong that apply to all humans at all times.

Privation

The absence of something. Catholics believe evil is an absence of good.

Conscience

A God-given feeling of right and wrong.

The Problem of Evil & Suffering

Catholic Christians, Liberal Christians and Jews believe in one God, who is omnipotent (all-powerful), omnibenevolent (all-loving) and omniscient (all-knowing). The problem caused by evil and suffering is that if God has these different qualities then he should want to end suffering and would have the power to end suffering. As suffering continues to happen then religious people ask the question: Why does the world contain so much evil and suffering?

Sources of Authority

"That which is evil...enhances our admiration of the good" (St Augustine Enchiridion)

"For what is that which we call evil but the absence of good (privation)" (St Augustine Enchiridion)

"He (God) can bring good, even out of evil" (St Augustine Enchiridion)

"A world without problems and hardships would be morally static" (John Hick: Evil and the God of Love)

Catholic response to the problem of evil and suffering (St Augustine)

Catholics believe that **free will** is a gift from God. God created humans with the ability to choose between good and evil. When humans choose the wrong thing it causes suffering. **Humans are to blame** for the suffering, not God. The story of Genesis tells how Adam and Eve decided to eat the forbidden fruit, going against God's wishes. This is the **first (original) sin**, sometimes known as the **Fall**. Original sin is a symbol that we all share some responsibility for the evil and suffering in the world. St Augustine gives three answers to the question of suffering: 1) The existence of evil helps people to appreciate the good in the world. 2) Evil is just the absence of good things. This is called **privation**. God does not cause or permit evil because evil isn't even a thing. 3) God allows suffering because he is omnipotent and good. He is always able to **bring a greater good out of suffering**.

Liberal Christian response to the problem of evil and suffering (John Hick's Soul Making)

John Hick developed the ideas of **St. Irenaeus**. According to Hick humans were made in the **image of God**, but they and the world itself were not made perfect. They need to **grow** to become spiritually perfect. Suffering and evil is the best way for humans to **develop**. Hick argues that God allows evil and suffering to happen, so that people can grow and develop in how they respond to it. Natural evil is one part of God's creation which allows humans to respond and **grow spiritually**. Hick calls this the process of '**soul making**'.

Jewish response to the problem of evil and suffering

Jews do not believe that people are born evil. They do not share the Christian concept of **Original Sin**. Jews believe they are **born free** with the feeling to do good or to do evil. The Torah teaches that God has given human beings choices and that it is important to struggle against the feeling to do evil actions by obeying God. Jews have been provided with guidance through the **Torah and mitzvot** which are actions that Jewish people should perform or avoid. By being obedient to the Torah and mitzvot Jews **can avoid evil**. Jews believe it is not possible to hide evil actions from God and each year, during the festivals of **Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur**, Jews apologise (make up for or make good) for the times when they have followed their feeling to do evil.

Exam Practice

- b) Describe what St Augustine taught about the origin of evil. (5)
d) 'Suffering is not always evil'. (15)