

RMPS

National 4/5

Religious & Philosophical Questions

Evil & Suffering

If God is good why do people suffer?

- Understandings of God'(s) nature
- Free will and responsibility
- Interpretations and responses to suffering

What is 'Evil'?

Definition of evil:

- A force or power that brings about wickedness and harm.
- A wicked or morally wrong act or thing.
- Deliberately causing great harm and misery.

There are 2 types of evil:

- ✗ **natural evil - suffering caused by events that have nothing to do with humans, and which are to do with the way the world is, e.g., natural disasters such as volcanic eruptions, floods or earthquakes**
- ✗ **moral (or human) evil - suffering caused by humans acting in a way that is considered morally wrong e.g., bullying, murder, rape, theft or terrorism**

"I think human beings have to take most of the blame for suffering. Fair enough, sometimes we don't set out to hurt others – accidents can happen – but so much of the suffering we see around us is a result of people's stupid selfishness and cruelty. I sometimes think the world would be better off without people in it."

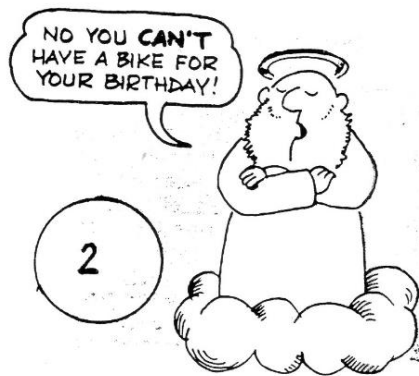
1. Is EVIL and SUFFERING just different words for the same thing?
2. Could there be suffering without evil?
3. Is there any such thing as evil?
4. Why is there more examples of moral evil than natural evil?

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1. What is one of the main arguments that put people off believing in God?
2. Why is blaming God for the bad things that happen not that simple?
3. Summarise 3 examples of evil and suffering found on the information sheets (each one should be a few sentences long)
4. Discuss the questions on page 4 and try to write down an answer to each one.
5. Are evil and suffering the same thing?
6. What is your opinion on the statement '*evil does not exist as a force opposed to good. It's just when something goes wrong*'. Do you agree or disagree? Give 2 reasons for your answer.

Understanding God's Nature

Atheist	A person who believes there is NO God
Theist	A person who believes there IS a God
Agnostic	A person who is UNSURE if there is a God



The trouble with all of these pictures is that they are human inventions. They are the result of people making God in their own image.

Humans have tried to explain and understand God who is mysterious.

The Attributes of God

The monotheistic religions believe God has shown Himself through nature, history and Holy Scriptures to have certain attributes or nature.

Characteristics of God

Omnipotent (All-powerful)	God is the Creator of the universe. There is nothing that is impossible for God.
Omniscient (All-knowing)	God has unlimited knowledge about everything. Nothing can be hidden from him.
Omnipresent (Present everywhere)	There is nowhere in all of God's creation where He cannot be found. God is everywhere, at once.
Omni –benevolent (All-loving/good)	God is perfect, good and wants the best for everyone.
Eternal (Everlasting)	God had no beginning or end. God was not created. God simply IS.

Arguments FOR God's existence.	Arguments AGAINST God's existence.
Beauty and complexity of the world/universe.	God as an invention to make people feel secure.

The astronauts said that they couldn't see God above the sky, so I don't think he exists.

He's never answered my prayers so I think I've just been talking to myself.

How could the universe and everything get here? Some-THING can't come from no-THING!

Why is there so much suffering in the world – disease, poverty, famine and disasters? There can't be a God, he wouldn't let these things happen.

When my Gran died I felt just terrible, so I prayed. I know God exists because I felt him helping me cope.

Scientists can explain everything now so there is no need to believe in God.

There are lots of things that exist but we can't see them – electricity, wind, love, atoms, hope, hate, etc. It's just silly to say that something can't exist just because we can't see it.

She says she's experienced God. All I know is she's changed, I like her now.

Look around you, someone must have created all this beauty – it's humans who are spoiling everything.

People have invented God because it makes them feel secure.

The problem of Evil and Suffering

We have studied what most religious people believe about the character and nature of God.

