**Free will**

**Section 1: Religious Free will**

**Section 1a: Background**

* Free will, in religious terms, is the opposite of predestination.
* Therefore, all human moral actions are the result of the freely ‘willed’ choice of the individual. Therefore, an individual is free to decide whether to follow God’s morality or reject it.
* One implication of free will is that each individual is responsible for their own post-mortem fate i.e. heaven or hell.
* Your syllabus asks you to consider two religious theologians who supported religious free will: Pelagius (354-420) and Jacobus Arminius (1560-1609)

**Section 1b: Religious free will - Pelagius**

**Background:**

* Pelagius (354-420) was an ascetic monk: therefore, he had chosen a religious path that prioritised abstention from worldly pleasures, to pursue spiritual goals.
* On a visit to Rome (the centre of the Roman Catholic Church), he was deeply concerned with the moral standards he found there. He blamed the abundance of sin, he found in Rome, on the Catholic Church’s predestination theology - later formulised by Augustine’s Doctrine of Original Sin
* This is because, according to Pelagius, people were not trying to control their urge to sin, because they felt the urge to sin was predestined and therefore they had no choice but to sin.
* In response Pelagius argued that people had the free will to resist sin. He wrote two major works on human free will: ‘On Nature’ and ‘Défense of the Freedom of the Will’.
* Pelagius theories angered the Catholic Church establishment in Rome. So much so that Pelagius was eventually declared a heretic by the Catholic church at the Council of Carthage in 418AD.

**Part 1: the role of original sin**

* His theory, like Augustine’s, starts with an interpretation of ‘the fall’ of Adam and Eve, that created the ‘original sin’.
* Pelagius argued an omnibenevolent God would not punish all of humanity for the sins of Adam and Eve. Therefore, in contrast to Augustine, Pelagius stated that Adam’s sin only affected Adam and is not inherited by all of humanity.
* Adam simply set a bad example for humankind, whilst Christ set a good example.
* Pelagius supported this argument by considering evidence found in Deuteronomy 24:16 - ‘Parents are not to be put to death for their children, nor children put to death for their parents; each will die for their own sins.’
* Therefore, according to Pelagius, humanity does not inherit ‘original sin’ and therefore is not inflicted by an overwhelming desire to sin (see earlier notes on concupiscence by Augustine). As Pelagius stated: “we (humanity) may not seem to be forced to do evil through a fault in our nature.”
* In fact, Pelagius then went one step further by arguing that ‘the fall’ can be seen as a good thing for humanity.
* He wrote: “If God had simply instructed Adam and Eve to eat from the tree, and they had obeyed, they would have been acting like children. So, he forbade them from eating the fruit; this meant that they themselves had to make a free will decision, whether to eat or not to eat. Just as a young person needs to defy his parents in order to grow to maturity, so Adam and Eve needed to defy God in order to grow to maturity in his image.”
* Therefore, in Pelagius’ view, Adam and Eve, by choosing to eat from the forbidden tree, were illustrating to God that they were mature enough to receive the gift of free will. It is this, free will, that humanity inherits from Adam and Eve i.e. that all people are responsible, to God, for their own actions.

**Part 2: free will is used to follow God’s laws**

* Therefore, Pelagius believed that people can use their freewill to follow God’s moral law; such as following the commandments.
* Pelagius believed that following the commandments was within human free will capabilities, because a loving God would not create commandments that humans did not have the capacity to follow. This is the Grace of Revelation – through the scriptures God reveals his will. As Pelagius stated: “No one knows better the true measure of our strength than He who has given it to us ……”
* When humanity freely chose to resist a temptation and thus keep to a commandment, Pelagius referred to it as ‘doing good works’.

