If God Exists, Why Is There Suffering in the World?

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Why Does God Allow Tragedy and Suffering?

God is all powerful
God is all good
Free Will for Humans
Evil exists
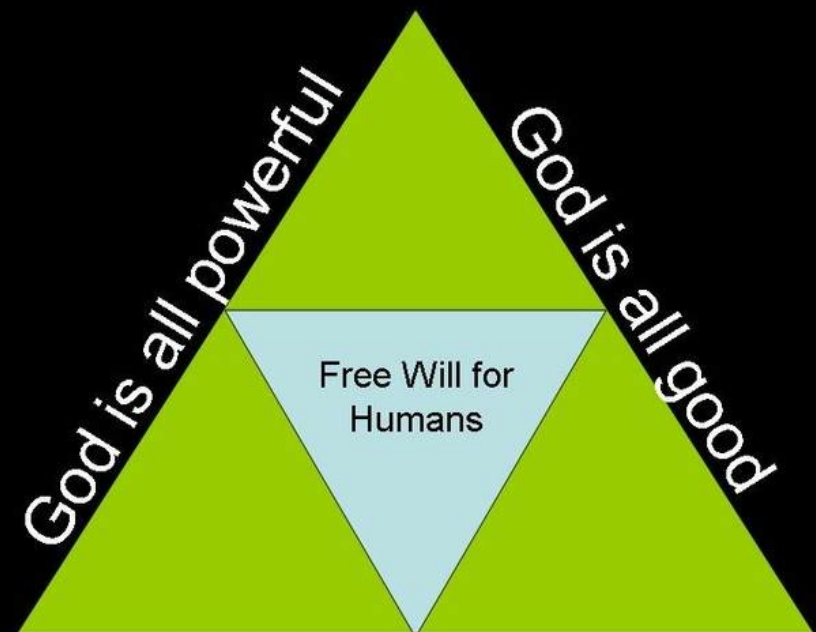
God, Suffering and Faith

Can we prove that God exists?

If God exists, why is there suffering in the world?

Can we do away with faith?

Bruegel the Elder, *Tower of Babel*

If There is a God, Why is There Suffering in this World?

Epicurus (341-270 BC)
The Problem of Evil

> Is God willing to prevent evil, but not able?
> Then he is not omnipotent.
>
> Is he able, but not willing?
> Then he is malevolent.
>
> Is he both able and willing?
> Then whence cometh evil?
>
> Is he neither able nor willing?
> Then why call him God?

Epicurus
(341-270 BCE)
philosopher and
teacher

One Response—
Two Principles of Reality, one Good and One Evil

According to many religions, there are two principles of reality.

For example:

- *Yin* and *Yang* in Taoism

- *Apollus* and *Dionysius* in Ancient Greek religion

- *Good* and *Evil* in Manicheism

If there are two principles, evil and suffering are explained as originating from the "evil principle".

Why Doesn't the "Two Principle Solution" Work?

St. Augustine against the "two principle solution":