- all-powerful (*omnipotent*)
- all-knowing (*omniscient*)
- all-good (*omni-benevolent*)
- creator of the world
- We have also studied the evil and suffering that exists in our world today.

From this comes a logical problem, which can be set out in the following way:

- If God is omnipotent, then why does God not *stop* evil and suffering occurring?
- If God is omniscient, then surely God would have *known* that evil and suffering would have occurred, as a result of creating this world?
- If God is omni-benevolent, then surely God wants to *remove* evil and suffering from the world?

Either.....

1. God does not exist.
2. God is not all powerful.
3. God is not all good.

Those who argue that God does not exist, will often suggest that the presence of evil and suffering in the world is evidence that there is no God. Their argument can be set out in the following way:

- If God exists then surely God would want to, and could, deal with the problem of evil and suffering.
- Evil and suffering continues to occur in the world.
- Therefore, God cannot exist.

Religious Responses to the Problem of Evil and Suffering

"If God is good, why do people suffer?"

- Despite this difficult question, many people in the world still believe in God.
- We need to ask the question, why?
- Religious people have a range of reasons and tell many stories to help illustrate them.

The Boy Who Grew Up

One day a young man told his father that he wanted to leave home and try and make it in the big world.

The father knew that it was a dangerous world out there and did not want him to go. Nevertheless, the young man thought he knew best and was not prepared to listen. The young man left home with the money that was due him. It was not long before things went badly wrong. The young man wasted his money and was soon abandoned by his so-called friends. Over the years he suffered famine and poverty. He tried to get a job but the only work available was degrading.

Eventually, he decided to return home. But the young man that returned home was very different from the boy who left. He had grown up. Through hardship, setbacks and disaster he had matured. He was no longer the brash, over-confident, irresponsible boy who left all that time ago. He had experienced the hardship of life and, although it was painful, it had made him into a much better person. He could admit his weaknesses, he knew the dangers of trying to get rich quick, and he knew the value of hard work.

The father could have tried to teach him those things by telling him but the boy would never have listened. Only by going out into the world, where suffering and evil was real, could the young man grow and become a better person than he was. Becoming grown-up was hard, but there was no other way.

The Story of Salvation

God created the world out of nothing. The world God created was a good world in which there was no evil. Into this good world God placed angels and humans. God gives to both angels and humans the gift of free will. Some of the angels misuse their free will. Led by the chief of these angels, Satan, they cut themselves off from God. They become fallen angels.

Humans also misuse their free will and disobey God. Because they are no longer fit to stay, humans are required to leave the perfect garden of paradise intended for them and have to live instead in a much harsher world in which there are evils like disease, disaster, greed and violence. This is called the Fall.

But God has not abandoned humans to this evil world. God has a salvation plan to save humans. After much preparation, and when the time was right, God entered into the world as Jesus the Saviour. Through his death and resurrection, God confronts evil directly and overcomes evil. The salvation plan worked. Humans are saved from evil and now humans are fit once again to live as God intended in paradise.

The Story of Moses and Khandir

Khandir knew the ways of the Lord. One day Moses said to him, 'Khandir, you are a man of great wisdom, I wish to be with you so that I might learn more.' Khandir allowed Moses to follow him but

Khandir warned Moses that he must not question anything that he should do. Khandir said to Moses, 'You must bear patiently and not question anything I do until I myself mention it.'

The two men walked on together to a river. After a while a boat came by and the kindly captain ordered his crew to pick them up. As they went down the river Moses was shocked. Khandir had punctured a hole in the bottom of the boat. No one else on board had seen the damage Khandir had done or had noticed the water slowly seeping into the boat. At last the boat arrived close to the city. Moses and Khandir thanked the captain and the crew and got off the boat.

As the boat continued on its journey Moses could contain himself no longer. 'Did you put a hole in the boat so that it would sink and drown the crew and passengers on board? What you have done was a dreadful thing.' Khandir looked at Moses and said, 'Did I not tell you that you must not question anything I do?' Moses' mind was very troubled, but the two men continued their journey together.

At last they arrived at the city. Moses and Khandir asked the people of the city for a little food but the people turned them away. As they were leaving, Khandir saw a wall that was about to collapse. Khandir laboured hard, carefully taking each stone and resetting it so that the wall was strong and well repaired.

