

# JOB'S VISION: THE DIALECTIC OF PERSON AND PRESENCE

by

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## I

I had heard Thee by the hearing of the ear,  
and now my eye sees Thee.

(Job 42:5)

Job had heard God (or of God) by the hearing of the ear, but now he sees. What does he see? This seeing is directly a function of the theophany in chapters 38–41, which in turn presuppose the total course of the heavenly wager, the dispute between Job and the friends, and Job's oath of clearance.<sup>1</sup> The meaning of the book issues from this revelation and Job's response to it, as a result of which Job's "face is lifted" and he intercedes for the friends (Job 42:8–9).<sup>2</sup>

Whatever we eventually conclude concerning the sources and objectives of the present text of Job, the fact remains that these voices and intentions are mediated by the text itself.<sup>3</sup> The voices of the text may

1. Tsevat (1966, p. 78) has called it "the most terrible oath in the Bible . . .," due to the fact that the apodosis, here the statement of the punishment, is included. The apodosis is ordinarily omitted in biblical oaths, probably because "one shied away from conjuring up punishment in the unlikely event of an unintentional factual inaccuracy of the material content of the oath." On the oath see also Blank (1951, pp. 105–107).

2. See Tsevat's argument (1966, pp. 79–82) that the book of Job poses a problem, the suffering of the innocent, which is answered in the final chapters.

3. I realize that "text" may be understood to include the author's conscious design and unconscious intentions, as well as all the signals and nuances it may give off for a given reader, reciter, and audiences as it is "performed." The variable of performance was brought home to me most vividly recently as I listened to a taped reading of the entire book of Job in Hebrew. The reading, which included a dark, mysterious kind of music in the background, came across to me as a sustained lament—including the speeches of God! In any case, in speaking here of text I mean simply the written Hebrew text as it has been

speak in conflict with each other, even in contradiction. A first principle of hermeneutics, as I hold it should be practiced, is to approach the text as an integral work before considering the possibility of dissolving it into historically different and religiously more and less valuable segments.

Studying a text may be, of course, a pre-text for comprehending something else, and there is a sense in which the text to be interpreted is always a pretext for an understanding or an object of interpretation. But the question is, how seriously is the text taken, how dearly or cheaply won is the prize of interpretation? After all, in the dialectic constituted by author(s)/editor(s)—text—audience (ancient and current), the text is a mediating reality which allows us to bring all these terms of interpretation together.

In an essay published in 1978 I discussed some positions that value the integrity of Job and then I presented my own exegesis of the theophany (Williams, 1978). The conclusions drawn in that study will be noted in part II of this essay. In the same context I shall present my current thinking on Job through a critique of two more recent studies that are of special interest to me: those by Robert Alter (1984) and André Lacocque (1981).<sup>4</sup> These two studies are, in my estimation, significant contributions to an understanding of the speeches of God. Alter's reading of the speeches as the grand poem of the Maker (Poet) uncovers as seldom before the rich language and playfulness of God's response to Job. Lacocque's essay, focusing on the semantic tension between Yahweh the Speaker and the cosmological mythic phenomena described as El's creation, enables us to see that this tension points paradoxically to a relationship of dialogue between Job and the transcendent God.

My own internal conversation with the text, as aided by these two commentators, is reflected in the conclusion that Job's vision is a glimpse of the larger Life in the midst of whose grandeur and mystery he is paradoxically given the opportunity to speak with the One who is other and most near. This otherness and nearness of God are no more and no less enigmatic than Job's own personal being. He is simultaneously *persona grata* and *non grata* to himself and before God.

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received. The possibility of a mutilated third cycle of speeches in the dispute does not affect my argument, nor do theories about the text which arise from study of the LXX and the Qumran Targum.