**Part 3: the role of ‘God’s grace’ in salvation**

* In the next part of his theory Pelagius wanted to make it clear, he was NOT arguing that humanity was completely able to fulfil the law (commandments etc) without God’s help.
* Instead, Pelagius argued that all ‘good works’ were carried out only with the grace of God. However, Pelagius saw God’s grace as enabling, not forcing, good works.
* What he means by this is that God is acting as a guide to do good works. God tries to guide humanity towards doing good but within the constraints of human free will.
* Humans possess the natural ability to seek God and Original Grace is God’s way of enabling this.
* Therefore, humanity has the free will capacity to ignore God’s guidance and be sinful. In fact, Pelagius believes this ability to sin is actually a good thing because it emphasises the goodness when a person does do good works. This is a point Pelagius argued when he stated: **“this very capacity to do evil is also good – good, I say. Because it makes the good part better by making it voluntary and independent.”**
* Therefore, Pelagius believed, that people do have the free will to choose to do good works, or be sinful. However, when they freely choose to do good works, it is through the guiding grace of God. As Pelagius states: **“Free will is in all good works always assisted by divine help.”**

**Part 4: Universal atonement**

* Pelagius believed that if people, with their free will, choose not to follow God’s commandments, they can still freely seek forgiveness. through God’s grace people can be forgiven for their sins and thus achieve salvation (the Grace of Pardon)
* This is because Pelagius stated that God grants atonement, through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, to all those who freely choose to have faith in him. God can foretell who will accept the Grace of Pardon – this is conditional election. The ‘condition’ your faith, is that you must freely accept Christ as your Saviour.
* Therefore, Pelagius is putting forward the idea of universal atonement i.e. Christ's death on the cross was for the forgiveness of all humanity.
* However, Pelagius does clarify this slightly. He argued simply freely asking for forgiveness is not enough to receive God’s atonement. Repentance must be more than freely asking for forgiveness, it should also involve choosing not to do that sin again.

**Section 1b: Religious free will - Arminius**

**Background:**

* Jacobus Arminius (1560-1609) was a student of Theodore Beza. Beza was the son-in-law and successor of predestination supporter John Calvin. In his early life Arminius identified as a Calvinist.
* (I’ve broken Arminius’ free will theory into 4 parts – to make it easier to understand):

**Part 1: denial of predestination**

* Arminius eventually rejected Calvinism. This is because he came to believe that God needed to be defended against Calvinist predestination claims.
* This is because Arminius believed Calvinist predestination ideas reduced humanity to God’s pre-programmed minions. That God just used humanity as a ‘play thing’ doing only as He willed.
* One particular element, of this, that Arminius highlighted was that if predestination was correct then God must be responsible for all evil carried out by humanity. If humans only do as God will’s then it must be God’s will that causes all evil.
* Therefore, Arminius stated he needed to defend God against predestination theories, so that: **“God might not be considered the author of sin, nor man an automation in the hands of God.”**
* Arminius believed in conditional predestination – that God can foresee who will gain salvation through their own faith in Christ.

**Part 2: the effect of original sin on free will**

* Unlike the earlier free will theology by Pelagius (see above notes), Arminius believed that original sin (when Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit) was bad for humankind.
* This is because, Arminius argued, all of humanity do inherit original sin from Adam. Therefore, Arminius argues that humanities free will is compromised. As Arminius states: **"In this [fallen] state, the free will of man towards the true good is wounded, infirm, bent, and weakened.”**
* Therefore, like Calvin’s predestination argument (see earlier notes), Arminius believed that if left in this state a person’s natural impulse would be to sin.

**Part 3: God's 'prevenient' grace (the Holy Spirit) allows humans to exercise freewill**

* However, unlike Calvin’s predestination doctrine, Arminius believed that ‘the fall’ did not completely fill humanity with the predestination to sin. Therefore, humanity was not necessarily predestined to continually sin.
* This is because of God’s grace. God’s grace, according to Arminius, is associated with the Holy Spirit. This link between God’s grace and the Holy Spirit is called ‘prevenient grace’. This is because it is God’s grace precedes each moral decision.
* Arminius believes that within all humanity God has placed his Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is seen by some Christians as the third divine person of ‘The Trinity’ i.e. the triune nature of God: the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
* Arminius believed that the Holy Spirit is the part of God that encourages all people to do good works. As Arminius stated the Holy Spirit will: **"fight against Satan, sin, the world and their own flesh.”**
* Arminius believed that the Holy Spirit is ever present to aid and assist all people through the variety of temptations they may face.

