

The Problem of Evil

FILM FOUR

Other Theodicies

Length: 14 minutes

TEACHERS

**To assist your lesson plans here are Twenty Questions,
with time-codes**

- {1}. According to Leibniz why is it unreasonable to give a judgement on the *'immeasurable and eternal'*? **{00:00 – 00:33}**
- {2}. How is Process Theodicy a very different sort of theodicy from the Augustinian and Irenaean Theodicies? **{00:58 – 01:17}**
- {3}. Briefly, explain in your own words how 'Process Theodicy' views God's relationship with the universe? **{01:18 – 02:16}**
- {4}. According to David Griffin, what are beings with the greatest power of self-determination capable of doing? **{02:19 – 02:35}**
- {5}. Why do some thinkers maintain that Process Theodicy is not a Theodicy at all? **{02:38 – 02:53}**
- {6}. According to David Griffin why is God the one Being capable of judging *'whether the goods achievable have been worth the price'*? **{03:14 – 03:37}**
- {7}. How does Monism view evil? **{04:00 – 04:12}**
- {8}. Complete the following sentence: "Monists believe we'd only recognize good -- -- -----" **{04:13 – 04:18}**
- {9}. What mistake in do we make according to Spinoza? **{04:19 - 04:36}**
- {10}. What is 'evil' according to Mary Baker Eddy, the founder of Christian Science **{04:43 – 05:15}**

- {11}. Write down ONE criticism of Christian Science. {05:18 – 05:37}
- {12}. Explain in a couple of sentences the basic ideas of the Free-Will Defence. {05:50 – 06:26}
- {13}. what does Richard Swinburne mean by a '*toy world*'? {06:27 - 07:03}
- {14} Why do some philosophers like JL Mackie disagree with the Free-Will Defence? {07:04 – 07:46}
- {15}. According to Alvin Plantinga why can't God cause free creatures to do only what is good? {08:01 – 08:44}
- {16}. Why, according to Protest Theodicy, is God 'guilty'? {08:57 - 09:23}
- {17}. Why is the freedom we've been given both too little and too much? {09:25 – 09:52}
- {18}. Why does John Roth think that God is '*everlastingly guilty*'? {10:32 – 10:54}
- {19}. According to Dorothy Sayers, why has God been honest and courageous? {11:30 – 12:18}
- {20}. How does Jakob Boehme see God? {12:21 – 12:57}

AFTER SCREENING

**When *The Problem of Evil* FILM FOUR finishes, ask
Your pupils/students to engage with:**

TASK 1

WRITE or SKETCH the most memorable image or statement that sticks in their mind. **SHOW** a friend their image or statement and explain the reason why they chose it. **DISCUSS** what they consider to be the most important message of the film. **EXCHANGE** their findings with the rest of the class.

TASK 2

RECALL what they've just watched. If they were able to interview any **ONE** of the people mentioned or representatives of any of the groups mentioned in the film **WHO** would they most like to cross-examine? **WRITE DOWN** the main question they would want to ask that person?

The people mentioned in the *Problem of Evil* film PART FOUR were:

Gottfried Leibniz: German Philosopher and Mathematician {1646-1716} who coined the word “*theodicy*”.

David R Griffin: born 1939, American Professor of Philosophy, author of *The Problem of Evil* and founder of The Center for Process Studies at Claremont School of Theology.

Baruch Spinoza: Jewish-Dutch Philosopher {1632-1677}.

Mary Baker Eddy: {1821-1910}, Founder of Christian Science.

Richard Swinburne: born 1934, Professor of Philosophy at Oxford University and author of *The Coherence of Theism* and *The Existence of God*.

J. L. Mackie: Australian Philosopher {1917-1981} and author of *Evil and Omnipotence*.

Alvin Plantinga: American Philosopher, born 1932, author of *God, Freedom and Evil* {1974}.

John K Roth: Contemporary Professor of Philosophy and author of *A Theodicy of Protest*.

