

## **Guilt**

Guilt is a condition which obtains when a person or persons have been convicted of a legal misdemeanor. That is the formal notion of guilt. The wider notion of guilt, however, extends far beyond the realm of the law. One does not have to be the doer of a formal infraction in order to be 'guilty' in this wider sense. In fact the science associated with the ultimates of the human condition, theology, figures the issue of guilt into assessments of man's original position in being. The Book of Genesis, at the debut of the Abrahamic scriptures, assigns guilt to eating of that 'forbidden fruit, whose mortal taste brought death into the world and all our woe.' In other words the first guilt provoking action occurred in the creative intricacy of a divine scene played off against a divine tapestry.

Guilt, whether viewed by the law or by a certain religion, bears a rich and complex relation to time. One has committed an infraction, broken the law, at a moment in time. Eating forbidden fruit does not occur in a vacuum, but under specific conditions—in this Abrahamic case naked, innocent conditions—but once the crime attached to the deed is done it is done, whether it's the theft of a loaf of bread, as in *Les Misérables*, or a bite of middle eastern cherry. That sin cannot be revoked, reread, or reinterpreted,

It was into such an irreversible situation that, by the Abrahamic account, God found himself, with the sin blemished Adam, and Eve, little me who just followed orders. First of all the central players in the Christian drama, God himself was faced with the irregularity that his universe-naming advocate, Adam, had committed a mortal sin. It was accomplished. From this point on we may well imagine God preoccupied with the problem of redressing the fault of sin and disobedience. It was not to be the case, after all, that the seeming finality of sin should be left beyond redress. But a mistake is a mistake.