**Part 4: the Elect and the possibility of rejecting God's grace**

* However, the guidance provided by the Holy Spirit is based on a person’s own will to follow through on the guidance of the Holy Spirit. As Arminius stated: **“provided they (believers) stand prepared for the battle, implore his help, and be not wanting to themselves, the Spirit preserves them from falling."**
* Therefore, a person’s impulse to sin, because of their inherited ‘original sin’, is balanced by the guidance of the God’s Holy Spirit.
* Arminius makes it clear that the Holy Spirit only balances humanities impulse to sin, it does not override it. This is because the Holy Spirit does not force itself on to a person; it acts only as a God given moral guide. As Arminius states: **“God has limited his control in correspondence with man's freedom.”**
* Therefore, all humanity has the freewill to decide whether to follow the will of the God’s Holy Spirit or give in to their natural inclination to sin. Thus, all moral agents have the ability to be saved from sin, but only if they freely follow the guidance of the Holy Spirit.
* Therefore, God has provided the possibility of salvation for all of humanity, but His provision only becomes effective for those who, of their own free will, choose to cooperate with His holy spirit and thus accept God’s offer of grace.
* People can also freely choose to resist God’s grace and therefore thwart God’s attempt at salvation.

**Section 2: Free will (a.k.a. Libertarianism) from Philosophy, Science and Psychology**

**Section 2a: Background**

* Philosophical, Scientific and Psychological forms of free will are often referred to as ‘libertarianism’.
* Libertarianism is the idea that people are completely free to act i.e. people have complete morally responsible for their own actions.
* You will consider 3 types of libertarianism: Philosophical, Scientific and Psychological.

**Section 2b - Philosophical Libertarianism by Jean-Paul Sartre**

**Background**

* Philosophy has several supports for free will. However, your syllabus wants you to specifically consider philosophical support, for libertarianism, from the French existentialist (check out this term on the internet) philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-80).
* Sartre’s libertarian beliefs can be summed up by the following quote: **“there is no determinism—man is free, man is freedom.”**

**Freedom is the result of two things: no God and self-consciousness**

1. **No God**

* Sartre starts his libertarian theory by arguing God does not exist. This can be seen when he stated: **“There is no God, so man must rely upon his own fallible will and moral insight. He cannot escape choosing."**
* What Sartre is arguing is that because there is no God there is no supreme/higher power controlling humanity. Therefore, he believed humankind is free because there is no all-powerful controlling deity.
* Interestingly Sartre stated humanity has ‘condemned’ to freedom i.e. people had no choice but to be free. The irony of this was not lost on Sartre when he argued humankind is totally free to make decisions with one exception: **“man is not free not to be free”.**

1. **Self-Conscious**

* Sartre also argued people can understand they have free will because humanity is ‘pour-soi’ (‘being for itself’), unlike animals who are just en-soi (‘being in itself’).
* The difference is that ‘en-soi’ beings are not self-conscious i.e. aware of themselves; whereas pour-soi beings have possession of a self-consciousness i.e. an awareness of their own existence.
* Sartre argued that humanities self-consciousness enables them to think about and consider the different possible futures that might come about from different actions. Therefore, people can reflect on their own lives and the choices they can make.
* This, according to Sartre, opens up a distance between a person’s self-consciousness and the physical world in which we all exist. Sartre calls this ‘the gap’ and it is this gap that allows people to have free will.
* This is because people have the ability to not just react to what is going on in the physical world around them (which would be just determinism).
* People can instead think/consider what are the possible alternative actions (and their consequences) they could do to a particular physical stimulus e.g. in reaction to someone insulting me, I could insult them back, I could hit them, I could stay silent etc. Because people are self-conscious they can reflect on each possible action they can take (intention, consequences etc) before freely choosing which course of action is the most appropriate.

**Bad Faith**

* Sartre used ‘reverse psychology’ to prove that people have free will. According to Sartre, humankind’s freedom is obvious because of the way people try to deny their own freedom.
* This is because, Sartre argued, freedom can bring emotional pain for the indiviudal. Therefore, people will try to avoid the reality of their own freedom. Therefore, they create a self-deception, in which they deny their own freedom – Sartre called this 'bad faith'.
* Bad faith, according to Sartre is the attempt, by people, to escape the pain and anguish of life by pretending to themselves that they are not free. People convince themselves that their attitudes and actions are determined by things outside of themselves e.g. their innate character, the situations they find themselves in, their roles in life etc. In fact, anything that does not mean they have to accept they are completely responsible for their own circumstances in life.
* This attempt to escape accepting responsibility (bad faith) for one’s own life is, according to Sartre, clear evidence that, in fact, one does have complete responsibility (freedom) for one’s own life.

