

Dialogue

A: Do you believe in a God who rewards good and punishes wrong-doing?

B: Well, I'm an **agnostic**. I don't know whether or not God exists, but if there is a God I hope he or she doesn't punish wrong-doing.

A: We punish murderers and rapists on Earth, so why shouldn't the same people **rot** in hell?

B: Because I'd prefer to discover an understanding God than a God of **vengeance**.

A: But everybody is free to choose between right and wrong.

B: I happen to believe that our choices can be traced back to their causes, some **hereditary** and some environmental.

A: But if you followed that line to its logical **conclusion**, you'd **pardon** all criminals.

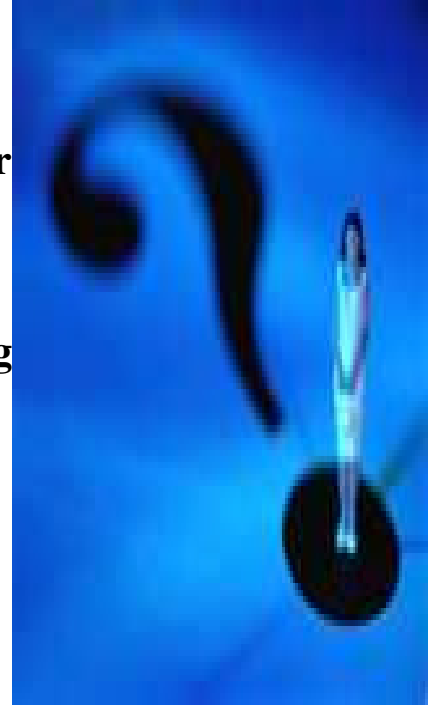
B: Not at all.

A: Then why shouldn't God send evil people to hell?

B: I would agree with you if the purpose of hell was to **rehabilitate** people, but hell is usually associated with torture.

A: But God gives people second chances. None of us is perfect.

B: But we can't help what we are. I still maintain that an understanding God would prefer rehabilitation to torture.



Vocabulary



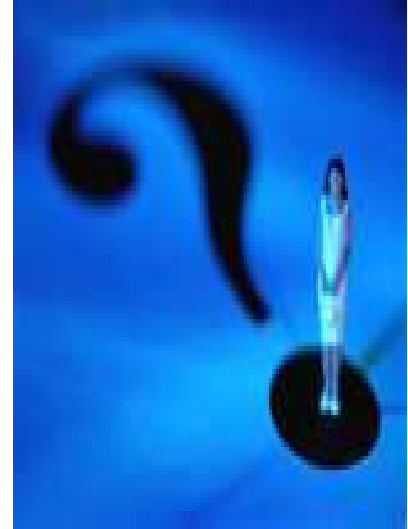
Rot



Hereditary

Response

1. What is an agnostic?
2. Do you agree that God is the God of vengeance?
3. According to person B, what causes our decision?
4. One of the commandments is “love your enemy”. Can you do this?



Express Yourself

1. There is life after death - for example, heaven, hell or reincarnation?
2. The story of Adam and Eve is not to be believed. Darwin's theory of evolution is more credible. Do you agree? Why/why not?
3. It is better to have any religion than to be atheist or agnostic. Do you agree? Why/why not?
4. Do people have *free will* to choose between right or wrong or are our choices determined by hereditary and environmental influences?
5. Are the ten commandments out of date? Which rules do you think are needed for religion or society today?
6. In Western Europe, church attendance has gone down, while in the Arab world religious worship has kept its popularity. Can you explain why?