4. I am grateful to Alter for reading an earlier draft of this essay and making some helpful comments.

## II

*A. God as Poet (Alter)*

Alter's article will enter into his forthcoming book on biblical poetics. Commenting at points on two underlying principles of organization in biblical poetry, narrative progression and intensification of assertion in the movement from stich to stich and verse to verse, Alter focuses on the contrast of mood and imagery between ch. 3, Job's opening lament, and ch. 38, the beginning of God's discourse. God's pulsating, expansive, life-affirming display of wild cosmic wonders stands in marked opposition to Job's wish to return inward to the narrow and safe confines of death's darkness. Job has cursed his birth and cried out for release from his present suffering. In lamenting his "day"—which could be either his day of birth or the time of conception (see Pope, 1978, p. 30)—he longs for the extinction of his life. He wishes to narrow his existence to nothing. The loss of light in darkness is the image that carries this wish:

Let the stars of its twilight be darkened,  
 let it hope for light but in vain,  
 and not see the eyes of dawn,  
 Since it closed not the doors of the womb,  
 nor concealed trouble from my eyes.

(3:9–10)

By contrast, God's poem of the world intensifies images of expansion, light, and cosmic vitality, as in, for example, these verses:

In what were the earth's bases sunk,  
 or who laid its cornerstone,  
 When the morning stars sang together  
 and all the sons of God shouted for joy?  
 Hedged the sea in with doors,  
 when it gushed forth from the womb . . . ?

(38:6–8, Alter's tr.)

Alter (1984, p. 37) is eloquent in his description of creation as the channeling and balancing of powers. In a comment that is poetically vibrant in its own right, Alter depicts the image of the wake of the crocodile (41:24) as suggestive of what Job senses, although his mind cannot encompass it. The creation, "an immense world of power and beauty and awesome warring forces . . .," is "like that final image of the crocodile already whipping away from our field of vision, leaving behind only a shining wake for us to see" (p. 41).

Alter reads the voice from the whirlwind as the utterance of the *Poietes*, the Maker of all things who rejoices in the beauty of His work and challenges Job to sense the mysterious vitality of the life-forms and rhythms of the creation. This is a piece of poetic criticism which has enriched our view of the book of Job. Job is brought by the Creator to the point of feeling the "ungraspable creation surging with the power of its creator" (p. 41).

I find Alter's essay convincing as a statement about the poetic character of the language of Job. Since his purpose is to focus on poetics, one cannot assume that this one article represents his total understanding of Job. Taken by itself, however, I think it lacks real engagement with Job's moral and religious plight. Job has suffered radically. To be told that the creation is marvelously and mysteriously beautiful, pulsating with the life which only God can give and express, is not sufficient. That is, it is not sufficient *unless* that grand enigmatic order is one Job belongs to, unless Job is related to the proud Poet in such a way that he sees himself in his role in a new way. Alter's interpretation reminds me somewhat of Gordis' argument (1965, p. 133) that the poetry and rhetoric of allusion in God's speeches suggest a moral order for humankind by analogy to the order and harmony of the natural world.

Now Gordis' deciphering of the divine rhetoric has the effect of an aesthetic anodyne for Job. Indeed, although Alter leaves Job with "the glimpse of an ungraspable creation," Gordis (1965, pp. 133-134) speaks more concretely than Alter of what this insight means for the human being that hears the Voice: the shrinking of one's individual troubles, rejoicing in beauty, and the call to affirm not only *ignorabimus*, "we shall not know," but also *gaudeamus*, "let us rejoice." This spiritual and moral dimension of Job's "gift of sight" is what Alter does not directly deal with.

Job indeed sees "something," even if this something is not there in the ordinary sense. This something is more, or other, than the throbbing beauty of God's work. It is an understanding drawn from allusions, omissions, and the very manner of God's speaking. Concerning allusions and omissions, I have made the argument elsewhere (Williams, 1978, pp. 70-72) and shall only summarize it here. (1) The voice from the whirlwind alludes frequently and ironically to Job's earlier speeches, and the description of Behemot and Leviathan reflects a larger mythical context in ancient Israel's traditions. God's images of the wild animals and the two mythical beasts suggest that they reveal something both about God and about Job. There is something "monstrous" in the divine, something divine in beasts and monsters, and something akin to

