OCR H573 | INDEPENDENT REVISION

A* Model Essay

Problem of Evil

Philosophy of Religion

Assess whether natural suffering can have a defensible purpose.

1,429 response words | Complete annotated PDF | Individual topic edition

What is included

A complete original response, an argument plan, paragraph-level AO1/AO2 annotations and source works for further reading.

A* describes the intended style of this teaching model. This is independently written, not an OCR-marked script or a guaranteed grade.

Use this model to study argument and evaluation, then write your own answer. Do not submit it as your own assessed work.

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Argument plan

Assess whether natural suffering can have a defensible purpose.

Thesis: Natural evil can have a limited developmental purpose only where suffering is proportionate, intelligibly connected to growth and not a replaceable means. Soul-making therefore explains some risk and struggle but cannot plausibly give every instance of natural evil a purpose; the strongest conclusion distinguishes a general purpose for a law-governed world from a particular purpose for each victim's suffering.

1. A stable, challenging world can make morally significant action and character formation possible.

Counter-argument: A general opportunity for growth does not show that each earthquake, disease or animal pain is necessary.

Interim judgement: Soul-making supplies a credible world-level purpose but overreaches if applied to every event.

2. Natural danger may be inseparable from embodied freedom, responsibility and predictable causal laws.

Counter-argument: An omnipotent God could apparently preserve regularity while reducing the scale and unequal distribution of harm.

Interim judgement: Regularity explains why intervention cannot be constant, not why this world must contain its worst horrors.

3. Apparently gratuitous animal, infant and destructive suffering counts against universal soul-making.

Counter-argument: Sceptical theism warns that finite minds cannot survey every divine purpose and consequence.

Interim judgement: Humility blocks certainty but does not erase the evidential weight of repeated non-developmental suffering.

4. Eschatological fulfilment could complete unfinished soul-making and defeat suffering.

Counter-argument: Later compensation does not retroactively make a person's agony an acceptable instrument.

Interim judgement: Hope can prevent suffering from being final, but purpose must also respect the sufferer rather than merely use them.