

EVIL AND SUFFERING

(from Dilwyn Hunt (2005) *Introducing Philosophy of Religion*, Nelson Thornes, Cheltenham. UK)

Zoroaster (628- 551 BCE)

Zoroaster was a Persian prophet, his followers are called Zoroastrians.

There are two forces: good and evil. These forces do battle. The force of evil is called Ahriman (destructive mind), the force of good is called Ahura Mazda (Lord of Wisdom).

Sometimes Ahura Mazda is strongest in the eternal battle, and the world flourishes and is blessed; we know when Ahriman has the upper hand because evil spreads and we suffer.

This battle will always go on; both forces are equally powerful.

John Stuart Mill (1806- 73)

Nature and the Utility of Religion (1874)

Although humans certainly cause much suffering and misery, the natural world is responsible for far more. Through sickness, plagues, floods, famine, and disasters, nature brings untold suffering onto millions of people.

There is no justice to suffering: the poor and needy always suffer the most. This is no evidence of an all-powerful designer, no just and loving God.

The Free Will Argument

Why did a supremely powerful, loving and just God create a world with so much suffering and injustice?

For those who believe in such a God, the Free Will argument is given. This argument relates to humans. God did not want a race of obedient robots.

God created humans with Free Will. This means that as well as love, generosity and kindness, humans can also display cruelty, indifference and hatred. The Free Will argument means that humans cause suffering, and God has allowed it to be a possibility in creation.