An Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion Eduqas AS Knowledge Organiser:

Theme 3B: Challenges to religious belief - Augustinian type theodicies

Key concepts:

- A **theodicy** is a defence, usually of God's traditional characteristics, in the face of the existence of evil and suffering.

- **Augustine** did not have an overall systematic theodicy. The **Augustinian type** theodicy has several strands to it because he approached it from a variety of perspectives in a variety of different writings.
- God's creation was **perfect**, including human beings. God did not create evil. Since God is good, then evil cannot arise from God. Evil is due to human sin and is not a substance but simply a '**privation**' or lack of good.
- God created humans as free beings but they chose to sin (**The Fall**). The punishment for this was that death was introduced ('dust you are and to dust you will return') and they were banished from the garden of Eden.
- All human beings inherit Adam's **original sin** and the created order was affected by The Fall ('cursed is the ground because of you' Genesis 3:17); this explains the occurrence of natural evils. Augustine also explains this by fallen angels and seems to accept a 'warfare theodicy' at times.
- Salvation through Christ and the death of Jesus is seen as the ultimate solution; God can bring good from evil - Christ overcoming the effects of the Fall transforms it into a 'happy mistake' (**felix culpa**).
- Augustine's theodicy is often referred to as **soul-deciding** due to the fact the notion of free will is integral to being able to accept redemption through Christ.

- Some challenges, from theology and philosophy, centre around the **inconsistency** of free will with an all-powerful God. Augustine establishes that creation was perfect, but if this was the case then humans would not sin, even with free will and therefore God shares responsibility.

- In addition, even if evil is a privation of good, it is still difficult to see why God chose to create a being whom he **foresaw** would do evil. Many would also argue that evil is a real entity that needs to be explained.
- Others focus on **punishment** from an all-loving God; the concept of preparing Hell as a place of punishment is not consistent with the concept of an all-loving God. Why are we all punished for Adam's sin?
- Scientific challenges include the idea of 'original sin' not as scientifically possible. Therefore, the whole idea of **genetic culpability fails**.
- Modern science also challenges the picture of a fall of humanity from perfection and the **subsequent disruption** of the created order. Science suggests an evolutionary development, not sudden change; the process of natural selection is well evidenced.
- Geologists also see the world as more **chaotic and complex** than this.

Issues for analysis and evaluation:

Key arguments/debates
The key debate about Augustine's theodicy appears to be about whether or not the notion of original sin is acceptable today.

Evil as a privation of good appears to be a viable explanation of what it actually is, but this does not automatically account for why it's theological purpose and make it compatible with the God of classical theism.

Key questions
Can we accept the notion of original sin in today's scientific world?
Are free will and omnipotence logically compatible?

Key quotes:

"... the loss of good has received the name 'evil'." (Augustine)

"Evil is the absence of the good, which is natural and due to a thing." (Augustine)

"Nature therefore which has been corrupted, is called evil, for assuredly when incorrupt it is good." (Augustine)

"I've always leant on original sin in a difficult moment because it transfers the blame from me to everyone." (Roger Scruton)

"Their sin... eating the fruit of a forbidden tree - seems mild enough to merit a mere reprimand." (Richard Dawkins)

Key words:

Theodicy	Augustine	type	strands	perfect
substance	privation	Fall	original sin	free will
created order	fallen angels	felix culpa	soul-deciding	