

Examine Hick's soul making theodicy and how it influences attitudes to evil and suffering. (10)

Hick's soul-making theodicy is an argument that shows that evil and suffering can exist with a God of classical theism, so they are compatible and can work together. It changes our attitudes towards evil and suffering as it mentions that through evil and suffering we are able to develop as Christians and grow into good Christians who are able to make moral decisions by themselves. Evil and suffering is necessary for character development because God can watch over us and see the decisions we make rather than being controlled by God and being determined to always do good. Throughout our development, evil and suffering plays an important role, because as Christians we need to develop good moral conduct and character to be able to come closer to God. It has a positive influence on the attitudes towards evil because it helps Christians to shorten their epistemic distance. By epistemic distance I mean the distance between ourselves and God. Evil is needed to allow us to make our own decisions, so we are autonomous beings not puppets controlled by God. This means that Christians develop through the decisions they make and this reflects God's good will, because God can see all our actions and heart desires. If a Christian is able to develop morally it shows their genuine love for God and why they want to have a closer relationship with him. Just because evil and suffering exists in the world it does not mean an omnibenevolent (all-loving) and omnipotent (all-powerful) God cannot exist. God is able to exist as a God of classical theism, because the evil and suffering in the world allows Christians to use their reason and their free will to make decisions that are morally right. In addition, without evil and suffering, Christians would not be able to go on their own personal journey of developing their soul. If the world was all-good there would be no purpose of human beings as God would already know our actions and their would be no personal relationship with him as it would not be able to develop and it would not be genuine. Therefore evil and suffering should not be looked at as a negative thing but looked at positively, as it helps to build character and develop as Christians so that we can flourish. Helps to understand the world around us.

Examine the meaning of each of the following:

- **Religious language is symbolic**
- **Religious language is analogical (10)**

Religious language is both sides of language that describes God, in terms of worship or even his attributes, for example, 'God is love' (Bible). Some philosophers view religious language as cognitive and others view it as non-cognitive, cognitive is language that is either true or false and tells us something about the world, and non-cognitive is language that is neither true nor false and tells us nothing about the world, example of cognitive language is 'the sky' and an example of noncognitive language is 'ouch'.

Religious language as symbolic is most famously attributed to Tillich who argues that religious language is meaningful. He argues that religious language is symbolic, Symbolic language is language that holds immense quality and power than religious people use in order to find meaningfulness in their beliefs about the divine and God. Tillich argues that we can use symbols in order to understand God and there are different ways in which it is possible, so symbolic language through words, objects, for example. Symbolic language through words, for example, includes 'God is love'. Tillich argues that we should not (take) this literally but rather we should understand to hold a certain degree of significance which indicates that God is loving, or that God has the most love. Furthermore, he distinguished between signs and symbols in order for us to understand that symbols hold something beyond what is seen where signs simply guide us and hold no further significance.

Moreover, religious language is symbolic in terms of objects, for example the cross (crucifixion) is known to Christians worldwide as the way in which Jesus sacrificed himself, it holds deep meaning, some may even argue that it brings them closer to Jesus and a divine deity which is why Tillich's religious language is widely rendered meaningful.

Religious language as analogical was brought about by Aquinas. He differentiated between (1) univocal and (2) equivocal language. (1) is when the words have the same meaning in different situations and (2) where the same words have different meaning, he argued that we cannot talk about God using univocal language as this would limit his incomprehensibility, God is beyond our understanding and is far greater and so therefore we can describe him using univocal language, in addition we cannot use equivocal language either as using a word in a different situation when it is applies to God incomprehensibility will lose all meaning. Thus Aquinas points to analogical language (likeness). He has two different forms, one being analogy of attribution, and the other being analogy of proportionality. Analogy of attribution is the idea that we can use one word to describe two things because one created the other, seeing as God created the world and the world displays greatness so we describe it as great, we can therefore describe God as great because he created the world, even though the reference of the word is the same, the levels and types of greatness are different. The world is great because it displays wonder but God's greatness is far greater because he is far greater. Analogy of proportionality is using words to describe two things in terms of the proportionality to the reality of the object/thing/person. For example, I can say that a baby is clever and Einstein is clever but the babies cleverness is proportionate to itself (baby clever) and Einstein's cleverness is proportionate to him 'scientist clever', both these analogical methods maintain God's transcendent otherness whilst allowing us to use language to describe him.

'The ontological argument proves the existence of God.' Evaluate this claim. (15)

Many would argue that the ontological argument is proof that God exists as it is deductive and a priori meaning that it is not a 'knock-down' argument. Thus, if the premises of the argument are true, the conclusion drawn from them must also be true, in this case from the definition of God, Anselm deduced that he must exist or we would be able to conceive of a greater being. Many Christians believe that this argument does indeed prove the existence of God, as it uses the basic definition of God which even a fool could accept, to logically argue that as the greatest conceivable being, he must exist. It is proof to many as it reinforces 'belief that' God exists, which to many pre-existing religious believers is valuable to their faith in God.