Moses was baffled. 'What is it you are doing, Khandir? You have laboured long hours repairing that wall. We are hungry and you could have taken payment for such hard work.'

'You have questioned me again,' said Khandir, 'and now we must part. But before we do I will tell you the truth of that which you could not bear patiently. The boat belonged to poor men. Following the boat was a king who, had the boat been undamaged, would have seized the vessel and would have brutally murdered the captain, the crew and all the passengers. Underneath the wall I repaired there was a treasure that belonged to two orphaned boys. Had the wall collapsed the two boys would have lost their treasure and suffered poverty all their lives.'

Moses lowered his head and nodded for he knew that this day he had gained a little wisdom.

The Toy Story Myth

Andy has many cool toys. One of his best toys was a radio-controlled toy car. Using the handset, Andy could make the car go forward, backward, right or left. He could make it go fast or slow or spin in a circle. All the time he had control.



One day, Andy drove the car into the neighbour's cat. His mum did not blame the car; she blamed Andy. She said, 'Andy, you are in control.'

On another day, Andy used the car to deliver to his mum some flowers he had bought for her on Mother's Day. Andy's mum did not thank the car; she thanked Andy. The car was never blamed or thanked for anything. The car was never right or wrong.

One afternoon, a nerdy friend tinkered with Andy's toy car. When the friend had finished, Andy found the car drove itself. However much Andy moved the buttons on the handset, the car did its own thing. However, the car did not just drive around and crash into things. When it came to a chair leg, it went around it. When it was on a steep slope, it slowed down. When it came to a wall, it turned around.

The car did other strange things. When the neighbour's mad dog got out and barked and snarled at Andy, without Andy doing a thing, the car powered up and drove over to the dog. The car revved its

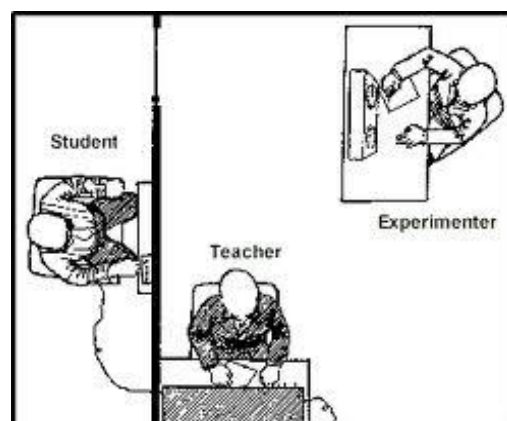
engine and sounded its horn at the dog. The dog was startled and ran away. Then, while Andy was lying in the hot sunshine, the car drove over and raised up its spoiler, protecting Andy from the sun.

When Andy talked to his nerdy friend about the car, he asked if the car was programmed to do those things. The friend said, 'No, Andy, the car is programmed to have free will. It can choose to do what it likes.'

Although Andy had no control of the car, he found that he liked his free will car much more. The car was now courageous, loyal, thoughtful, imaginative, generous and patient. Andy loved his free will car in a way that was different from all his other toys. For Andy, the free will car was so special that it was not like any of the other toys. For Andy, it was not like a toy. It was much more than that. If anything, it was more like Andy.

Stanley Milgram

Stanley Milgram was a psychologist who wanted to find out if ordinary people would carry out extreme acts of violence. He had been horrified at what people in the concentration camps had done to others during World War II. He wanted to know if there was something wrong with the people who did this – or if anyone would do it given the “right” conditions. He set up a famous experiment. This involved people giving electric “shocks” to other people when they got a question wrong (the shocks weren’t real, but the person giving them didn’t know that). He found that ordinary people were quite prepared to shock other people to death, provided that they could blame someone else for it. As long as they could say “I was just following orders”, According to Milgram, anyone is capable of great evil.



TASK:

After you have read the stories above, copy the table below, BUT, remember to REORDER the meanings as they are not currently in the correct order. You should also try to add a little detail to explain how each story manages to get across its message:

STORY	What this story teaches about suffering
Toy Story Myth	People are capable of great evil
Stanley Milgram	Hardship matures you
The Story of Moses and Khandir	God has provided an escape plan
The Boy Who Grew Up	Free will is better than being a 'robot'
The Salvation Story	We don't always see the bigger picture

Freewill and Responsibility



Freewill

- The question of freewill is often a *key issue* in philosophy and ethics.
- Many moral philosophers argue that people need to be truly free in their decision-making, if their actions are capable of being judged, and considered *morally significant*.
- In other words, if people have no choice but to act in a certain way, can we hold them accountable (responsible) for what happens as a result of them doing something?

