

RELIGIOUS STUDIES TRANSITION WORK 2025

	<p>ONCE A PHILOSOPHER, ALWAYS A PHILOSOPHER.</p> <p>Over the coming weeks and months, you may voluntarily engage with any of the recommended reading materials shown below. You should then complete the mandatory task.</p>			
 <p>Books</p>	 <p>The Puzzle of God</p>	 <p>The Pig that wants to be eaten</p>	 <p>101 Ethical Dilemmas</p>	 <p>Action Philosophers</p>
	<p> www.theguardian.com/world/philosophy www.lse.ac.uk/philosophy/departments-blog/ www.ethicssage.com/ www.logicmatters.net/blogfront/ www.stephenlaw.blogspot.com/ www.philosophynow.org/ www.blog.practicaethics.ox.ac.uk/ www.rockingphilosophy.com/ www.perfectchaos.blog/category/philosophy/ www.aphilosopher.drml.com/ </p>			
	 <p>BBC: The Big Questions</p>		 <p>BONHOEFFER</p>	
	<p> Radio 4 Sunday Ethical & Topical Issues The Moral Maze - Discussion on weekly moral issues Philosophy Podcast - Informal and informative podcast on Philosophical issues for students The Religious Studies Podcast - weekly podcasts of topical issues A Romp Through Ethics for Beginners - Ethics from Oxford University </p>			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Mary Beard's Civilisations ➤ BBC: Extreme Pilgrim - Ascetic Christianity (Peter Owen James) ➤ Netflix - Messiah 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ BBC- Young, Pretty Religious and Welsh ➤ Netflix's God and Kings – The story of Moses. ➤ Sacred Rivers (Simon Reeves) 	

Mandatory task:

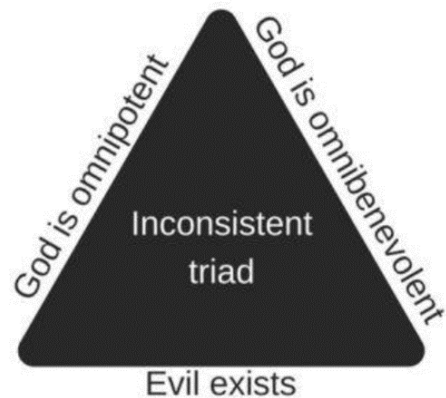
The problem of evil

Match these key words with the right definitions

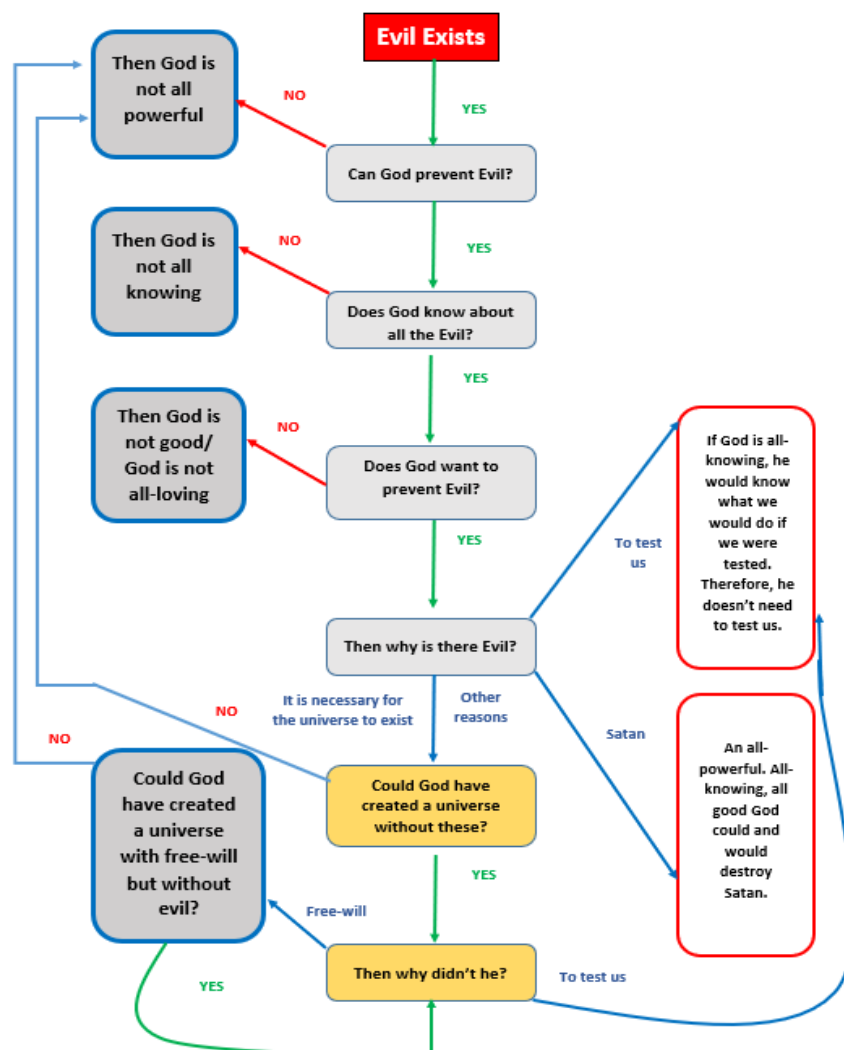
Omnipotence	Omnibenevolence	Omniscience
Theodicy	Evil	The Fall
Original Sin	Manicheism	Moral evil
Privation or privatio boni		
Purgatory	Dysteleological	Free will
Natural evil	Monotheism	Epistemic distance