1. Suppose that there are two principles of reality.

2. A principle of reality is just like a God. So, a principle of reality, by definition, is unlimited.

3. But if there are two principles, they cannot be unlimited.

4. Thus, there cannot be two principles of reality.
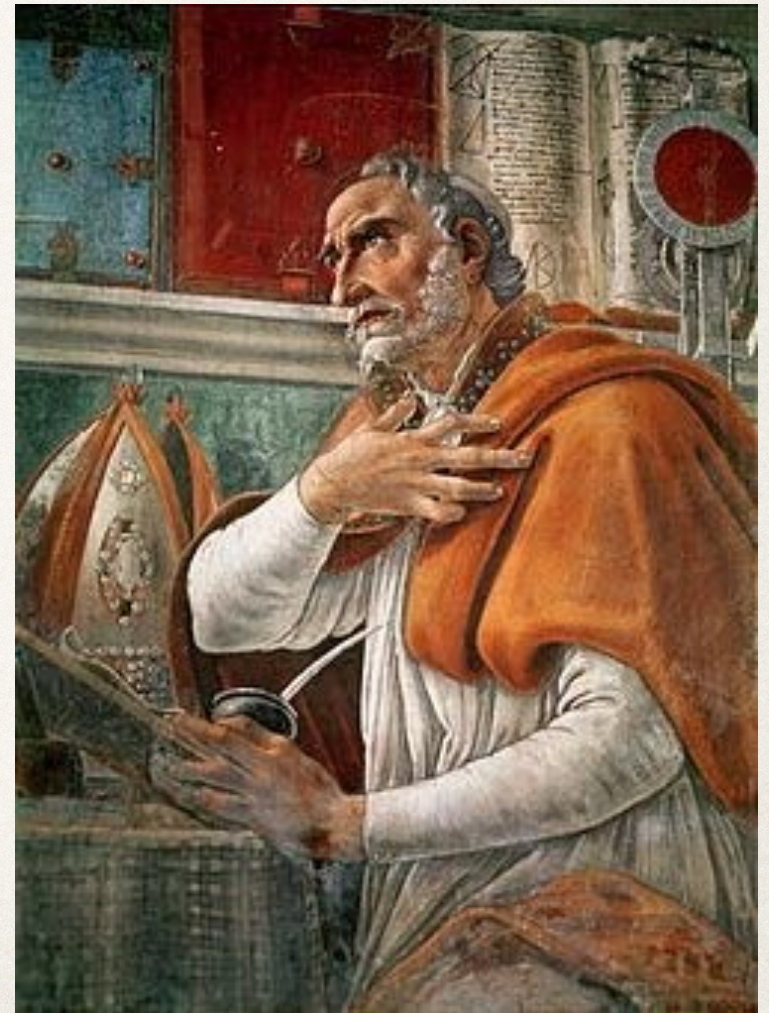
From Last Week:
An Explanation of Evil that Came Up in Class

"Good" can be understood only in opposition to "evil". If there is no "evil", there would be no "good" either.

But If There is Only One God, Where Does Evil Come From?

The Problem of Evil Formulated by St. Thomas Aquinas

It seems that God does not exist; because if one of two contraries be infinite, the other would be altogether destroyed.

But the word "God" means that He is infinite goodness.

If, therefore, God existed, there would be no evil discoverable; but there is evil in the world.

Therefore God does not exist.

Thomas Aquinas' Response—
Inscrutability of God

Response: *That is part of the infinite goodness of God, that He should allow evil to exist, and out of it produce good.*

The "Free Will" Response

What if there is no such a thing as **free will** as discussed earlier in the course?