NEW WORDS

- **Freewill** *n* 1 the ability to make a choice without outside coercion or pressure. 2 the belief that human behaviour is an expression of personal choice and is not determined by physical forces, Fate, or God.
- **Responsibility** *n* the state of being responsible, having authority or control over something, being accountable for your own actions.

Omnipotence?

- The *freewill argument* is mainly a defence of God against the challenge to his omnipotence :
 - If God is omnipotent, then why does God not *stop* evil and suffering occurring?
- This question assumes that the reason God has not stopped suffering and evil is that he is *unable* to.
- People who believe in the freewill argument think about it differently. They question whether God *should* stop suffering and evil.

1. Do you think God should stop suffering?
2. What would humans have to give up if he did?
3. What would it be like to live in a world where this was the case?

A world without suffering

Equilibrium is a film that examines the idea of a world without pain and suffering and what it would take to achieve it.

...without love, without anger, without sorrow, breath is just a clock ticking. – Mary (Equilibrium)

What's the point?

- The point that this film makes is that a life lived without freedom, choice, emotion and experience is pointless.
- These are the things that set us apart from other animals.
- And yet these are often the things which lead to suffering and evil. How?
- The freewill argument raises the same question – what would be the point in life if we were just like robots – moved around and controlled by God?
- However, with this freewill, we then have to accept responsibility that people can, and sometimes do, choose evil.

Responsibility

- Some people argue that God cannot be held responsible for things humans deliberately choose to do to each other.
- Freewill is the belief that people are *free to act* as they see fit, and especially that they are under no obligation to do bad things (or can *choose* not to do them).

Human Nature:

Insights from Christianity

- In Genesis 1:26-27 it says
 - Then God said, "Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.
- Christians believe that we have been made 'in God's image' – that he has given us his ability to choose between good and evil.
- If people are evil it will end up destroying society.
- The Bible teaches that people should: 'Love your neighbour as you love yourself'.
- God's Holy Spirit can help people to be good.

What is free will?

- Is the ability to make choices freely.
- is the ability to know and choose between right and wrong.
- Christians believe that being made in "God's image" (Genesis creation story) is showing humans ability to make reasoned choices – freewill.
- Is what some believe is what separates us from the rest of the animal kingdom.
- means you are responsible for the choices you make.
- Is this a good enough reason for the presence of evil and suffering in the world?

The necessity of suffering

Is pain and suffering always a negative thing?

Should there be suffering?

- Not all suffering is bad for us - some suffering is *absolutely necessary* to keep us alive and well.
- For example, imagine a world where there was no pain or suffering *at all*.
 - what would happen if we put our hand in a flame?
 - or ate something healthy for other creatures to consume, but poisonous for humans?
 - or if our teeth never ached?
 - or if we never felt any physical and/or emotional pain when someone hurts us?

The Purpose of Physical Pain

- Pain is the signal that something is wrong and needs to be fixed.
- Dr. Paul Brand, a great medical missionary, worked with lepers and saw the suffering that they went through.
- One of the problems with leprosy is that the leper can no longer feel pain in the leprous parts of his body, and Dr. Brand talked about what a tragedy that was. He said, "If I had the power to eliminate human pain, I would *not* exercise that right. **Pain's value is too great.**" There is a protecting purpose of pain.
- Dr. Brand said that when a healthy person has an injured leg, he develops a limp that causes him not to put weight down on it.
- A leper will sometimes wear away a wounded part of his body because he feels no pain. He might burn a cigarette down until it burns his skin and never feel it. He doesn't have pain to protect him.
- There is a correcting purpose of pain.
- It tells us that something is wrong.
- If we didn't feel pain, we wouldn't know we were sick, and we wouldn't seek an answer.



Growth because of emotional pain

Many people also argue that pain causes us to grow as people. We learn and develop through pain and it leads us to be better, more compassionate people.