Keyword	Definition
	A distance in human knowledge and understanding of God, implying that humans cannot know or be sure that God exists in order to preserve human free will.
	A lack of purpose or design in nature, often implying that things exist without a pre-ordained or ultimate goal.
	All-loving, an attribute of God.
	All-knowing, an attribute of God.
	All-powerful, an attribute of God.
	An attempt to justify the goodness of God given the fact of evil in the world.
	The ability to make independent choices between real options. The belief that human beings may freely choose their own actions.
	Evil and suffering caused by non-human agencies or nature.
	Belief in One God.
	A phrase used by Augustine to mean an absence of goodness.
	The disobedience of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden that led to all humanity being flawed thereafter. Theologians who do not take biblical accounts literally tend to use the term to refer to universal human tendency to do evil.
	The evil and suffering inflicted by humans upon the created order (i.e. creation) through deliberate misuse of human free will.
	The biblical event in which Adam and Eve disobeyed God's command and ate the fruit from the forbidden tree in the Garden of Eden; also used to refer to the imperfect state of humanity.
	A place where people go, temporarily, after death to be cleansed of sin before they are fit to live with God.
	Gross violation of standards of moral conduct, vileness.
	A dualistic religious system with Christian, Gnostic, and pagan elements, founded in Persia in the 3rd century by Manes (c. 216–c. 276 CE) and based on a supposed primeval conflict between light and darkness. It was widespread in the Roman Empire and in Asia, and survived in eastern Turkestan (Xinjiang) until the 13th century CE.

In the 3rd century BCE, an ancient Greek Philosopher, Epicurus, argued that if God is omnipotent (which also entails his omniscience and omnipresence) and omnibenevolent, there should be no evil and suffering in the world. Why? Epicurus argued that for believers, an omnipotent God has an unlimited power to stop or prevent evil and suffering. Also, an omnibenevolent God who loves everyone unconditionally should stop or prevent evil and suffering so no one suffers evil. This led him to conclude that it is reasonable to suppose that owing to the existence of evil and suffering in the world, God is either not omnipotent or not omnibenevolent or God does not exist. This (as shown in the diagram opposite) is what philosophers call the inconsistent triad. It is also known as the Logical Problem of Evil (the logical aspect of the challenge of the problem of evil). Epicurus' argument is diagrammatically shown below. Follow the green or red arrow, depending on your answer to each question.



The Logical Problem of Evil (Epicurus, Hume and JL Mackie)



More often, the challenges to belief in God are more forcibly made by those who point to the sheer quantity of evil which is perceived to exist in the world. This is known as the evidential aspect of the issue. Attempts by philosophers to reconcile the existence of evil with the existence of the God of classical theism are known as theodicies. One of the most famous was put forward by St Augustine of Hippo.