Two Challenges

Challenge 1:
Suffering caused by human beings against other human beings

Challenged 2:
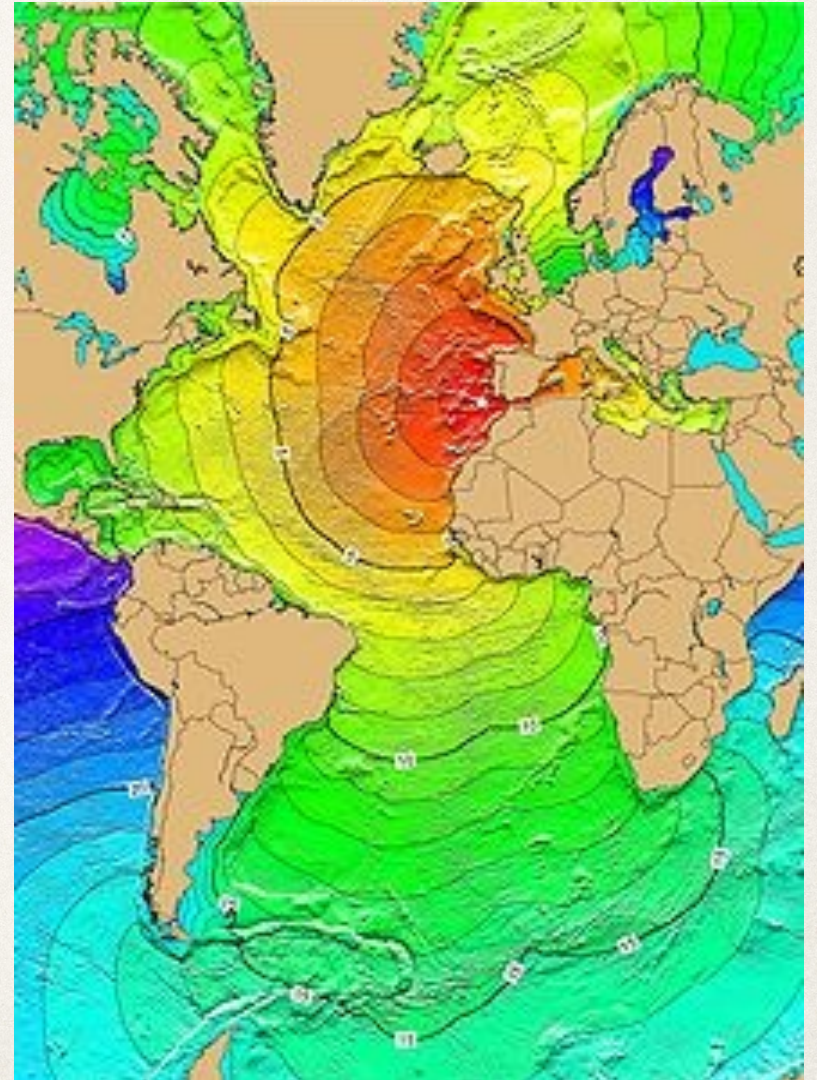Suffering caused by natural disasters

Can the "Free Will Response" address Challenge 2?

The 1755 Lisbon Earthquake

The city of Lisbon was almost entirely destroyed.

In 1755, Lisbon had a population of 200,000 people. Approximately, 30,000-50,000 people died, including people living in surrounding cities.
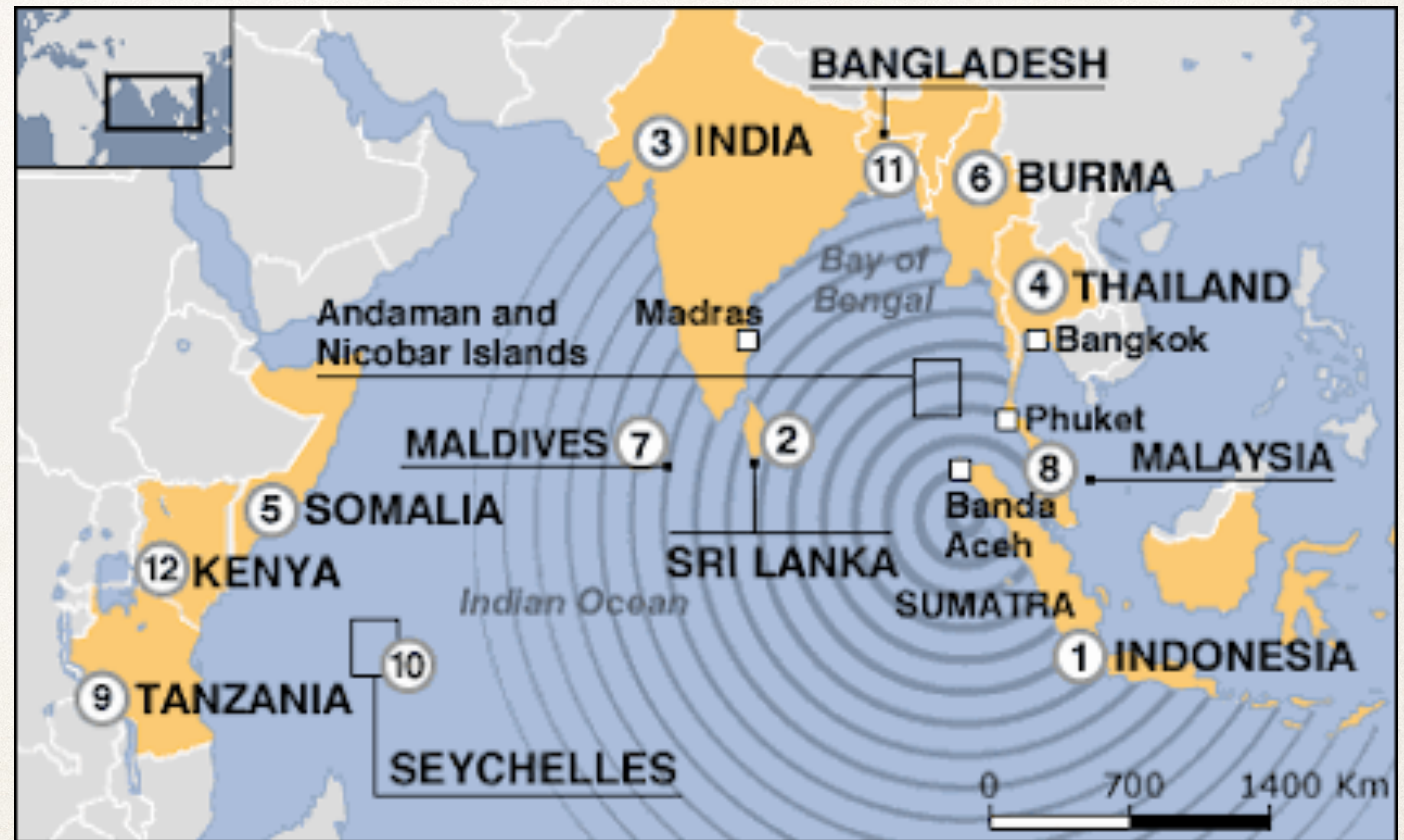
The 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami

250,000-280,000 causalities

See BBC Article "Tsunami among World's Worst Disaster"

http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/4128509.stm

Voltaire's Poem on The Lisbon Earthquake

French philosopher of the
Enlightenment (1694-1778)

Quotations from the Poem

We cannot learn why

Endless disorder, chaos of distress,

Must mix our little pleasures thus with pain;

Nor why the guiltless suffer all this woe

In common with the most abhorrent guilt.

'T is mockery to tell me all is well.

Quotations from the Poem

What is the verdict of the vastest mind?

Silence: the book of fate is closed to us.

Man is a stranger to his own research;

He knows not whence he comes, nor whither goes.

Tormented atoms in a bed of mud,

Devoured by death, a mockery of fate.

How Does a Believer in One God Justify Natural Disasters?

Responses to Problem Of Evil

1.Two Gods, one good and one evil

- **But** there cannot be two Infinite, all-powerful Gods

2.There is no "good" without "evil"; we need to experience "evil" to appreciate "good"

- **But** this does not explain how and why "evil" came about

3.God gave us free will

- **But** free will does not explain "evil" as a result of natural disasters

- **But** if God gave us "free will", didn't He create "evil" indirectly?

- **But** how could God create evil (even indirectly) if God is entirely good? Shouldn't we admit that "evil" was already in God so that God is (partly) evil?

THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

Yes

No

Could God have created a universe without evil, which maintains freewill?

Freewill

Why did God create evil?

Yes

Could God have created a universe free of evil?

No

No

God is testing us

An all-knowing God would have already known the results before the test was conducted.

God is not all-powerful.

God is not all-loving.

God is not all-knowing.

No

No

No

God is testing us

Can God prevent the evil?

Yes

Does God want to prevent the evil?

Yes

Does God know about the evil?

Yes

Then why does evil exist?

The universe requires evil as a necessary condition to exist

Satan

EVIL EXISTS

An all-knowing, loving, and powerful God would and could not have allowed the creation, or continued existence, of Satan.

Not God

Who created them?

Not God

Who created Satan?

God

God