eduqas

Key concepts:

- **Irenaeus**, like Augustine, did not have a systematic theodicy; unlike Augustine, Irenaeus presents God as responsible for the possibility of the existence of evil. This was deliberate because God wanted human beings to develop the qualities that would make them spiritually perfect.

- Crucial for **Irenaen type** theodicies is the first part of Genesis 1:26: 'Then God said, "Let us make humankind in our **image**, according to our **likeness**."'

- For Irenaeus, human beings were created with **partial maturity**, but the potential to develop and grow into the image and likeness of God. Thus, Adam and Eve were expelled from the garden of Eden not because they were perfect and then sinned, but because they were **immature**.

- Medieval theologians, and in last century the theologian John Hick, made an analogical distinction between 'image' (possessing the potential qualities of God's spiritual perfection) and 'likeness' (actualising those qualities).

- John Hick disliked a literal reading of Genesis; instead he argued for an **eschatological perfection** in Christ (a modern theological evolutionary idea).

- For Hick, the Fall becomes an inevitable part of maturity, realising 'the most valuable potentialities of human personality.'

- By developing second-order goods, such as courage and compassion, human beings could mature from 'image' into 'likeness'; the created order thus provides opportunity for development and becomes 'a **vale of soul-making**.'

- This process is justified through salvation; by resurrection into the afterlife human beings become fully realised in terms of both image and likeness.

- Free will and the ability to choose to do good is essential for maturity. True freedom for human beings requires an '**epistemic distance**' from God whereby human beings are unaware of the knowledge of God and make spiritual and moral decisions independently, accepting God through faith.

- This distancing is essential, ensuring that free choice is more valuable and that any sense of being 'watched' avoids any choices being compromised.

- God's **mercy** also allows for all those who reject God, or those who have no opportunity to perfect this growth and development, to take up or continue this process in the afterlife; an 'eschatological justification' of God's plans.

- Some challenge the **logical consistency** of eschatological justification. If everyone will be saved eventually then why behave morally now? Do I have free will when even if I refuse salvation initially, ultimately I will receive it?

- Others suggest that the very harsh idea that **suffering as an instrument** of a loving God is more akin to abuse of a tyrant exercising power or control in a cruel, unreasonable, and arbitrary way.

- Why is the overall **process so lengthy** and painful? Are there not any better ways to achieve spiritual and moral development?

- The evidential arguments presented by Rowe and Paul question **evil as a tool** for learning; it may sound reasonable in theory, but in reality the amount of misery caused is excessive, arbitrary in distribution and totally unnecessary.

- The reality is that it appears to be a 'soul-breaking' rather than a 'soul-making' theodicy.

Key quotes:

"...human goodness slowly built up through personal histories of moral effort has a value in the eyes of the Creator." (John Hick)

"But the man was a little one, and his discretion still undeveloped, wherefore also he was easily misled by the deceiver." (Irenaeus)

"The common cognomen of this world among the misguided and superstitious is 'a vale of tears' from which we are to be redeemed by a certain arbitrary interposition of God and taken to Heaven." (John Keats)

Issues for analysis and evaluation:

Key arguments/debates

The logical objections to Irenaean type theodicies centre around coherence.

The evidential objections question evil and suffering as a 'tool' for development', little compensated by Hick's eschatological justification.

Key questions

Is there a better way to avoid unnecessary evil and suffering?

What is the value of eschatological justification?

Key words:

Irenaeus	image	likeness	maturity
Hick	potential	actual	perfection
vale of soul-making	eschatological justification	epistemic distance	arbitrary
independently	watched	afterlife	inconsistency
Rowe and Paul	cruel	excessive	soul-breaking