Behemot and Leviathan in Job which has to be overcome and contained by God. (Sometimes one's own creation takes on a life of its own, even getting out of hand!) (2) Mankind does not appear in God's panoramic description of the cosmos—a striking omission! Humankind (Job) is indeed addressed by the Speaker, a significant point which I shall develop shortly. But the human subject is not directly told who he is and where he comes from in the order of things. For such information to be omitted is contrary to the conventional function of myth and covenantal history. Something has opened up for Job. He is now an *open question*. I infer that he sees that he (man) is not simply given in the creation. (3) God's poem simply bypasses the alternatives posed in the prologue and the dispute. In God's test of Job, will Job remain righteous and innocent of wrongdoing? And in Job's test of God, will God acquit Job, who is not deserving of the suffering that calls his integrity into question? (Job thus assumes the same premise concerning retribution as the friends, but he draws a different conclusion about his predicament and the human lot generally.) Job is neither justified by God nor condemned. The alternatives are insufficient, and false as argued by the friends.

Alter's study is a pioneering view of the rich language of Job. He offers a doorway to the text and the thought-world of the poet, but in what he has written so far he does not proceed to the *dialogue* that takes place between God and Job. He leaves Job with his avowal of "the gift of sight," but the object of this seeing seems to be "an ungraspable creation" (p. 41). It is on the point of this dialogue that Lacocque's essay is pertinent.

### *B. God's Speeches as "Semantic Impertinence" (Lacocque)*

Although humankind is not described in God's speeches, the human, Job, is spoken to by God. Much has been made of this textual fact, often to the effect that Job ends with a sense of God's overwhelming presence, and of His graciousness in speaking to him (see Terrien, 1978, pp. 369–373). Lacocque's argument, based on the hermeneutics of Paul Ricoeur, is that a *redescription* of reality takes place when Yahweh speaks of El's creation (1981, pp. 39–45). This redescription is a "semantic impertinence." It reframes the kind of theophany that had been rooted in cosmological myth. The Name, YHWH, qualifies the God-speeches, and so serves to effect a new view of the world. Thus a fresh vision of the ultimate referent is opened up, which is human experience illuminated by limit-experiences (Job's experience of loss, radical pain, and revelation).

Lacocque makes a valid point concerning the divine name. The rabbis of old maintained that there was an important theological distinction involved in the use of the proper name YHWH as contrasted to the generic forms (El, Elohim, etc.). As Lacocque sees it, to have Yahweh himself speak of what “he,” El, has done is to de-scribe differently, to put the discourse within another sort of horizon. Lacocque moves toward a further unfolding of this point in his concluding statement:

“Yhwh spoke to Job from the whirlwind” is the appropriate mode of resolving the tension at the basis of the whole book. The resolution *is* in the speaking of God who utters His Name and focuses Job’s attention on the Speaker Himself. (p. 45)

It is not textually accurate that God utters His own name. It is the *narrator* who does so. It is the one reporting the speeches of God who says that Yahweh speaks. In other words, the authority of the divine speaker comes only through the narrative frame that is given.<sup>5</sup> We can see a formal tension between the narrator’s use of the proper name and the occurrences of the generic names (Elohim, 38:7; El, 38:41; 40:9, 19; plural in 41:17; Eloah, 39:17; 40:2; Shadday, 40:2). To intensify and complicate this tension, the divine voice continually uses the first and second persons in the singular. This has the rhetorical effect of putting Yahweh and Job together at some propitious cosmic vantage where they consider together what some third party has achieved—while at the same time the Voice employs the first person singular constantly in speaking of His works. The effect is a kind of rhetorical oscillation in which the “I” stands between the proper and the generic name.

5. At this point Richard Jacobson’s discussion (1981) of Job as a case in interpretation and authority is relevant. He points out that authority is “typically represented as a form of absence” (p. 68). A representative, a tradition, a law, or a text typically stands in place of the *source*, the “author” of the given expression. The author of Job—authors, Jacobson says—exercises the final authority of interpretation by authorizing the text. God is represented as the voice of ultimate power and authority that refuses to answer Job’s questions and asserts the unbridgeable gap between what there is to know and what humans can know. The Voice from the whirlwind is an “alibi” (Latin, “in another place”). “God” or the “truth” is *elsewhere*. Only the text remains.