Dorothy Sayers: {1893-1957}, British crime writer, poet and playwright of *The Man Born To Be King*: a cycle of 12 plays about Jesus {1941}.

Jakob Boehme: Shoe-maker & Mystic {1575- 1624}, who had a number of mystical experiences during his youth, culminating in a vision in 1600 revealing to him, the spiritual structure of the universe.

TASK 3

Split up into groups of three/four. Nominate a scribe from your group to take notes. You have 30 minutes for each group to discuss the following quotations, before exchanging your group’s thoughts and feelings to the rest of the class:

DISCUSSION ONE

“Those beings with the greatest power of self-determination, and hence the greatest power to deviate from the divine will for the good of the whole,

necessarily have the greatest power to influence others - for good or ill. The capacity to create and the capacity to destroy go hand in hand"
David R Griffin, *The Problem of Evil*

DISCUSSION TWO

"Evil is a negation, because it's the absence of truth. It's nothing because it's the absence of something. It's unreal because it presupposes the absence of God the omnipotent and omnipresent. Every mortal must learn that there is neither power nor reality in evil. The only reality of sin, sickness and death is the awful fact that unrealities seem real to mistaken human belief".

Mary Baker Eddy, Founder of Christian Science

DISCUSSION THREE

"The less God allows men to bring about large scale horrors the less the freedom and responsibility he gives them. We're asking that God should make a toy world, a world where things matter but not very much.....where we can choose and our choices can make only a small difference.....while the real big choices remain God's. God would be like an over-protective parent who won't let his child out of his sight for a moment, allowing him the choice of doing real harm".

Richard Swinburne, *The Existence of God*

DISCUSSION FOUR

"Everything hinges on the proposition that God possesses - but fails to use well enough - the power to intervene decisively at any moment to make history's course less wasteful. Thus, in spite and because of his sovereignty, this God is everlastingly guilty and the degrees run from gross negligence to mass murder".

John K Roth, *A Theodicy of Protest*

DISCUSSION FIVE

"For whatever reason God chose to make man as he is, limited and suffering and subject to sorrows and death, He had the honesty and the courage to take His own medicine. Whatever game He's playing with His creation, He's kept His own rules and played fair. He Him self has gone through the whole of human experience, from the trivial irritations of life and lack of money, to the worst pain, humiliation, defeat, despair and death. He was born in poverty and died in disgrace and felt it all to be worthwhile".

Dorothy Sayers, *The Man Born To Be King*

DISCUSSION SIX

“God’s capacity for suffering is proportional to his greatness; it exceeds our capacity for suffering in the same measure as his capacity for knowledge exceeds ours. Christ was prepared to endure the agonies of hell itself....and accept this suffering in order to overcome sin, death and the evils that afflict our world, and, to confer on us a life more glorious than we can imagine. So we don’t know why God permits evil; we do know, however, that He was prepared to suffer on our behalf, to accept suffering of which we can form no conception.”

Alvin Plantinga, *God, Freedom, and Evil*

DISCUSSION SEVEN

“If the greatest act in the world and the greatest crime in the world, became the source of not only endless blessing to man, but also the perfect delight to God, then there is no horror, no crime or no war which is impossible for his purpose. There is none that should destroy the Christian faith which has as its source and sustenance that cross and its victory. In a divine irony, man’s greatest crime is turned to the greatest blessing. The riddle is insoluble but the fact sure”.

