



RS.TC9 Solutions to the Problem of Evil and Suffering

AQA 8062 · Calculators not allowed · about 75 minutes

Total Marks

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Name: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / ____

Answer ALL questions. Show all your working.

- 1** Which one of the following best defines the free will defence as a religious response to the problem of evil and suffering in Theme C?
- ☐ A. God directly causes all suffering to test believers
 - ☐ B. Evil exists because God lacks power to remove it
 - ☐ C. God allows human beings genuine freedom, and some evil results from human choices
 - ☐ D. Suffering is an illusion and does not really exist
 - ☐ E. God punishes people with suffering to prove their guilt

(Total for Question 1 is 1 mark)

- 2** Give two brief reasons, from religious teaching, why some believers accept the free will defence as a solution to the problem of evil and suffering in Theme C.

(Total for Question 2 is 2 marks)

- 3** Outline two recognised religious responses to the problem of evil and suffering named in Theme C: Solutions to the Problem of Evil and Suffering.

(Total for Question 3 is 2 marks)

- 4** Explain two aspects of the soul-making theodicy as a religious response that tries to justify suffering in Theme C.

(Total for Question 4 is 4 marks)

- 5** Explain two contrasting Christian beliefs about why God allows suffering. Refer to Christian scripture or another source of religious authority in your answer.

(Total for Question 5 is 5 marks)

- 6** Give three features of the free will defence as taught in many religious traditions in Theme C.

(Total for Question 6 is 3 marks)

- 7** Explain two common criticisms of the free will defence as a complete answer to the problem of evil and suffering, in the Theme C context.

(Total for Question 7 is 4 marks)

- 8** Explain two ways believers might understand the claim that evil and suffering will be resolved or compensated for in an afterlife, as part of Theme C responses.

(Total for Question 8 is 4 marks)

- 9** Give two Christian teachings or passages that supporters of afterlife compensation might use to defend the hope that suffering will be made right.

(Total for Question 9 is 2 marks)

- 10** Explain the importance of religious responses to suffering for believers today, referring to Theme C ideas such as the free will defence, soul-making and afterlife compensation.

(Total for Question 10 is 6 marks)

- 11** Give three concise differences between the free will defence and the soul-making theodicy as Theme C responses to suffering.

(Total for Question 11 is 3 marks)

- 12** Evaluate the view that the free will defence successfully answers the problem of evil. In your answer you should give reasoned arguments to support this statement, give reasoned arguments to support a different point of view, refer to religious arguments and reach a justified conclusion. (Include up to 3 marks for SPaG.)

(Total for Question 12 is 15 marks)

Mark scheme · RS.TC9 Solutions to the Problem of Evil and Suffering

Question 1

- **B1** selecting option C, God allows human freedom so some evil results from human choices, cao
- **Answer: C**

Question 2

- **B1** God values genuine moral choice so must allow humans to choose good or evil, oe
- **B1** without free will acts of love and moral goodness would be meaningless, oe
- **Answer: E.g. God allows choice so moral responsibility is real; love and genuine goodness require freedom.**

Question 3

- **B1** one correct response named, e.g. the free will defence, oe
- **B1** another correct response named, e.g. soul-making theodicy or belief in afterlife compensation, oe
- **Answer: Any two named responses, for example: free will defence; soul-making theodicy; belief that suffering will be compensated in an afterlife.**

Question 4

- **B1** point 1: suffering is seen as an opportunity for moral and spiritual growth, enabling virtues like courage and compassion, oe
- **B1** development 1: experiencing and overcoming hardship helps form character and moral maturity, oe
- **B1** point 2: soul-making claims some kinds of moral goodness can only arise through facing challenges, oe
- **B1** development 2: without difficulties believers could not develop empathy, patience or self-sacrifice, which are valuable goods, oe
- **Answer: E.g. suffering permits moral growth and virtue formation; some goods like compassion require experiencing hardship.**

Question 5

- **B1** belief 1: the free will defence, that God allows humans freedom and evil results from wrong human choices, oe
- **B1** development 1: this view can be linked to Genesis 2:16-17 where humans are given a command and freedom to obey or disobey, oe
- **B1** belief 2: the soul-making theodicy, that suffering builds character and brings people closer to God, oe
- **B1** development 2: this can be supported by Romans 5:3-4 which links suffering with perseverance and character, oe
- **B1** scriptural/source reference made accurately, e.g. Genesis 2:16-17 or Romans 5:3-4, oe
- **Answer: E.g. free will defence linked to Genesis 2:16-17; soul-making linked to Romans 5:3-4.**

Question 6

- **B1** humans are given genuine moral freedom, oe
- **B1** some suffering is a consequence of human wrong choices rather than God causing it, oe
- **B1** God allows freedom so that love and moral goodness are possible, oe
- **Answer: Any three: genuine moral freedom; suffering can result from human choices; freedom allows genuine love and moral worth.**