Two quick comments about Jacobson’s argument, which is interesting even though expressed in an obfuscating language of semiotics. (1) The text expresses not only a gap for which the text itself is a stand-in to fill the void; it points also, in its unspoken dimension (overtones, omissions, and implications of the narrative frame), to a real relationship between God and Job. (2) If God’s speech is a kind of alibi, *so also is Job and his response*. That is, Job is absent from the mythic cosmos, his true being does not lie either in his “place” in the world or in his arguments for his integrity. See the discussion of “person” in part III.

One explanation of this formal tension between Yahweh as speaker and "God" as name of the "I" in Yahweh's speeches is that the writer, whether the author of the rest of Job or a later interpolator, has drawn together ancient mythical material<sup>6</sup> and framed it with a conventional Yahwistic formula that represents Yahweh as speaking. In the ancient material there were doubtless set phrases that could not be changed without offending the ear or otherwise giving a sense of infelicity. Two obvious instances of such poetic or mythical conventions are *bēnē ʿēlōhīm*, "sons of God" in 38:7 and *ʿēlīm*, "gods," in 41:17. Concerning "sons of God," a complementary "sons of Yahweh" is not attested. As for the "gods" that tremble before Leviathan (41:19), the ancient Israelite was unlikely to assert that Yahweh was afraid of any person or power! In other words, the name YHWH could not be associated with certain aspects of cosmological myth.

The opposite explanatory tack is to point out that there is no conflict or discrepancy of any kind between the proper name and the generic variations. After all, isn't it the case that in the languages most of us are familiar with one can range from personal name to title and generic designation without any sense of contradictions? My response is that there is no sense of contradiction if one has a certain context for comprehension of the discourse. However, wide variations of voice and referent in a brief discourse or dialogue would be disconcerting, for the effect would be that of multiple subjects speaking outside of the immediate frame of reference. (Someone speaking too far apart from the frame of reference is usually perceived as crazy!) To offer my own prosaic example:

Jansen strode into the room and said to Smith, "Why can't you accept my diagnosis? Don't you trust the doctor? Do you know more than the expert?"

6. Tsevat (1966, pp. 84, 86-87) argues that the mythical elements of the divine discourse are conventions that have in fact become demythologized and are used as poetic imagery by the learned poet. John Gammie (1978, pp. 217-231) has also argued that Behemot and Leviathan are not mythical beasts. My position is very close to Tsevat's in this regard, although I think that a great formal tension remains between the form and content of the speeches and the narrative frame. Tsevat takes as one example the picture of Sea as a baby diapered by God (38:8-9), whereas ancient near eastern myths otherwise depict a battle between the god Sea and the fertility God. He is correct, though it should be remarked that the possibility the wild son might rebel is presented rather forcefully in 38:10-11! Gordis (1977, pp. 567-572) sees the only alternatives as mythical animals and real animals, and he opts for real animals on the basis of certain considerations. My point is considerably different from his. I view these as mythical animals which are demythologized, indeed, but as traditionally mythical they would have been powerful and appropriate metaphors for the poet as he has God confront Job with the wild wonder of creation.

We may infer that Jansen is a medical doctor and Smith is his patient, although Smith could be a relative or friend of a patient who wishes to press the doctor for more information or for the recommendation that another opinion be sought. If Jansen is the doctor who is treating the patient, it is odd that he refers to himself in the third person. However, it is conceivable that in a given context a person of rather pompous propensities might generalize or ask a rhetorical question in this manner in order to defend his position. Of course, Jansen may actually be a doctor called in to give a second opinion.