P. T. Forsyth, *Justification of God*

DISCUSSION EIGHT

“Greater damage is often done to religion by those who think of themselves as their philosophical friends, than by those who present themselves as religion’s despisers. Nowhere is this damage more in evidence than in discussions of the problem of evil”

Dewi Zephaniah Phillips, *The Problem of Evil & The Problem of God*

HANDOUTS FOR PUPILS

Presentations

- **Presentation is a key skill in today’s world and this activity aims to enhance the way you present powerful ideas to an audience in SEVEN MINUTES, and, in the process improve IT, research and expressive skills, and most importantly work with others**
- **You will work in small groups in which everyone from your allocated group will be expected to address the rest of the class during your presentation, *without notes*, and *all members* of the group will be active in producing one of the following: a visual/dramatic/ musical presentation/short film/ power-point/ debate/drama/dance/‘epic’ poem/piece of artwork/ textile/ montage/ ‘graffiti wall’/ poem/play/comedy routine/historical**

reconstruction/opera/choir/song/ musical/ or rap; relating any presentation back to the Problem of Evil and, producing something that will enhance audience understanding

- Each group will be marked for knowledge, understanding and evaluation in the same way as an individual is marked for an essay. So take it seriously, but above all be creative and express yourselves and enjoy the search for the “X” factor
- Your Presentation will take place in.....
- The most highly marked groups of presenters will be encouraged to perfect their presentations with a view to recording them as a resource for future use in the classroom.

Planning Suggestions

Each group has three lessons to create a dramatic and dynamic seven minute presentation on their allocated task to the rest of the class.

Each group will have over three hours to prepare and its suggested that you spend the 1st hour ensuring that *everyone* in your group knows and understands their allocated subject; the 2nd hour planning a strategy for a dynamic and informative presentation, and the 3rd hour in creatively putting your ideas into practice, ensuring that you have a dress rehearsal before the big day.

GROUP ONE: A Presentation: “Leibniz”

In his book *Théodicée* the German Philosopher Gottfried Leibniz {1646-1716} argues that this world must be ***the best of all possible worlds*** and couldn't have been made perfect since only God can be perfect, and, in His infinite wisdom and goodness, God could never have made a better world than the one we have which is ***the best of all possible worlds***: “*It is unreasonable to give a judgment without inspecting the whole. We have knowledge of only a tiny part of that eternity which stretches out immeasurably. For how small a thing is the memory of a few thousand years which history hands down to us. And yet, out of so little experience, we rashly make judgments about the immeasurable and the eternal.*” {Gottfried Leibniz, *Théodicée*}

GROUP TWO: A Presentation: “Process Theodicy”

Process theodicy maintains that God didn't create the universe out of nothing but rather manipulated and moulded *pre-existing elements*, elements that existed before God. As such God can only persuade rather than fully control these elements because they are *self* determining and autonomous. The universe is an evolutionary process, and since things can determine themselves, God didn't create evil but instead attempts to *bring about*

goodness and order in the face of the chaotic nature of these pre-existing entities. The more complex an entity, the greater its ability and power of self-determination and consequently the greater its freedom to both create and destroy.

GROUP THREE: A Presentation: “Monism”

Monism views ultimate reality as being entirely of one substance, which is good, and evil a mere illusion in our minds. Monists think we'd recognize evils as good if only we could see the whole picture. The 17th century philosopher Spinoza, believed we mistakenly only assess things in terms of their usefulness to ourselves without recognizing their real value, as in Nature where there is no good and evil, while in the 19th century Christian Science, {based on monist thought} emerged, maintaining that the only reality of sin, sickness and death is the fact that these 'unrealities' seem real to mistaken human belief.

GROUP FOUR: A Presentation: “The Free-will Defence”

The Free-Will Defence maintains that this world is the perfect environment for providing us with the freedom to make real choices, choices which inevitably produce both good and evil outcomes. A God who intervened to prevent us from doing evil would compromise this freedom and thereby prevent us from ever developing any real virtues, for if God designed us to always do good we'd never be genuinely free.

GROUP FIVE: A Presentation: “Protest Theodicy”

Protest Theodicy accepts that because God's all-powerful He is capable of intervening in human history, but, chooses not to and is thus guilty of crimes ranging from gross negligence to mass murder. Although God has given us freedom, this freedom is either too little or too much: too little because with a little more freedom we could know more about the darker secrets of nature like cancer and too much because as free agents we're capable of unleashing the most appalling horrors upon the world.