**Illustration of Bad Faith - Waiter**

* Sartre illustrated the ‘bad faith’ with the example of a cafe waiter.
* Sartre argues that a café waiter’s movements and conversation are a little too "**waiter-esque**". Sartre explains what he means by this: **“the waiters voice oozes with an eagerness to please; he carries food rigidly and ostentatiously; his movement is quick and forward, a little too precise, a little too rapid."**
* For Sartre, the waiters exaggerated behaviour illustrates that he is ‘play acting’ as a waiter. He has allowed himself to just become an automaton i.e. that his particular role, as a waiter, determines his every action and attitude.
* However, Sartre argues that the waiter, is in fact, freely deceiving himself. He is ultimately aware that he is not merely a waiter, but is freely deceiving himself that he is determined by his role.
* Therefore, the waiter is denying his own freedom (bad faith) but by using his own freedom to do so i.e. the waiter ultimately knows that he is free and could give up been a waiter at any time, but freely denies this to himself.
* Therefore, for Sartre, bad faith is paradoxical in nature because when acting in bad faith (denying one’s freedom) a person is using their freedom to do this.
* Therefore, people, such as the waiter, are not determined by their role or circumstances, all people are free to choose who they are and how they live.

**Gift and A Curse**

* Sartre theory supports the libertarian argument that people are free.
* However, Sartre’s believes such freedom is both ‘a gift and a curse’ for humanity.
* The gift: people have the freedom of making something out of their lives.
* The curse: freedom brings the responsibility that a person must develop their own lives.

**Section 2c - Scientific Libertarianism by Dr Angela Sirigu**

**Background:**

* Over the last century science has been seen to support determinism (see earlier notes).
* However, in recent years advancements, particularly in genetics and cognitive neuroscience, have potentially developed support for libertarian ideas.

**Cognitive Neuroscience**

* One such recent development, in neuroscience (the study of the brain) was carried out by Dr Angela Sirigu and her team, in early 2012, at the Cognitive Neuroscience Centre in Bron, France.
* They reported that they had potentially found that free will is sited in a part of the brain called the parietal cortex (check out on the internet where the partial cortex is in the brain).

**The Experiment**

* Sirigu discovered the above by electrically jolting the parietal cortex in seven patients, undergoing brain surgery.
* Each of the seven patients was awake during surgery, so they could answer questions put to them by Sirigu. Each patient claimed to feel a desire to move when they were jolted by the electricity: such as to wiggle their fingers, roll their tongues or move their limbs. Stronger electrical pulses convinced patients they had actually carried out these movements, though in reality their bodies did not move.
* What Sirigu found from the above experiments was that the parietal cortex was sending only one specific instruction (wiggle your finger, roll your tongue etc) to another part of the brain, called the premotor cortex.
* The premotor cortex then returns the outcome of the movement (the finger wiggled etc) to the parietal cortex. As Sirigu states: **“You need both systems, the parietal and premotor cortex to generate intention and check whether this is followed through.”**

**Sirigu’s Conclusions**

* However, the fundamental part of the experiment for Sirigu is that the partial cortex only passes on one specific instruction to the premotor cortex. Therefore, according to Sirigu, the parietal cortex must go through a variety of possible movements that could be made but only selects one to send to the premotor cortex that then makes the move.
* Therefore, at some point the parietal cortex must decide which particular movement to make from a variety of potential options. As Sirigu argues: **“What it tells us is there are specific brain regions that are involved in the consciousness of your movement.”** Therefore, there is a part of the brain (the parietal cortex) that potentially allows people to make a specific decision from several choices.
* Therefore, Sirigu believes that she has discovered the region of the brain that illustrates the mechanics of free will.

**Support**

* Patrick Haggard, a neuroscientist at University College London, believes the above scientific theory breaks new ground on the study of free will.
* This is because it pinpoints the specific part of the brain where free will resides. As he states: Sirigu’s experiment is **“extremely interesting, because up to now it has been very difficult for neuroscientists to deal with the idea of intentions or wishes or will.”**

**Section 2d - Psychological Libertarianism by Carl Rogers**

**Background**

* Potential libertarian support comes from the psychological school of thought called ‘Humanism’.
* Humanism is a psychological approach that encourages people to reflect on their own behaviour, as opposed to the psychologist drawing conclusions about their behaviour (as behaviourist’s like Pavlov do – see earlier notes). Humanism is sometimes referred to as the ‘phenomenological approach’.
* One of the early founders of Humanism was American psychologist Carl Rogers (1902-1987).

