

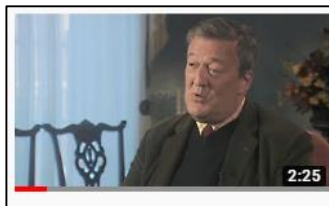
# Preparation for A-Level : Philosophy

## The Problem of Evil

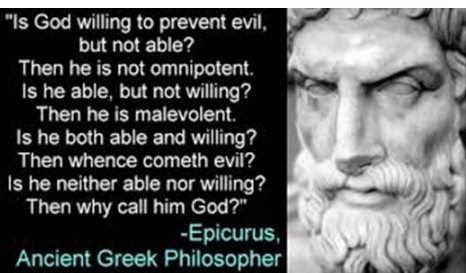
Remember this is A-Level work, it is difficult and it is ok if you do not fully understand it. It often takes several lessons with a teacher to understand it so working on your own may be difficult but give it a go.



RECAP: What is the problem of evil?  
Youtube "Stephen Fry on God"



Stephen Fry on God | The Meaning Of Life | RTÉ One  
RTÉ - IRELAND'S NATIONAL PUBLIC SERVICE MEDIA • 8.7M views • 5 years ago  
The Meaning of Life with Gay Byrne, Sunday 1st February, 10.30pm See more from The ...



If God is omnipotent (all-powerful) he would be able to create a world without evil and/or stop it  
If God is benevolent (all-loving) he would not want humans to suffer

But evil exists so...  
- Either God isn't all-loving and all-powerful  
- OR God doesn't exist

### Theodicy : A Christian response to the problem of evil

(How you can believe in an all-loving & all-powerful God that created a world with suffering in it)

There are many different theodicies such as those to the right. For your A-Level you need to understand two philosopher's theodicies: Augustine & Irenaeus

God didn't cause evil humans did.  
God created the world perfect.

Suffering is a test to prepare us for heaven or hell

We cannot fully understand God's ways

We need evil to appreciate good

### The Augustinian Theodicy

For Augustine, the world was created perfectly – indeed Creation is the “perfect emanation of God’s creative plenitude”. “God saw all that he had made, and indeed, it was very good.”  
**Genesis 1.31** All things within this creation are also perfect and without ‘evil’, and can be deemed good.

**For Augustine evil is *privatio boni* (a privation of good);** the result of a malfunctioning or corrupting of something that itself ought to be (and ultimately **is**) good. Evil is **not a force**, but a **lack of goodness** resulting from Free Will. *Quotation:* “...[Evil] is nothing but the corruption of natural measure, form or order. What is called an evil nature is a corrupt nature...It is bad only so far as it has been corrupted.”

Evil comes from the fact that in the garden of Eden (**Genesis 2**), the very knowledge of good and evil came about: The fruit was taken (i.e Adam and Eve used their **free will** badly), and the rest is history!

#### The result of Evil

> **Natural Evil** - is the loss of order in nature after expulsion from perfect Eden.

> **Moral Evil** - comes from man’s knowledge of good and evil being acted upon

Both of these forms of evil are in many ways a **punishment for man**, since all are ‘seminally present in Adam’ – **Original Sin**. Augustine suggested that this justified the fact that God appears not to put an end to suffering/intervene in the world to prevent it.

#### Soul-Deciding Theodicy

Augustine’s theodicy is known as ‘soul deciding’ because, after God will decide the fate of our soul based on how we respond to suffering in the world. Even though God did not cause evil he cannot take it away due to freewill but He has given everyone the possibility of eternal salvation through the sacrifice of Christ.

God created the world perfect as it says in Genesis. Moral evil is a result of freewill and natural evil is a result of The Fall (Original Sin). God wants us to be free of suffering so sent Jesus to give us salvation – free of suffering in heaven.



Augustine of Hippo (354-430)

## The Irenaean Theodicy

St Irenaeus argued that evil exists due to the deliberate action of an omnibenevolent (all-loving) God who wanted his creation to develop the qualities that would make the spiritually perfect.

He pointed out that Genesis 1:31 says God created the world and "it was good", he purports that this suggests God created the world with room for improvement.

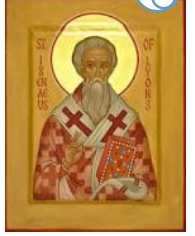
St Irenaeus believes that mankind needs evil in the world in order to become moral because it through evil and suffering we can grow. Genesis 1:27 states that humans were made in the "image of God"; we were made with freewill, able to understand morality (what is morally right and wrong) and with it we must practice and improve our souls.

God remains at an epistemic distance from us, this means he doesn't intervene but allows us to grow of our own accord be as an omnibenevolent God he wants us to choose good.

John Hick, a more recent philosopher, supported this idea when he stated "the world is seen, instead, as a place of soul making". By experiencing suffering and overcoming it, keeping our faith and learning from it we can become children of God.

God is all-loving and created us with freewill and the ability to improve so we can grow into children of God. God is good and wise and wanted a world that allowed us to choose to be 'children of God'

St Irenaeus  
(130 – 202 AD)

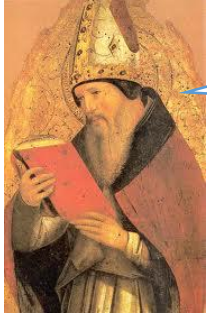


## Tasks

**Remember this is A-Level work, it is difficult and it is ok if you do not fully understand it at this point.**

1. Read this sheet carefully
2. Pick ten key words that would help you summarise Augustine's view on the problem of evil, do the same for Irenaeus. Explain these two views to someone at home, see if they understand by asking them to explain the different back to you.
3. Augustine blames humans for suffering whereas Irenaeus suggests God is the cause but for good reason. Read the speech bubbles below. What do you think is the cause of evil in the world?

## So who has the better argument?



Augustine- - the world was created perfect but was spoiled by the misuse of free will on the part of the angels and subsequently by humankind.

Irenaeus- evil has always been part of the world and exists for a reason, God did not want evil in the world but evil is necessary if there is to be good.



4. Below are a list of points, identify is Augustine or Irenaeus would make these points....

- A. God is omnibenevolent he would never create evil
- B. God wanted us to have freewill which means we need the ability to decide right from wrong so he couldn't make the world perfect
- C. God loves us so much, even though we are the cause of evil and suffering he still wants to help us get away from it by giving us eternal life in heaven through Jesus
- D. Eventually we will become children of God, when we learn from our suffering and we aspire to do good we are becoming like God

5. Read through each philosopher again and without looking see if you can write down what each philosopher believes then check against the sheet.

6. Many atheists would believe these are weak arguments and many Christians would believe one philosopher's view is stronger than the other. Can you come up with any criticisms of these two arguments? Use the quotes below to help you.

"How dare you create a world in which there is such suffering that is not our fault?"



David Hume

If God is omnipotent, omniscient and wholly good, whence evil? If God wills to prevent evil but cannot, then He is not omnipotent. If He can prevent evil but does not, then he is not good. In either case he is not God.



AZ QUOTES