Augustine's theodicy

In an attempt to explain how evil could exist in a world that had been created good, Augustine made use of a literal interpretation of the Fall story, which today we would describe as myths: the fall of the angels and the fall of man. In the first, a group of angels, led by Lucifer (Satan), the brightest of all angels, rebelled against God and because of their free rejection of God were cast out of heaven and into hell. Satan, the great tempter, then persuaded Eve to freely disobey God's command so that she and Adam ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. This choice led to Adam and Eve being cast out of the place of bliss and into a world of suffering.

- ❖ These two stories allow Augustine to argue that humankind is being punished for the first sin, as we were all seminally present in the loins of Adam. So Original Sin, as it is called, has brought natural evil into the universe by bringing disorder into its fabric. As he was a Christian, redemption was significant to Augustine and it is important to understand that while evil came from free choices, those choices did not stop God from loving us, and atonement is brought about through the saving work brought about by his Son dying to redeem us from sin.
- ❖ This theodicy is generally described as a soul-deciding theodicy. Crucial to Augustine's theodicy is the idea of free will, in the choices people make that bring about moral evil.
- ❖ Another aspect of Augustine's theodicy was his belief that evil could not be something in itself (a material in the universe), which was a reaction to his having been a Manichee before his conversion to Christianity. He described evil as a privation, meaning that it was a lack of something good and not a thing in itself. A common example would be blindness being a lack of sight and not something in itself.

Criticisms of Augustine's theodicy

John Mackie suggested that we can all point to people we know have free will but who always choose to do the right thing. This raises the question as to why God could not create us all like this and thus do away with the existence of moral evil. The common response is that if we do not have genuine free will, then religious believers could not have the loving relationship with God that he wants and would be no more than organic robots.

John Hick's reworking of Irenaeus

Unlike Augustine, Irenaeus believed that humans were evolving, that they were born in God's image, so they could grow into his likeness. The stumbling blocks that evil places in the path of humanity are put there by God to help people to grow in his likeness.

- ❖ In his book *Evil and the God of Love*, Hick built on the Irenaean theodicy and developed his own theodicy. He did not agree with the idea that humans were created perfect and fell away to something less. He made use of modern scientific

theories such as evolution to propose that instead of being created perfect, humans were in fact in the process of becoming perfect. This is known as the vale of soul-making theodicy.

- ❖ While Irenaeus believed that we continue to grow and develop after death so that the soul-making will go on, he also maintained that those who freely reject God will be damned. Hick, however, believed in universal salvation. He argued that if suffering exists so that our souls can be made, then the existence of hell itself could be perceived as part of the problem of evil.
- ❖ Instead, he viewed hell as a kind of purgatory where those who are not yet ready for heaven, essentially those whose souls are not fully made, exist in a place of temporary suffering.
- ❖ However, this position has its own problems as the reason for free will is hard to understand if even those who have rejected God in their earthly life are still effectively going to spend all eternity with him.
- ❖ Many scholars would argue that the evidential aspect of evil is too great for Hick's theodicy to hold water. How, for example, could anyone argue that the death of a child was the stumbling block that helped the parents to grow into the likeness of God?
- ❖ Hick argued that God keeps himself at a knowledge distance from believers so that it is faith that is important rather than an actual knowledge of God's existence. He called this the 'epistemic distance'.

Using the introduction above, online search engines, and any A-Level textbook you can lay your hand upon, answer the following questions.

1. Explain the importance of the attributes of God to an understanding of the inconsistent triad

2. Explain how Augustine's background as a Manichee affected his views on the problem of evil.

3. To what extent can it be argued that this world is 'a vale of soul-making'?

4. "The evidence of terrible evils in the world is a stronger support for the non-existence of God than any logical arguments about inconsistent triangles." Evaluate this statement.

5. To what extent is the argument that evil is a privation and not something created.

6. What does Hick mean by the following quotation? "We can see no gain to the soul, whether of the victim or others, but on the contrary only a ruthlessly destructive purpose which is utterly inimical to human values."

7. Explain the importance of the concept of “epistemic distance” to Hick's theodicy.

8. Research and evaluate D. Z. Phillips' objection to a 'soul-making' theodicy.

9. Research and explain what is meant by dysteleological evil.

10. To what extent can monotheism be defended in the face of natural and moral evil?



Extra lined paper, if needed.

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