Evaluating the theodicy of Irenaeus

Strengths

1. Unlike Augustine`s theodicy, Irenaeus` theodicy can be reconciled with scientific evolutionary theory.

2. Unlike Augustine`s theodicy, Irenaeus` theodicy does not contain a logical contradiction between a) the idea that God created a perfect world, and b) the appearance of evil and suffering in the world.

3. Irenaeus` belief that everyone will eventually complete their development into God`s likeness and go to heaven is more in-keeping with the idea that God is loving. A less harsh theodicy toe Augustine`s which focuses on God`s justice.

4. Like Augustine`s theodicy, Irenaeus` theodicy helps to explain the existence in the world of both moral and natural suffering.

Weaknesses

a) Problems with the concept of `heaven for all`

1. The concept of `heaven for all` seems unjust: it places too much emphasis on God`s love and not enough on God`s justice.

2. The concept of `heaven for all` also creates logical problems for Irenaeus` theodicy. Where is the incentive to `develop into God`s likeness` if you know everyone is to be rewarded with heaven?

Problems with the quantity and seriousness of suffering in the world

Irenaeus` theodicy shows how the process of soul-making requires the existence of some suffering in the world. But why is there *so much* suffering? Many would argue that the quantity and gravity of suffering in the world is totally unacceptable.

Problems with the idea that any suffering is needed in the world

Irenaeus` theodicy rests on the assumption that suffering is good for humans: that God allows suffering to exist in order to help people develop into his likeness. This idea that suffering can be seen as an expression of God`s love has been challenged by **D. Z. Phillips**.

Related to this is **J. L. Mackie**`s argument that God`s gift of free will to humans is not an excuse for the existence of evil and suffering. God should simply have made human beings who would never have chosen to sin.

What do you think John Hick would say to Phillips and Mackie in response?