**People lives can become determined**

* Rogers believed that people were born experiencing beings, who live in the present and have the potential to respond freely to their current situations.
* However, Rogers concedes that a person’s life can become determined by external conditioning (behaviourist theory – supported by Pavlov). Roger’s particularly believed that conditioning can occur due to parental, peer or social pressures e.g. to conform to societies ‘norms’.
* Rogers argued that young children do have their own developed thoughts and ideas about numerous aspects of life, such as: politics, religion, sexual matters etc.
* When a child’s parents, peers or society disapprove of their thoughts and feelings the child considers such thoughts are wrong.
* Moreover, the child believes the only way to achieve acceptance (from their parents, peers or society) is to forget about their own free willed thoughts and feelings and instead embrace those of their parents, peers etc.
* Therefore, the child is, in essence, rejecting their own ideas and thoughts and just become a deterministic robot copying the ideas and thoughts of their parents, peers etc e.g. a child may freely feel they are attracted to someone of the same sex, however, because of parental, peer etc pressures, the child will bury away these free willed feelings.

**Self-Actualisation: the theory**

* Rogers, however, rejected that such deterministic factors were permanent. This is because he believed that people can still achieve freewill through the process of: ‘self-actualisation’.
* Self-actualisation basically involves a person getting in touch with their own feelings and then acting on them.
* Rogers’ believed that this was a personal journey that was unique to each person. As Rogers stated: **"As no one else can know how we perceive, we are the best experts on ourselves."**
* Rogers believed that if a person can act on their own free will feelings, they can break the ‘chains’ of determinism and express their own freewill i.e. they can self-actualise.
* Rogers’ believes that full self-actualisation occurs when a person’s ‘ideal self’ (i.e. who they would freely like to be) is the same as their actual ‘true self’.

**Self-Actualisation: develops full potential**

* Rogers believed that it is only when a person achieves freedom, through self-actualisation, that they can fully fulfil their full potential. Rogers describes an individual who has self-actualised as a fully functioning person.
* As Rogers stated: **“The paradox is that when I accept myself just as I am, then I can change for the better.”**

**Section 4 (Part 1): Implications of Free will/Libertarianism on Moral Responsibility**

**4a - Background on Free will/libertarianism and Moral Responsibility**

* The implications of free will/libertarianism for moral responsibility are in many ways the opposite of hard determinism.
* This is because libertarians believe a person’s life is completely free from deterministic factors; such as God’s omnipotent predestination power, psychological behaviourism, biological determinism or universal causation etc.
* Therefore, if libertarianism is correct that the individual has free will, then each person must have complete control over their moral attitudes, moral actions etc.

**4b -** **The value in blaming moral agents for immoral acts**

* The above theory that human free will leads to moral responsibility has several implications.
* One such implication is that there is moral value in blaming a person for any immoral acts they commit i.e. it would seem morally fair to punish people for committing immoral acts. This is because the choice of whether to act morally, or not, is within a person’s own free ‘willed’ moral control.
* This is why Sartre partly viewed free will as a curse for humanity - total free will comes with total moral responsibility. Sartre believed that even those people who wish not to take responsibility, for their actions, are still making a free choice to do so.
* Support for the above theory can be found in the UK legal system e.g. legal courts accept what is known as ‘rational choice theory’.
* Rational choice theory is the belief that people are ‘reasoning actors’ who freely weigh up the costs and benefits of their actions, and therefore make freely willed rational choices when committing an illegal act.
* Therefore, the UK legal system takes a free will view and thus believe it is right to punish people when found guilty of a crime.

**4c - The usefulness of normative ethics**

* A further implication of libertarianism is that they appear to uphold the usefulness of normative ethics.
* The aim of all normative ethics is to act as a moral guide, helping a person to do perceived good actions and avoiding wrongful ones.
* As libertarianism holds that people have the freedom to choose their actions, normative ethics can be seen as a useful guide to helping people freely choice the right course of action.
* Normative ethics maybe particularly useful when a person is ignorant of societies moral norms. This is because without a normative ethic to guide them, they may become amoral i.e. lacking any moral sense.
* Let’s consider the usefulness of Act Utilitarianism.