Because we have experienced pain, we can care for other people when they experience pain.

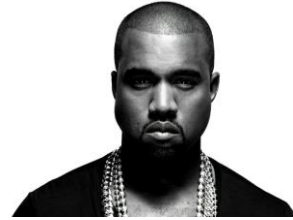
This is common thinking in today's culture:

Kelly Clarkson

*"Think you left me broken down
Think that I'd come running back
Baby you don't know me cause you're dead wrong
What doesn't kill you makes you stronger
Stand a little taller
Doesn't mean I'm lonely when I'm alone
What doesn't kill you makes you a fighter
Footsteps even lighter
Doesn't mean I'm over cause you're gone"*

Kanye West

*"Now that that don't kill me
Can only make me stronger"*



Natural Evil

- This also applies to the natural world around us.
- Often 'evil' is a process by which the world is healing itself.
- It is a natural stage in the development cycle.
- For example, not all forest fires are bad.
- Many times fires are started by lightning or the Forest Service might even start fires.
- Those fires serve a very important purpose:
 - Fires open up forests so that sunshine can get through
 - This encourages plants to grow.
 - The ash from the burned trees and bushes serves as fertilizer to make plants grow better.
 - Certain shrubs and grasses start growing very quickly after a fire.

Omniscient?

- Many Christians argue that God knows the benefits that come from suffering.
- He sees the bigger picture and knows he must allow suffering and evil in the world.

From the Bible

- Zechariah 13:9
 - This third I will put into the fire;
I will refine them like silver
and test them like gold.
- 1 Peter 5:10
 - And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast.
- Romans 8:28
 - And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who love God.

1. What is the purpose of physical pain?
2. What are the benefits of suffering?
Think about both
 - Human suffering
 - Natural suffering
3. What might Christians say about God and the benefits of suffering?

God's Plan of Salvation

Genesis 3:1-24

Below are different titles given to the story in Genesis chapter 3:

- The Genesis Story
- The Fall
- The Story of Adam and Eve



1. Man and woman living in a perfect paradise in communion with God.
2. Snake tempts woman to take fruit of the tree
3. Woman gives fruit to the man
4. Both hide from God
5. Woman will suffer childbirth/ Man will work the ground
6. Clothed and banned from the Garden of Eden

Religious Myth or History?

- People interpret this story in Genesis 3 in different ways:
 - Fundamental Christians, also known as Creationists, believe that the Bible's account of creation and the fall describes historical events.
 - They believe this story actually happened.
 - Liberal Christians believe that this account is not historical but a **religious myth** – timeless truth.
 - A religious myth helps to express religious ideas or beliefs through imaginative images – it expresses a 'truth' about life, God or human nature.

What does the story teach?

- The story in Genesis was written to show that evil and suffering came into the world through human sin.
- Humans are created free to love and obey God or not. Christianity believes humans are responsible for bringing evil and suffering into the world because through choice, humans turned away from God.
- Whether Christians believe that this story is true or a myth, they believe this was the **original sin**.
- NEW WORD
 - **Sin** n 1 the breaking of a religious or moral law. 2 any offence against a principle or standard.

Omni benevolent?

- Remember, we asked the question 'if God is omni-benevolent, then surely God wants to *remove* evil and suffering from the world?'
- Christians would argue that evil and suffering is because of human fault
- God gave mankind freewill and man sinned and caused evil and suffering.
- However, God had a plan to help because he loved mankind so much.

The Plan of Salvation

"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."
John 3:16



■ Although humans still suffer, Jesus has, through His life, death and resurrection given mankind hope. This hope is that suffering and death will be ended, and that humans will be re-united with God.

1. How do Fundamental Christians interpret the story from Genesis 3?
2. How do Liberal Christians interpret the story from Genesis 3?
3. What is the purpose of a religious myth?
4. What is original sin?
5. What was God's Plan of Salvation?
6. How does this relate to the problem of evil and suffering?

Battle of Good vs Evil

Can you think of other examples of how the Devil is portrayed in films or TV shows?

Why might some Christians be concerned about portraying the Devil in a comedic way?

Names for the Devil

- Satan
- Lucifer
- Prince of Darkness
- Demon
- The Tempter
- Beelzebub
- The Evil One
- Son of the Morning



The word **SATAN** is from Hebrew – the original language of the Old Testament.
The word **DEVIL** is from Greek – the original language of the New Testament.