However, Gaunilo's response to Anselm's proof of God's existence counters his argument in such a way that indicates that Anselm's argument is nothing more than idle speculation. Gaunilo's concept of a perfect Island draws the conclusion that we could begin to conceive of thousands of perfect objects which quite clearly do not exist. Therefore, some believe that Anselm's 'proof' cannot be absolute as can we apply his logic to countless other objects and that although we can readily accept his basic definition, it does not necessarily follow that God exists in reality.

Countering this, Anselm's response in his workings 'Proslogium 3' point out that islands are contingent whereas God is necessary, therefore the two simply cannot be compared. This, to many, makes perfect sense as any religious believers do not see God as a contingent immanent being, rather he is transcendent and unknowable and therefore comparing him to a contingent object, such as an island is completely illogical. Anselm's response gives proof to many that God does in fact exist as he is a necessary being, therefore any attempt to compare him to contingent items/beings is futile as he is from an entirely different realm. Furthermore, many see Anselm's argument as proof as it works in terms of pure logic and not empirical evidence which can easily be mistaken or false in human error. In addition, C.S. Lewis believed that Anselm's ideas were given to him from divine inspiration, offering further proof to many that his argument is proof of God's existence.

However, philosopher Kant makes an interesting argument that the concept of 'existing' is not a real predicate and adds nothing to the concept of a thing. For example, 'the cat sat on the mat' involves the predicate 'sat on the mat' with 'cat' being the subject. However, saying 'the cat exists' gives no further knowledge of it and therefore makes Anselm's argument redundant. This is valid for many as it gives them no specific knowledge about God's nature, simply that he 'exists' which provides no aspect of faith to a religious believer's ideas but simply produces a deductive argument. Many also don't see the argument as proof as Kant points out that if the argument truly a priori the question is why is it not universally accepted in the same way as, for example, $2+2=4$? Kant argues that we can accept Anselm's definition, but there is no contradiction in saying that God does not exist. We could say that 'a unicorn is a horse with horns' but it does not follow that unicorns exist, therefore Anselm's argument does not prove that God exists as if it was a priori, and God's existence could be logically proved, there would be no doubt that he existed, and the mystery surrounding him would be shattered.

In conclusion, despite offering a logical argument, Anselm's ideas are highly speculative and the criticisms given by Kant such as existence is not a predicate, and questioning why it is not universally accepted, suggest that Anselm's argument can be denied as not proof that God exists, for if he could be revealed in logic there would no longer be any mysterious element and he would factually exist, but that is not the case.

'Religion has no satisfactory response to the challenge of the verification principle.'
Evaluate this claim. (15)

The verification principle stems from a group called the logical positivists which includes Schlick and Ayer. The principle follows that only statements that are either analytical or synthetic are meaningful. If a statement is not true by logic, it must be verifiable through empirical, sensory experience. Hence the verification principle dismisses an array of language including claims about religion and morality. For example, a believer stating that 'God exists' is not true by definition and we have no way of verifying this through our sensory experiences as God is seemingly not involved or evident in our world. However, religion does challenge this along with various Christian scholars. For example, Hare argues that religious claims are simply Bliks. They are apparently irrational and unexplainable to everyone who doesn't experience them but are deeply meaningful to those who possess them. They are a set of unquestionable claims about the world, they cannot be challenged. However, a religious believer may alternatively argue that their religious claims are meaningful universally and are not simply a set of irrational assumptions.

Many believers perceive their claims to be to be cognitive and factual, they believe their claims are true. However, if believers take this kind of stance, it forces their claims to be put under the same level of scrutiny as scientific claims as their claims are supposedly factual they must hence be similarly analysed and tested in the same manner as a science claim. Hick, however, puts forward a response to the verification principle that seems to make Christianity as a whole applicable and verifiable under the principle. His view of eschatological verification suggests that Christianity is in principle verifiable as if after death humans reach eternal life in heaven with god they will know that Christianity and God are real and exist in a real world. However, this raises various issues, there is no way of truly verifying this in practice as, following death, there will be either an afterlife or not, there is no way of corresponding this on earth or on confirming it after death. Similarly an atheist could use the same line of argument to say that, in principle, the afterlife can be verified as not existing. Hick's eschatological verification can never be proven as we will be dead. Hence this seems an unsatisfactory response as it doesn't give us anything to work with in this life time, essential hence it is meaningless as it can only apply once we are dead.

Wittgenstein also attempts to resolve the issue by saying that religious language is deeply meaningful in its own language game. It has its own set of terms and rules which only make sense in the particular game. Only with knowledge and understanding can religion be understood and those external to this, not involved in the game, cannot comment or criticise religion as they cannot understand it. However, this response to the verification principle is also arguably unsatisfactory as it seems to protect religion from any kind of critique by retaining it in one type of specific sphere. However, evangelical Christians are specifically committed to spreading the word of God and inviting others into it. Similarly religion being protected in this manner seems to protect it from secular debate and development.

Many argue that religion should not be subject to the scientific demands of the verification principle, however, religion is meaningful to believers as they believe they are making cognitive and factual claims, hence perhaps such religious claims should be challenged and subject to such scrutiny. Any attempts to protect religion from the verification principle either seem to deflate its meaning and purpose or give propositions that have no value in the mortal and empirical world we live in.