**Act Utilitarianism**

* Act Utilitarianism is an atheist normative ethic created by Jeremy Bentham, based on human pleasure (see earlier notes).
* Bentham’s Act Utilitarianism basically revolved around, what he called: ‘the principle of utility’ i.e. an action should only be carried out if the consequences of that action bring about the maximum happiness, for the maximum amount of people, affected by the action.
* However, Bentham is pre-supposing, with the principle of utility, that people have the free will to select the course of action which will bring about the greatest happiness e.g. if holding the door open for my teacher would bring about the greatest happiness; then the individual is morally guided by Act Utilitarianism to do this action.
* Therefore, if libertarianism is right, when stating that all human decisions are free willed, then normative ethics, like Act Utilitarianism, are of value.

**Section 4 (Part 2): Implications of Free will/Libertarianism on Religious Belief**

**4d - The implications for God’s omnipotence.**

* Monotheistic religions (such as Islam, Christianity etc) generally attribute the quality of omnipotence to their deity.
* Definition of Omnipotence: having unlimited power.
* The theory of free will can question whether God is omnipotent. This is because humanities free will could be an illustration that God does not have the omnipotent power to carry out an eternal predestination plan for all of humanity.
* This point was potentially highlighted by Augustine: he reacted angrily to the free will teachings of Pelagius (see earlier notes) because his free will theology, according to Augustine, reduced the omnipotent nature of God.
* This is because Pelagius theories made it possible for a mere human being to decide freely whether to be morally good or sinful. The implication of this was that the individual would then be able to tell an omnipotent deity whether to give them salvation. Augustine, argued this would be a denial of God’s omnipotence.
* Therefore, Augustine is making it clear that concept of free will would deny God’s omnipotence.
* Moreover, psychologist Sartre believed that humanities free will not only illustrated there was no omnipotent God controlling human choice but was, indeed, a clear illustration there was no God at all. As Sartre states: **“There is no God, so man must rely upon his own fallible will and moral insight."**
* However, it can be argued that the above points do not illustrate that free will diminishes God’s omnipotence.
* This is because they instead show that God illustrates His omnipotent nature in different ways e.g. Arminius argued that within all humanity God has placed his guiding Holy Spirit (see earlier notes). Therefore, it could be argued that only an omnipotent God could have the power to do this.

**4e - The implications for God’s omnibenevolence.**

* Monotheistic religions also attribute the quality of omnibenevolence to their deity.
* Definition of Omnibenevolence: the quality of ‘all-loving’ or ‘all good’.
* The theory of free will can seem to support the idea of God’s omnibenevolence. This is because the concept of free will supports the idea that salvation can be potentially achieved by all humanity. As Pelagius and Arminius theorised (see earlier notes) all humanity can achieve salvation using their free will; therefore, God is being loving to all of his creation.
* This point was supported by Arminius’ supporters (called Remonstrants) at the ‘Synod of Dort’ in 1619. One of their ‘Five Articles of Remonstrance’ was that salvation (or condemnation) on the day of judgment is freely conditioned by the faith (or unbelief) of the individual.
* Therefore, God’s omnibenevolent nature is supported by free will theory because it opens the possibility that all people can achieve salvation by freely choosing to follow God’s eternal moral laws.
* This is in contrast with predestination theory, as stated by both Augustine and Calvin, which illustrated that God only appears to predestine some people – the elect. The rest, the reprobates, will not be saved by God and will inevitably descend to hell post-mortem. This clearly questions God’s omnibenevolent nature because God would appear to be punishing and rewarding people on behaviour only He had control over**.** Based on the above point **Bertrand Russell** (1872-1970) stated that God must be ‘**a monster’**. This is because, as Russell stated: **“A God that punishes or rewards on the basis of God’s own eternal decisions in unfair and immoral.”**
* (Optional Note: the above could be potentially countered because one of the other attributes of God, given by the monotheistic religions, is that God is omniscient (the quality of been all-knowing). It can, therefore, be argued that God knew that humanity would do great deeds of evil, such as the holocaust, with the free will He allowed humanity. However, despite this knowledge, God still went ahead and gave humanity freewill; which is not the actions of an omnibenevolent God.)