The Battle between Good and Evil

For Christians, God (and Jesus) is the 'Ultimate Good'. However, some people would say that if there is an ultimate good there must also be an ultimate evil – this is what is meant when people use the word Devil or Satan.



Some people believe that Satan was originally an angel (Lucifer) and that he rebelled against God and was thrown out of heaven.

He is jealous of God's love for humanity and seeks revenge by tempting humans away from God.

Many Christians believe that people are trapped in a battle between good and evil and that ultimately good will win. They see this as a reason why there is so much evil and suffering in the world.

Read Mark 5 and write a short summary of the story.

The Story of Job

- In the Bible, Job is a good man, blameless in the eyes of God. He has kids, a wife, land, and a bunch of sheep. God is proud of Job and Satan challenges God on Job's goodness.
- Satan says that while Job loves God now, if you took away his earthly possessions and his children, he would soon change. God agrees to the challenge, and Satan unleashes a force that kills all of Job's family except his wife, kills his servants, and reduces his homes to dust.
- But Job remains loyal. He refuses to denounce God. Satan sets up another challenge. This time, God lets Satan give Job a nasty rash, boils, and blisters all over his body.
- Job still doesn't denounce God. Satan is proven wrong. Job goes back to his day job, and eventually God gives him double what he had at the outset. Job lives to a ripe old age.

Is the Devil Real?

Yes

- The Devil is mentioned in various places in the Bible.
- In Genesis, the Devil tempts Eve.
- The story of Job.
- The Temptation of Jesus in the desert.
- Exorcisms carried out by Jesus.

No

- The Devil is a symbolic way of showing how people often struggle to do the right thing.
- There is always the temptation to do things wrong.
- People choose to do evil things.

How might Christians explain the problem of evil and suffering in the world?

You should consider:

- Freewill and responsibility
- The necessity of suffering and evil
- God's Plan of Salvation
- The battle between good and evil

How might Christians explain the problem of evil and suffering in the world?

Sample Answer 1

Christians might say that there is both good and evil in the world. Good things come from God and evil things come from the Devil. Some Christians might say that evil is caused by people. Other Christians might say that God is good, but there is so much evil that he cannot stop it all. They might say that there are different types of evil and that some of it is just part of life but some is done by us. Evil might be a problem because people find it very upsetting and they might say there is too much evil in the world today. It is a problem if people are evil because they will not get into heaven. If people are evil then it causes problems for everybody. There are many types of evil things that go on such as murder and child abuse. These things cause problems for people because they cause suffering and they are also a problem for society. Most Christians believe that people who do evil will be punished and end up in hell with the devil.

Examiner's comment: this is a low level response. This person has clearly not understood the term 'problem of evil'. They have mentioned some relevant facts, but there is no real understanding.

Sample Answer 2

The existence of evil raises many questions and this is why some people see it as a problem for religions.

Some people might say there is so much evil that God cannot stop it all. Christians believe God is omnipotent, therefore he is able to stop it, but does not because it would intervene with our free-will. They also believe that God is loving and does not want us to suffer, but like a good parent must allow to learn from our mistakes.

Some Christians will refer to the story of Genesis and say that the problem of evil was brought into the world when Eve gave into temptation and ate the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge. This brought 'original sin' into the world.

Some people might say that the existence of the Devil is part of the problem of evil – if God is all-powerful, why does he not stop the devil? If the Devil tempted Eve in the Garden of Evil, why did God allow him to be there if it was supposed to be a perfect place?

Christians recognise that there is both good and evil in the world. Traditionally, good things are believed to have come from God and evil things from the Devil. Some Christians might say that evil is caused by the choices that people make and that the Devil is anything that leads us away from the will of God. They would say that there is a difference between natural and moral evil. Moral evil is caused by us – but is a consequence of us having free-will. If we want to be truly free beings we must accept that some people will make bad choices that cause suffering for others.

Examiner's comment: This answer is not much longer than the first, but is much better because it is more focused on the question and demonstrates real knowledge. Time has not been wasted on 'waffle' or irrelevant details. This is a good answer, showing a clear understanding of the question. There is a good description and explanation of a variety of ways in which Christians might try to explain the problem of evil. Information is presented clearly and there is good use of technical terms.