GROUP SIX: “A Christian Theodicy”

For Christians, the God in the New Testament represented by the person of Jesus Christ, isn't a remote God unconcerned about evil and suffering, but a God made flesh, a God willing not only to get his hands dirty but prepared to have them punctured too: *“For whatever reason God chose to make man as he is, limited and suffering and subject to sorrows and death, He had the honesty and the courage to take His own medicine. Whatever game He's playing with His creation, He's kept His own rules and played fair. He Him self has gone through the whole of human experience, from the trivial irritations of life and lack of money, to the worst pain, humiliation, defeat, despair and*

death. He was born in poverty and died in disgrace and felt it all to be worthwhile". {Dorothy Sayers, *The Man Born To Be King*}

SOURCE MATERIAL FOR FURTHER WORK

FILM FOUR

The Script

Other Theodicies

'It is unreasonable to give a judgment without inspecting the whole. We have knowledge of only a tiny part of that eternity which stretches out immeasurably. For how small a thing is the memory of a few thousand years which history hands down to us! And yet, out of so little experience, we rashly make judgments about the immeasurable and the eternal.'

Gottfried Leibniz {1646-1716}, *Théodicée*

1. Process Theodicy

A very different type of theodicy from the Augustinian and Irenaean Theodicies is Process Theodicy. Process Theodicy rejects the traditional belief in God's omnipotence and therefore removes the stumbling block of why God doesn't put an end to suffering, with the simple answer that He can't. According to Process theodicy, God didn't create the universe out of nothing but rather manipulated and molded *pre-existing elements* – elements that existed before God. As such God can only persuade rather than fully control these elements because they are *self determining* and autonomous. The universe is an evolutionary process, and since things can determine themselves, God didn't create evil but instead attempts to *bring about* goodness and order in the face of the chaotic nature of these pre-existing entities. The more complex an entity, the greater its ability and power of self-determination and consequently the greater it's freedom to both create and destroy:

"Those beings with the greatest power of self-determination, and hence the greatest power to deviate from the divine will for the good of the whole, necessarily have the greatest power to influence others - for good or ill. The capacity to create and the capacity to destroy go hand in hand"

David R Griffin
The Problem of Evil

Some thinkers maintain that process theodicy isn't a theodicy at all because it removes the quality of omnipotence from God, and an impotent God wouldn't be worthy of worship. However, according to Process Theologians, God, in the face of evil, does everything he possibly can, to counterbalance it with the ongoing creation of good, and, furthermore, when evil and suffering occur God Himself suffers:

“God shares all our sufferings and while every advance in the evolutionary process has been a risk and greater sufferings were made possible, it's always been a risk for God, too. In fact God is the only being who has experienced every single evil that's occurred in creation, and as such is the one being in a position to judge whether the goods achievable have been worth the price”

David R Griffin
The Problem of Evil

2. Monism

If process theodicy alters the concept of the God of Classical Theism, monism alters the concept of evil, Monism views ultimate reality as being entirely of one substance, which is good, and evil a mere illusion in our minds. Monists think we'd recognize evils as good if only we could see the whole picture. The 17th century philosopher Spinoza, believed we mistakenly only assess things in terms of their usefulness to ourselves without recognizing their real value, as in Nature where there is no good and evil, while in the 19th century a movement based on monist thought known as Christian Science, emerged:

“Evil is a negation, because it's the absence of truth. It's nothing because it's the absence of something. It's unreal because it presupposes the absence of God the omnipotent and omnipresent. Every mortal must learn that there is neither power nor reality in evil. The only reality of sin, sickness and death is the awful fact that unrealities seem real to mistaken human belief”.

Mary Baker Eddy {1821-1910}
Founder of Christian Science

While Christian Scientists believe that evil is illusory, critics point out that evil feels real enough for those who suffer it, while if so much of what we believe is illusory how can we be sure which ethical standards should be upheld and which ones rejected?

