

## Teachings about God and Suffering

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### Abraham and Isaac

- Abraham was bound to obedience with God as his incentive was so great, so when God told Abraham to kill his only legitimate son, he was reluctant but attempted to obey.
  - This was God's test of faith for Abraham, God's intention was not to kill Isaac but to see if Abraham was really that faithful to him. The story also raises the question as to whether God's command was really bad as he had previously stated, or whether it was good because he said it was good. The Euthyphro Dilemma, are things good because God wills them to be?
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### The Euthyphro Dilemma

- The nature of the dilemma is to ask the question whether good things are constants, are they good by themselves? Or are good things good because God is good and he commanded them?
  - There is the argument that goodness is not a constant because God is wrathful at times in the Bible, such as when he destroys the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah out of rage and punishment for their sins. Therefore, God must determine what is good. But if he can break his own rules then God is not good by nature. There lies the paradox. The fact that God can break his own rules demonstrates that either he is not bound by laws he made or that he is bad.
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### Human and Original Sin

- There are many different views on why God allows suffering in the world, one of the most logical if taking the Bible for word, is the idea of Adam and Eve's original sin in the Garden of Eden.
- In the Genesis story of the Fall, Adam and Eve disobeyed God's instruction to 'not eat from the tree of knowledge'. This was because they had free will to disobey him.
- While the tree of knowledge may not have inherently been evil (as God was not thought to bring evil into the world initially), rather Adam and Eve brought evil into the world by eating the fruit.
- It is God's moral-will not to restrict people and to allow them to have free will. The perfect world that God created, and the perfect relationship with God is ruined by the result of free will.
- St Augustine (354-430CE), a Christian bishop argued that this meant evil was a result of humans themselves making specific wrong choices themselves rather than God doing something.

## Evil as a Lesson

- Another Christian bishop, named Irenaeus (130-202CE) said that man, unlike the rest of creation was imperfect when God made him. Immature in a way. Man was created to grow to be perfect.
  - As a result of the existence of evil, the existence of goodness is appreciated. We as humans can learn and comprehend that God's goodness exists because we can compare it to human evil.
  - Sometimes, evil cannot be explained. For example, the suffering of an innocent child cannot be explained as we cannot learn from it if there is illness, God's goodness is not truly revealed through the suffering of a child unless there is a miracle. This can cause problems when a good person is diagnosed with a bad illness, especially if they led a good Christian life.
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## Evil as a Test of Faith

- Many times in the Bible, evil is presented as a test. This is shown traditionally in the book of Job where Job is allowed to be bullied by the Devil by God.
- Therefore, suffering is seen as a test for the good and a punishment for the bad. Once Job had been through many sufferings, God rewards him for his faithfulness by giving him back everything times 7.
- Some Christians believe that they are being tested in the event of terminal illness where they have been told they will die, this strengthens their faith even though you might expect the opposite to happen.