Non-Religious (Secular) Responses to the Problem of Evil and Suffering

What is Humanism?

- A secular, non-religious approach to life
- Not based on any type of religion or religious belief system
- Focused on humanity
 - Decisions should be made based on respect of mankind



Humanist views on Evil

- For Humanists, 'evil' is a word we use when something is so bad that the words 'wrong' or 'terrible' don't say enough.
- They do not think it is:
 - a supernatural force
 - caused by demons or devils
 - the condition humans are born in
 - a punishment or a test by a 'god'
- Humanists disagree with the Christian idea of 'original sin' - punishing humans for the sins of their ancestor would be cruel and unjust.

Humanist views on Suffering

- Humanists do recognise that suffering exists in the world.
- Some evils, like war and famine, are caused or made worse by human greed.
- Natural suffering, like illness and floods are just because the world is the way it is.
- They believe there will always be suffering in the world; we have to learn to cope with it.

Responsibility

- Humanists believe that humans have a degree of choice and control over their lives.
- Because of this we must take responsibility for the way our lives turn out.
- Humanists think we should try to understand what makes people do evil things.
- Most also believe that we have a responsibility to others to help them when they are suffering.
- Humanists believe that we must do what we can to lessen and stop suffering, because happiness is the ultimate good.
- The nineteenth century American humanist Robert Green Ingersoll summed up this philosophy in *The Gods* in 1876:
 - "...happiness is the only good; ...the time to be happy is now, and the way to be happy is to make others so."



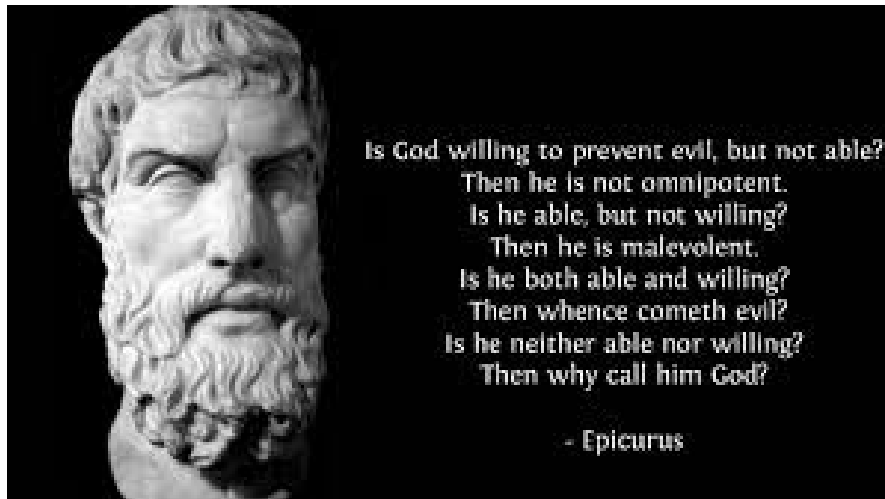
God?

Humanists argue against God and free will.

The existence of 'evil' and suffering is one of the main reasons they question God's existence.



Epicurus



Surely a loving God could have made a world in which natural disasters did not happen, and in which humans had limited free will (just as we have limited physical and mental abilities).

This 'limited free will' would mean that we were incapable of doing evil.

- They argue that most of us have this kind of limited free will and don't find it a problem.
- For example, many people could not deliberately kill a person, let alone commit mass murder.

How might a Humanist explain the problem of evil and suffering in the world?

You should explain:

