

Teacher Resource Bank

GCE Religious Studies

Candidate Exemplar Work

Unit 3B: *Philosophy of Religion*

Candidate's Response to *The Problem of Evil*



CANDIDATE EXEMPLAR WORK

GENERAL CERTIFICATE OF EDUCATION ADVANCED LEVEL



RELIGIOUS STUDIES UNIT 3B PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION

RST3B

EXAMPLE OF CANDIDATE'S RESPONSE

For this paper you must have:

- a 12 page answer book.

Time allowed: 1 hour 30 minutes

Instructions

- Use black ink or black ball-point pen.
- Write the information required on the front of your answer book.
The *Examining Body* for this paper is AQA. The *Paper Reference* is **RST3B**.
- Answer **two** questions.

Information

- The maximum mark for this paper is 100.
- The marks for questions are shown in brackets.
- In each question, part (a) tests your knowledge and understanding, while part (b) tests your skills of reasoning and evaluation.
- You will be marked on your ability to use English, to organise information clearly and to use specialist vocabulary where appropriate.

RST3B: Philosophy of Religion – *The Problem of Evil*

- 4 (a) ***Explain how natural evil may be seen as a challenge to belief in God and how the Irenaean and Augustinian theodicies respond to this challenge.***

(30 marks) AO1

Candidate Response

The problem of evil is as follows;- God is omnipotent and benevolent, but evil exists. This is a logical contradiction because if God is all powerful why does he allow evil and suffering? And if God is benevolent, surely he would also stop it. It must logically follow that he is either not all powerful, or he doesn't care and therefore not benevolent. If this is the case, then he is not the God of classical theism, and therefore doesn't deserve our worship.

This view is rejected by Christians and they look to Theodicies to try to explain why evil appears to exist. One such theodicy is the Irenaean theodicy. Irenaeus explains how God's aim is to create humans in his own image, and therefore perfect. This interpretation came from the Bible passage "let us make man in our image, after our likeness" (Genesis) where God explains his aim for mankind. Irenaeus explains how this ultimate perfection couldn't come about unless we have free will. He says that God could have created us in a way where we always did the right thing, but that would mean we are mere robots. He goes on to say how this 'perfection' without free will is not as valuable as 'perfection with freewill' where humans can develop it themselves. Hick summed this argument up by saying "A human who develops perfection is infinitely better than that of a robot."

The Augustinian Theodicy seeks to provide a reason for the existence of evil. Augustine explains how evil originally came from the 'Original Sin' as presented in Genesis, where Adam disobeyed God by taking the apple, because he mis-used his free-will given to him by God. As each human being was seminally present in Adam, this has carried down, bringing with it the evil that mis-use of free will brings. Evil is a form of punishment for the original sin. Natural evil was a product of when Adam disturbed the natural order by disobeying God.

General Comments

The general explanation of the problem of evil in the first paragraph is imprecise and not applied to the issue of natural evil. God's all-powerful nature is queried in terms of him allowing evil rather than, as it should have been, in relation to him not stopping it. The challenge to his benevolence is barely explained.

The paragraph on the Irenaean theodicy does not refer specifically to natural evil and the account given of it is about free will and its use, without any attention to how this could explain the presence of natural evil. It is generally accurate.

The paragraph on the Augustinian theodicy does make a reference to natural evil at the end when it is described as being a result of Adam's sin. The outline leading up to that is accurate.

There is no evidence in the answer that the candidate understands what natural evil is beyond the final sentence.

Level 3 (10 marks)

Very close to the descriptor for level 2 and raised above it only by the treatment of the Augustinian theodicy which is more focused on the question.

- (b) **Assess how far the Irenaean and Augustinian theodicies succeed in dealing with the problem of natural evil.**

(20 marks) AO2

Candidate Response

Together, the Augustinian and Irenaean theodicies attempt to justify the problem of evil. What they successfully do is provide us with an answer to the evil question. The question is, does the answer justify the means, for example, just because of free-will, is it fair that 6 million Jews were killed? War's in history have claimed millions of lives, and surely a benevolent God, who was all powerful, would stop it. Richard Swineburne said "if God intervened with the holocaust, then he would compromise our free will." Which is true if the theodicies are correct, but free will, or no free will, a benevolent God would not allow for the deaths of 6 million Jews. It is possible to counter that statement and say that God goodness is far more complex than human goodness, and his level of goodness may account for short-term suffering, for a long-term plan.

In direct response to the 2 theodicies mentioned. There are potential flaws. The Augustinian Theodicy explains how evil is a direct result of the Original sin. But if evil came afterwards, then how was Adam able to disobey God, in a situation where there was no evil? Schleiermacher said "A perfect world gone wrong is a logical contradiction" Therefore, if there was a situation available for Adam to disobey, evil must have been present, and therefore attributed to God.

The Augustinian theodicy also explains how there is a hell, as a punishment for wrong doers, and how evil is Also a punishment. This is particularly unjust, especially if you look at science. Through science, it is clear that Humans were not seminally present in Adam, and it is therefore unfair to punish them through evil and hell, because of his actions. Furthermore, science, e.g. Darwinism, has concluded that Adam never even existed, and that we evolved from other animals.

The Irenaean Theodicy explains how God gave us free-will in order to develop higher levels of perfection, but with this idea, comes the complications of heaven and Jesus. Firstly, everybody ultimately goes to heaven, through the development of perfection, then people need not live a good life. Also, the role of Jesus is unclear, because he was sent to free us of our sins, but ultimately, our free-choice will do that for us according to the Irenaean theodicy.

Together the two theodicies help provide explanations to the existence evil, but do not conclusively do so, because both are flawed. For example the Augustinian theodicy goes against scientific knowledge such as Darwinism. Also, in the case of case of both theodicies there is no real evidence to suggest that the holocaust was a result. Also, in response to both theodicies, it can be said that a benevolent God, free will or not, would not all for the death of 6 million Jews, or 20 million soldiers in World War 1.

Commentary

The answer is not explicitly related to natural evil – in fact the first paragraph is dealing directly with moral evil. The idea expressed in the last sentence is (apparently accidentally) relevant.

The writer has already attributed natural evil to Adam's sin in part (a), so the rehearsal of major criticisms of the Augustinian theodicy has some relevance. There is no attempt to consider, counter or evaluate the views presented. A more selective focus on the question would have improved the answer greatly.

The comments on the Irenaean theodicy are not directly relevant to natural evil. It is not really made clear why either point is a criticism.

The final paragraph explicitly relates to moral evil – understanding of what natural evil is has not been shown. It is otherwise repetition.

Summary – a rehearsal of some standard criticisms largely unapplied to the specific issue raised. Reasonably well informed on the Augustinian. No comment on, counter to or evaluation of these criticisms.

Level 4 (JUST) (10 marks)

TOTAL 20 out of 50 marks