3. The Freewill Defence

The Free-Will Defence maintains that this world is the perfect environment for providing us with the freedom to make real choices, choices which inevitably produce both good and evil outcomes. A God who intervened to prevent us from doing evil would compromise this freedom and thereby prevent us

from ever developing any real virtues, for if God designed us to always do good we'd never be genuinely free:

"The less God allows men to bring about large scale horrors the less the freedom and responsibility he gives them. We're asking that God should make a toy world, a world where things matter but not very much.....where we can choose and our choices can make only a small difference.....while the real big choices remain God's. God would be like an over-protective parent who won't let his child out of his sight for a moment, allowing him the choice of doing real harm".

Richard Swinburne
The Existence of God

Some philosophers disagree with the Free Will Defence and argue instead that God *could* have created us free, yet free to always choose good:

"If there is no logical impossibility in a person's freely choosing the good on one, or on several occasions, there can't be a logical impossibility in them freely choosing the good on every occasion. God wasn't faced with a choice between making innocent automatons and making beings who in acting freely would sometimes go wrong: there was open to him the obviously better possibility of making beings who would act freely but always go right".

J. L. Mackie
Evil and Omnipotence

Other philosophers on the other hand maintain that if God designed us always to do good, we wouldn't be free:

"God can't cause free creatures to only do what's good, for if He does they aren't significantly free because they don't do what is good freely. To make creatures capable of moral good, God must create creatures capable of moral evil. He can't give them the freedom to perform evil and at the same time prevent them from doing so. The fact that free creatures sometimes go wrong, counts neither against God's omnipotence nor against His goodness, for He could have forestalled the occurrence of moral evil only by removing the possibility of moral good".

Alvin Plantinga
God, Freedom, and Evil

4. Protest Theodicy

Protest Theodicy is in one sense not a theodicy but an *anti-theodicy* which puts God on trial. It accepts that because God's all-powerful he's capable of intervening in human history, but, chooses not to and is thus guilty of crimes ranging from gross negligence to mass murder. Although God has given us freedom, this freedom is either too little or too much: too little because with a little more freedom we could know more about the darker secrets of nature

like cancer and too much because as free agents we're capable of unleashing the most appalling horrors upon the world:

"Everything hinges on the proposition that God possesses - but fails to use well enough - the power to intervene decisively at any moment to make history's course less wasteful. Thus, in spite and because of his sovereignty, this God is everlastingly guilty.....and the degrees run from gross negligence to mass murder".

John K Roth,
A Theodicy of Protest

5. Christian Theodicy

For Christians, the God in the New Testament represented by the person of Jesus Christ, isn't a remote God unconcerned about evil and suffering, but a God made flesh, a God willing not only to get his hands dirty but prepared to have them punctured too.

"For whatever reason God chose to make man as he is, limited and suffering and subject to sorrows and death, He had the honesty and the courage to take His own medicine. Whatever game He's playing with His creation, He's kept His own rules and played fair. He Him self has gone through the whole of human experience, from the trivial irritations of life and lack of money, to the worst pain, humiliation, defeat, despair.....and death. He was born in poverty and died in disgrace and felt it all to be worthwhile".

Dorothy Sayers,
The Man Born To Be King

"It cannot be said of God that he is this or that, evil or good, or that he has distinctions in himself. For he has no tendency to anything, for there is nothing before him to which he could tend, neither evil nor good...He is a single will in which the world and the whole of creation exists. He is neither light nor darkness, neither love nor wrath, but the Eternal One."

Jakob Boehme, {1575- 1624}
Shoe- maker & Mystic

WATCH-WORDS!

The following words and phrases have been used in the film and in the resources - sometimes more than once - and are useful words and phrases for pupils and students to know, and understand:

Anti-theodicy, automatons, '*best of all possible worlds*', Christian Science, classical theism, deviate, evolutionary process, free agents, Monism, negligence, omnipotence, omnipotent, omnipresent, pre-existing elements, Process Theodicy, proposition, Protest Theodicy, self-determination, sin, sovereignty, The Free-Will Defence, theism.

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