The point is, we could go on and on speculating, but the switch in names and persons is confusing unless we are given a larger context which enables us to comprehend this little narrative. And most sociolinguistic contexts do not prepare us for a narrative frame that offers surname (in the narrative introduction to the statement by Jansen), first person question, use of title, and vague generic noun ("expert")—all evidently referring to the same subject! It is therefore unlikely that an author would subject the audience to these switches *unless* his material already imposed considerable constraints upon him. Now it is possible, as far as I know, that except for the two instances already cited (38:7 and 41:17) Yahweh could have been substituted for God where a generic name for God is utilized. The young ravens *could* cry to Yahweh rather than to El (38:41); Yahweh, rather than Eloah, *could* be said to have deprived the ostrich of wisdom (39:17); etc. But if the point of the poetry includes generalization about the cosmos and by implication the human condition, and if this broader picture requires using ancient mythical materials and traditional literary forms—then there is willy-nilly a constraint to employ ancient, universal conventions. Thus the generic form of the divine names.

But the proper name of Israel's God draws upon a distinctively Israelite convention. Is this the redactional narrator's interpolation, one that is not integrally related to the composition of the God-speeches and the rest of the book? Another consideration makes this unlikely. The name YHWH always occurs in connection with a *narrative dialogue formula* in the theophany and Job's response. The formula is *wayya'an . . . wayyōmer*, "and he answered and said" (38:1; 40:1, 6—Yahweh answers Job; 40:3; 42:1—Job answers Yahweh). This very formula of narrative dialogue is employed at the beginning of every speech in the dispute between Job and the friends except for Job's final statement before his peroration and the peroration itself (3:2; 4:1; 6:1; 8:1; 9:1; 11:1; 12:1; 15:1; 16:1; 18:1; 19:1; 20:1; 21:1; 22:1; 23:1; 25:1;



26:1).<sup>7</sup> It is thus no simple matter to extricate this formula from the book of Job. It is difficult to imagine a later editor or interpolator working through the scroll, assiduously adding this phrase to the beginning of speeches.

Of course, the dialogue phrase is utilized also in the prologue and Elihu's discourse (Job 1:7, 9; 2:2, 4; 32:6; 34:1; 35:1), giving rise to the possibility that someone (or someones) responsible for the framing tale and the Elihu speech imposed the convention on the rest of the work. But again, is it likely that someone would have gone through tediously adding this transition marker at every change of speaker? No, I would argue that the following facts lead to a sensible inference:

(1) The name YHWH in the God-poem is always used in connection with a narrative dialogue formula.

(2) This narrative dialogue formula is employed consistently throughout the book.

(3) *wayya<sup>c</sup>an . . . wayyōmer* is a common convention in the narrative prose of Hebrew Scriptures for introducing locution in narrative. It is less common in prophetic speech, where it is used for introducing the word of Yahweh or that of his *mal'āk* (Isa 21:9; Joel 2:19; Zech 1:10, 12, 13; 3:4; 4:6; 6:5).<sup>8</sup>

*Inference:* The divine name taken in conjunction with the narrative dialogue formula is a formal qualifier of the cosmological poem that

7. 27:1 and 29:1 both begin, *wayyōsep ʔiyyōb seʔēt mēšālō wayyōmer* "And again Job took up his parable and said."

8. See S. Mandelkern (1962, p. 900). Gordis (1977, p. 442) proposes that the poet's use of the name YHWH in the theophany was "influenced by the traditional relationship of the theophany of JHVH to a storm (Exod 19:16; Judg 5:6f. [sic!—5:4–5]; II Sam 22:8–16 = Ps 18:8–16; Isa 63:19f.; Nah 1:3; Hab 3:5f.; Zech 9:14; Ps 50:3; 68:8f.)" I have two comments about his explanation. (1) Generic nouns for God occur also in the contexts of most of the passages he cites. See Exod 19:19; II Sam 22:3, 7; Ps 18:3, 7; Isa 64:3; Nah 1:2; Hab 3:3. Concerning Psalms 50 and 68, they read as if they had been ancient Canaanite, or in any case non-Yahwist, psalms which were revised in a Yahwist setting. In Psalm 50 YHWH occurs only at the beginning, and in Psalm 68 Elohim dominates, YHWH not occurring until v. 17! In other words, the association of the divine proper name with theophanies was not inevitable at all. There was no overwhelming constraint for the poet to use YHWH in 38:1; 40:1, 3, 6; 42:1 on the basis of theophanic conventions alone. (2) The sphere from which the dialogue formula comes is locution in narrative, as already said. Where God or his messenger is the divine subject in the passages I have cited, the phrase is occasioned by a question from the human subject, either implicit (Isa 21:8–9a) or explicit (Joel 2:17; Zech 1:9; *passim*). Moreover, the setting in Isaiah 21 and Zechariah is that of a prophetic vision, not the "thunder and lightning" type of theophany referred to by Gordis.