**4f - The use of prayer.**

* A further implication of free will theory is the value of prayer.
* Definition of prayer: from the Latin ‘precariis’ - which means to ask earnestly.
* If free will holds true, then it can be argued prayer is meaningfulness. This is because prayer can be used to seek God’s guidance on the correct moral path or to seek His forgiveness for sin. Both these uses of prayer are supported by the theory of free will.

**To seek God’s guidance on morality**

* Pelagius argues that humanity is not able to fulfil God’s moral law without divine aid (see earlier notes).
* Pelagius stated: **“God helps us by His teaching and revelation, whilst He opens the eyes of our heart. Whilst He points out to us the future, that we may not be absorbed in the present; whilst He discovers to us the snares of the devil** …”
* Therefore, Pelagius believed that people have the free will to choose to do good works, or be sinful. However, when their free will chooses to do good works, it is through the guiding grace of God. As Pelagius states: **“Free will is in all good works always assisted by divine help.”**
* This divine aid to guide people down the righteous path could be developed through prayer i.e. as the individual opens themselves up to God, so they are opening themselves up more to God’s guiding light.

**Seek His forgiveness for sin**

* Pelagius also believed that if people, with their free will, do choose not to follow God’s moral law, they can still seek forgiveness for their sins. Pelagius stated that God grants atonement, through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, to all those who freely choose to seek forgiveness/repentance.
* Repentance can be gained, by all individuals, through prayer.

**4g - The existence of miracles**

* Definition of miracle: from the Latin ‘miraculum’ - meaning ‘wonder’.
* However, the term miracle tends to have a more specific religious meaning, perhaps best expressed by David Hume: **‘an event that appears to break the laws of nature and so is held as an act of God.’**
* The acceptance of free will theory has a negative effect on belief in miraculous events. This is because divine miracles, by their nature, are predetermining an outcome e.g. in Joshua 10:13 in the Judeo-Christian Bible, it states that God made the sun and moon stand still so that Joshua could defeat the enemies of Israel. Therefore, God was clearly predetermining the outcome of a major event, with a miracle.
* This directly conflicts with the theory of free will where all events are free of determinism. Therefore, illustrating the incompatible nature of free will and miracles.

**4h - The link between God and evil.**

* The last implication of free will theory, for religious belief, is the link between God and evil.
* The theory of free will theory could suggest that God is not responsible for evil.
* This can be illustrated with the theory of Arminius (see earlier notes). Arminius wrote his free will theory, as a response to the pre-destination ideas of John Calvin. This is because he felt the need to defend God’s nature against pre-destination so that: **“God might not be considered the author of all sin.”**
* The reason why free will theory can defend God against the above accusation is that free will gives the individual the freedom to choose to do good works or to sin. As Pelagius argued: **“this very capacity to do evil is also good – good, I say. Because it makes the good part better by making it voluntary and independent.”** Therefore, free will theory makes it clear that the responsibility for evil is humankinds and not God’s.
* This above idea is further supported by the theodicy of Irenaeus (130-202).
* Definition of a theodicy: a religious argument put forward to defend the existence of the God but justifies why God allows both moral and natural evil.
* Irenaeus argued God created humanity imperfect. God did this because He made humankind's task in life to develop into God's perfection. To develop into God’s perfection, humanity must freely make moral decisions; every moral decision where the person chooses to do ‘good works’ develops that person closer God’s perfection.
* However, free will opens up the possibility that people will choose to be morally evil e.g. the holocaust. However, Irenaeus Theodicy illustrates this is not God’s responsibility. This is because, Irenaeus claims, moral evil is a necessary part of life because it enables humans to develop in to His perfection. Without evil moral decisions would have no real value i.e. humanity would not develop into God’s perfection such as developing the virtues of courage and perseverance (which Irenaeus called ‘second-order goods’)
* Therefore, God cannot stop moral evil occurring because this would compromise human freedom and, therefore, stop humanity having the potential to develop in His perfection.
* Therefore, Irenaeus, in his theodicy, is clearly supporting the idea that free will entails that humanity is responsible for the moral evil; God cannot intervene because this would stop the development of humanity.