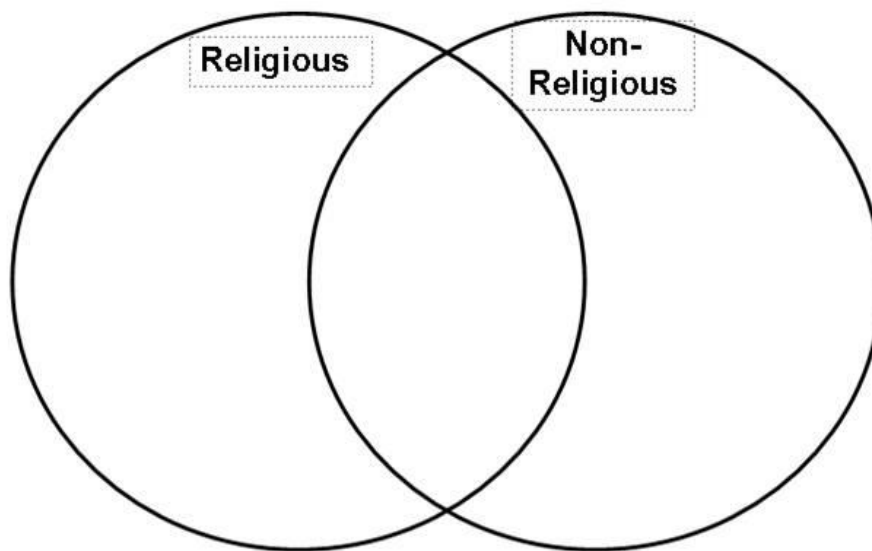
- How Humanists view the world
- What they think of evil
- What they think of suffering
- How they think people should respond

Compare/Contrast

Draw a Venn diagram

Where the circles overlap, write what these two views have in common

In the outer circles, note the differences

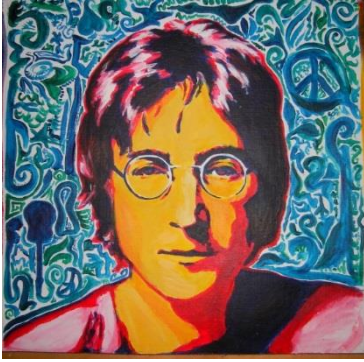


What similarities and differences are there between the Christian and Humanist views?

You should explain:

- ☐ What the two views agree on
- ☐ Where the two views are different

Fate and Destiny



"There's nowhere you can be that isn't where you're meant to be..."
John Lennon

"Our lives are not our own. From womb to tomb, we are bound to others – past and present. And by each crime and every kindness, we birth our future."



"Some say our destiny is tied to the land, as much a part of us as we are part of it. Others say fate is woven together like a cloth, so that one's destiny intertwines with many others. It's the one thing we search for, or fight to change. Some never find it. But there are some who are led."



NEW WORDS

Fate *n* the development of events outside a person's control, regarded as predetermined by a supernatural power

Destiny *n* the events that will necessarily happen to a particular person or thing in the future

Religious views on fate and destiny

- The **will of God**, **divine will**, or **God's plan** is the concept of God having a plan for humanity, and desiring to see this plan fulfilled
- Some Christians believe that God has an individual plan for their lives
- This is often linked with the idea that evil and suffering can be used by God to make you into the person he wants you to be

Non-religious views on fate and destiny

- There are many non-religious people who also have an idea that their lives are already decided
- Often this is expressed as the idea that given any particular set of circumstances, people will always make the same decisions
- Therefore, these decisions aren't really choices – they are based on what is happening at the time
- Whatever happens is the *only thing* that was ever going to happen

Determinism

- This is often known as **determinism**
- *Religious determinism* sees God as responsible for the way things happen
- *Non-religious determinism* sees circumstance as responsible for the way things happen

William Ernest Henley

Out of the night that covers me,
Black as the pit from pole to pole,
I thank whatever gods may be
For my unconquerable soul.

In the fell clutch of circumstance
I have not winced nor cried aloud.
Under the bludgeonings of chance
My head is bloody, but unbowed.

Beyond this place of wrath and tears
Looms but the horror of the shade,
And yet the menace of the years
Finds and shall find me unafraid.

It matters not how strait the gate,
How charged with punishments the scroll,
I am the master of my fate:
I am the captain of my soul.



If you believe it is a world of choice, you regard your life as a product of your own decisions. If you believe in destiny, you suspect there are greater forces defining your life's story. Even if we are each part of some great master plan, our unique journey has more personal meaning when we choose it for ourselves.

1. What are the advantages of believing that your life is controlled by external forces and that everything is decided for you?
2. What are the disadvantages?
3. How might it help you deal with evil and suffering in the world? Summarise what you know about determinism.
4. Summarise what you know about determinism.
5. What reasons might someone give for not believing in 'free will'?