7.8 The Problem of Evil and Suffering: 30-minute Pack

AQA 8062 · about 30 minutes

Total Marks

Name: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / _____

Answer ALL questions.

1 Explain two contrasting views about whether the existence of evil disproves the existence of God. Refer to a philosopher of religion in your answer.

(Total for Question 1 is 5 marks)

© Revision Library | revisionlibrary.co.uk

2 This question is about the problem of evil and suffering as an argument against the existence of God. It is the AQA-style 24-mark, five-part question.

(a) State what is meant by the 'problem of evil'. **(1)**

(b) Give two forms of evil referred to in discussions of the problem of evil. **(2)**

(c) Explain Epicurus's formulation of the problem of evil. Refer to a philosopher of religion in your answer. **(4)**

(d) Explain two contrasting Christian theodicies in response to the problem of evil. Refer to a philosopher of religion in your answer. **(5)**

(e) Evaluate this statement: 'Theodicies successfully solve the problem of evil.' In your answer you should: refer to religious and philosophical teaching, refer to different points of view, reach a justified conclusion. **(12)**

© Revision Library | revisionlibrary.co.uk

(Total for Question 2 is 24 marks)

© Revision Library | revisionlibrary.co.uk

Mark scheme · 7.8 The Problem of Evil and Suffering: 30-minute Pack

Question 1

view 1: many philosophers argue evil and suffering are strong evidence against God's existence, since it is difficult to reconcile the amount and severity of suffering, e.g. the suffering of innocent children, with a God both able and willing to prevent it, oe **B1**

development: the logical form of this argument claims an omnipotent, omnibenevolent God and the existence of evil cannot both be true, since a truly all-powerful and all-loving being would remove all the evil it could, oe **B1**

view 2: other philosophers argue this does not disprove God's existence, since it may be logically possible for God to have morally sufficient reasons for allowing evil, for example to preserve genuine free will or enable moral growth, oe **B1**

development: the free will defence, developed by Alvin Plantinga, argues a world containing free creatures who sometimes choose evil is more valuable than a world of creatures with no free choice at all, so it is not a logical contradiction for God to permit the possibility of moral evil, oe **B1**

reference to a philosopher of religion made accurately, oe **B1**

Answer: Contrast: evil as evidence against God's existence vs the free will defence (Plantinga) showing no strict logical contradiction.

Question 2

(a) the challenge that the existence of evil and suffering seems inconsistent with belief in an all-powerful, all-loving God, oe **B1**

(a) Answer: The challenge that evil's existence seems inconsistent with belief in an all-powerful, all-loving God.

(b) moral evil (suffering caused by human action), oe **B1**

(b) natural evil (suffering caused by natural processes not caused by humans), oe **B1**

(b) Answer: Moral evil and natural evil.

(c) point 1: the argument, traditionally attributed to Epicurus and recorded by the later Christian writer Lactantius, sets out a dilemma about God's power and goodness in the face of evil, oe **B1**

(c) development: it asks whether God is willing to prevent evil but unable to, making God not omnipotent, or able to prevent evil but unwilling to, making God not omnibenevolent, oe **B1**

(c) point 2: the argument concludes that if God is both willing and able to prevent evil, it is unclear why evil exists at all, and if God is neither willing nor able, it questions why such a being should be called God, oe **B1**

(c) development: this formulation is used to argue the existence of evil is logically incompatible with the traditional theistic understanding of God as both omnipotent and omnibenevolent, oe **B1**

(c) Answer: The Epicurean dilemma: God's willingness/ability to prevent evil cannot both hold alongside evil's existence, without contradiction.

(d) view 1: the Augustinian theodicy, developed from the teaching of Augustine of Hippo, argues evil is not a substance created by God but a privation (absence) of good, which entered the world through the misuse of free will, first by rebellious angels and then by Adam and Eve in the Fall (Genesis 3), oe **B1**

(d) development: on this view God is not responsible for evil, since he created a perfectly good world, and both moral evil (from human free choice) and natural evil (as a consequence of the world's disorder after the Fall) result from creatures' choices rather than God's design, oe **B1**

(d) view 2: the Irenaean theodicy, based on the teaching of Irenaeus and developed by the philosopher John Hick, argues instead that humans were created imperfect and immature, and evil and suffering are necessary for 'soul-making', the process by which humans grow into the moral and spiritual likeness of God through freely-made choices, oe **B1**

(d) development: a world with no challenge or suffering would not allow the development of virtues such as courage or compassion, so on this view God allows evil and suffering as part of a longer process leading, Hick argued, to eventual fulfilment for all souls, oe **B1**

(d) reference to a philosopher of religion made accurately, oe **B1**

(d) Answer: Contrast: Augustinian theodicy (evil as privation from the misuse of free will/the Fall) vs Irenaean theodicy (evil as necessary for soul-making, developed by Hick).

(e) **L4** A well-argued, balanced answer that considers more than one point of view in a developed way, using accurate and detailed references to religious and philosophical teaching to support each point, and reaches a clear, justified conclusion. **10-12**

(e) **L3** A clear and reasoned answer that considers more than one point of view, supported by relevant references to religious and philosophical teaching, though the justification of the conclusion may be less developed. **7-9**

(e) **L2** A reasoned answer that considers at least one point of view, with some relevant supporting evidence, but with limited or no consideration of an alternative view. **4-6**

(e) **L1** One or more relevant points are made, but with little or no supporting evidence and no reasoned conclusion. **1-3**

(e) **L0** No relevant content. **0**

© Revision Library | revisionlibrary.co.uk

(e) Indicative content:

- Agree: the Augustinian theodicy protects God's omnipotence and omnibenevolence by placing responsibility for evil entirely on the misuse of free will by creatures (fallen angels and then humans), not on God, who created a good world.
- Agree: the Irenaean theodicy, developed by John Hick, offers a coherent purpose for suffering ('soul-making'), arguing moral and spiritual growth requires a genuinely challenging environment, with ultimate justice restored through fulfilment after death.
- Agree: the free will defence, developed by Alvin Plantinga, shows it is not strictly logically impossible for an omnipotent, omnibenevolent God to coexist with evil, since a world with free creatures, some of whom choose wrongly, may be more valuable than one without free will at all.
- Agree: theodicies allow believers to maintain confidence in God's goodness and power even while acknowledging the reality of suffering, which many find both pastorally and intellectually satisfying.
- Disagree: John Hick himself criticised the Augustinian theodicy as logically incoherent, since it is difficult to explain how wholly good creatures, made by a perfectly good God in a perfect environment, could freely originate evil in the first place; modern science also contradicts a historical Fall and once-perfect creation, since natural evil such as animal suffering predates the existence of humans.
- Disagree: critics of the Irenaean theodicy argue some suffering seems excessive, unequally distributed, or destructive rather than character-building, for example the suffering of infants or victims of extreme cruelty, which does not obviously contribute to 'soul-making'.
- Disagree: the Irenaean theodicy depends on the idea of universal salvation for all souls after death to make the unequal distribution of suffering in this life seem fair, which not all theists accept and which cannot itself be verified.
- Disagree: the free will defence explains moral evil but is less successful at explaining natural evil, since natural disasters, disease and animal suffering are not obviously the result of any creature's free choice.
- A balanced answer might conclude that theodicies succeed in showing God's existence is not logically ruled out by the existence of evil, but are less successful at fully justifying the scale, intensity and apparent unfairness of suffering actually observed in the world.

© Revision Library | revisionlibrary.co.uk