Question 7

- **B1** criticism 1: it struggles to explain natural evil such as earthquakes which are not obviously the result of human choice, oe
- **B1** development 1: many theists try to extend free will ideas to moral laws of nature but critics say this is unconvincing, oe
- **B1** criticism 2: it may not justify horrendous evils that seem disproportionate to individual freedom, oe
- **B1** development 2: examples of extreme suffering raise the question whether free will requires allowing such severe harm, oe
- **Answer: E.g. cannot easily explain natural evil; seems inadequate for horrendous suffering that seems disproportionate.**

Question 8

- **B1** point 1: some believe God will make justice right in an afterlife so suffering will be compensated, oe
- **B1** development 1: this can mean rewards for the faithful and restoration for victims, offering hope, oe
- **B1** point 2: others see the afterlife as a place where suffering is healed and meaning given, e.g. the promise of new creation, oe
- **B1** development 2: Christian hope in resurrection and a renewed creation can be cited as a way God resolves suffering, oe
- **Answer: E.g. afterlife as place of divine justice and compensation; afterlife as healed new creation where suffering is ended.**

Question 9

- **B1** reference 1: Revelation 21:4 about God wiping away every tear, oe
- **B1** reference 2: Romans 8:18 on present sufferings not being worth comparing with future glory, oe
- **Answer: For example: Revelation 21:4 and Romans 8:18.**

Question 10

- **Level 3** (5-6): A detailed, well structured answer that explains several reasons why religious responses to suffering are important for believers, with accurate references to themes such as free will, soul-making or afterlife compensation and clear links between the reasons given.
- **Level 2** (3-4): An answer that explains some reasons for the importance of religious responses to suffering, with some supporting detail and at least one appropriate reference to a Theme C idea.
- **Level 1** (1-2): One or two simple points about the importance of religious responses to suffering, with little supporting detail.
- **Level 0** (0): No relevant material.
- **Indicative content:**
 - Religious responses can provide meaning and comfort to those in pain, helping believers cope and maintain faith.
 - The free will defence can help believers accept moral evil as a consequence of human freedom, preserving belief in an omnibenevolent God.
 - Soul-making offers a way to see suffering as morally formative, encouraging growth in virtues like compassion and patience.
 - Belief in afterlife compensation gives hope that injustices and suffering will be set right, supporting resilience and justice-oriented action.
 - These responses can influence ethical behaviour, for example encouraging forgiveness or compassion rather than resentment.
 - Different believers weight these responses differently, but they often function together to support faith in the face of suffering.

Question 11

- **B1** difference 1: free will focuses on human moral choice as cause of evil, oe
- **B1** difference 2: soul-making focuses on suffering as a means to develop virtue, oe
- **B1** difference 3: free will justifies allowing evil to preserve freedom whereas soul-making attributes purpose to suffering for growth, oe
- **Answer: E.g. free will: cause is human choice; soul-making: suffering as purpose for growth; free will preserves freedom, soul-making emphasises development and purpose.**

Question 12

- **Level 4** (10-12): A well-argued and balanced evaluation, showing clear understanding of the free will defence and strong engagement with reasons for and against it, including relevant religious material. The conclusion is justified and supported by the discussion.
- **Level 3** (7-9): A clear and relevant evaluation with at least two developed points on each side of the argument, including some religious material. The conclusion is appropriate.
- **Level 2** (4-6): A partially developed evaluation with some argument for and against the view, but with limited development or use of religious material. A simple conclusion is given.
- **Level 1** (1-3): Simple or undeveloped ideas about the free will defence, with little or no balance. Little attempt at a conclusion.
- **Level 0** (0): No relevant material.
- **Indicative content:**
 - Arguments supporting the free will defence: it preserves human moral responsibility and makes sense of why God would permit moral evil rather than directly cause it.
 - Supporters may cite Genesis 2:16-17 about humans given choice, and argue that genuine love requires freedom which God values.
 - It can be combined with other theodicies, for example soul-making or afterlife compensation, to form a wider theodicy.
 - Arguments against the free will defence: difficulty explaining natural evil such as earthquakes, tsunamis or disease which are not the result of human choices.
 - The problem of horrendous suffering, for example genocide or extreme pain, may seem disproportionate and challenge the claim that free will justifies allowing such evils.
 - Some philosophers argue God could create creatures who freely choose good, or that omnipotence and omnibenevolence are incompatible with the extent of suffering.
 - Religious responses include appeals to mysterious divine purposes, the Fall, or emphasis on eschatological justice in an afterlife, which critics may see as unsatisfactory consolation.
 - A balanced conclusion might accept that the free will defence explains some forms of evil and preserves central religious commitments, but that it is not a complete answer on its own and is best seen as part of a broader set of religious responses.