

Dialogue

Content

In the genre of dialogue or debate, an issue is explored through the conversation of two or more characters. The genre was a popular vehicle for conveying philosophical discourse, particularly Socratic discussion. In the ancient near east, it was coupled with the motif of undeserved human suffering in dialogues much like the Book of Job, except that humans are eventually found sinful and the gods capricious.

The Book of Job is different from its Greek and near eastern counterparts. Unlike the Greek dialogues, there is no ultimate resolution of the problem of human suffering in Job (if one disregards the epilogue); Job is simply told that the answers he seeks lie beyond his comprehension. Unlike the near eastern parallels, Job's misfortune is not due to his own sin.

Form

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| 1. Preliminary Scene: | Characters and problem introduced. |
| 2. Dialogue Proper: | Scene is almost irrelevant; dialogue (a series of questions and responses) becomes the action. |
| 3. Resolution of Problem: | (In Job, there is no resolution except for the epilogue) |

Function

The purpose of the dialogue is educative; in imitating the conversation of a philosophical master with his disciples, new followers learn to arrive at the resolution of classic problems.

For Further Practice

Gen 18:16-32

Rom 3:27-4:2

Justin, *Dialogue with Trypho*