God utters. It is a qualifier that relocates the non-human world of meteorology and animals into the context of Israelite dialogical dispute, a dialogical dispute that takes place, as it always must for ancient Israel, between the God of Israel and His chosen one. The use of the Name in a dialogue formula suggests formally and quite paradoxically a relationship of exchange or conversation between Job and the majestic transcendent One who speaks from the whirlwind.

One could counter, of course, with the rejoinder that I have found nothing about what actually takes place between Job and God. What I have done is to show there are two formal textual facts that do not harmonize easily with each other: the ancient (or archaizing) El-poetry and a distinctively Israelite form of dialogue. There is no way to answer this objection apart from getting a view of the book of Job as a whole. Even if we had the Job poet(s) with us and he (or they) told us what he had in mind, we should still have to talk about the total written text as it appears before us. But if I am correct that the God-speeches are related by rhetorical allusion to the rest of Job and that this allusiveness is part of a web of paradox and irony, then Job's affirmation that his eye has seen God should be accepted as the outcome of a process of communication.

This communication, in terms of its tone and mythical content, *be-littles* Job—that is, it reduces him to insignificance, it leaves him out of the scheme of things. But its overtones, omissions, and dialogical frame suggest that Job's absence from the world-picture is balanced by a three-fold being:

(1) Job's being is akin to that of beasts and monsters, about which God waxes poetic.<sup>9</sup>

(2) Job can ultimately neither justify himself nor be justified. Whether guilt and innocence, with attendant moral categories, are a human creation or not (the book of Job does not directly deal with this question), they crumble into dust in the face of the totality of being in which humankind participates.

(3) Job is absent from God's poem of the cosmos, but he is simultaneously addressed as though he were valuable to the divine Speaker; he is an opponent who must be given to understand the world *sub speciei eternitatis*.

9. Behemot and Leviathan as metaphors of the "monstrous mystery" of both God and man that I stressed (1978) may suggest also the strength, defenses, and renewal that are God-given human possibilities. For a development of this insight see Gammie, 1978, pp. 220, 222, 225–226.

Lacocque's study furthers an understanding of the unspoken dimension of the communication. Although he errs in stating that Yahweh utters His own name, he offers a hermeneutical perspective (redescription and semantic impertinence) and initial textual clues (the Speaker and His Name) that enable the interpreter to appreciate the poetics of the text while searching for its theological meaning.

### III

When one attends to the unspoken dimension of the communication one begins to understand that the meaning of God's poem inheres in the coming of God to speak to Job. Job is spoken to by that reality which is most other and yet is more what he is than he thinks. To this other reality we give a *face* which we call "God"; and we symbolize God as Person. At the same time, the biblical revelation implies that the Person of God is a *persona*, it is a mask that discloses something to us but conceals much more. This One speaks to Moses face to face, yet Moses is not allowed to see the Face (Exod 33:11, 20). It is the Face that Jacob sees in the place he names Face-of-God, yet he "sees" it only at the price of struggle and injury (Gen 32:31–32). It is the Face of the One who gives a Name, but the name is not a true proper name (Exod 3:13–15). It is a *person*-al name that is not personal in the sense of intimate or familiar.

The face of Job mirrors this divine face. In the very midst of his final affirmation of seeing, he concedes his inability to see and to reflect what he has experienced:

- 42:2 I know that everything Thou canst do  
and from Thee no purpose can be withheld.
- 42:3 "Who is this, hider of counsel in ignorance?"  
So I proclaimed and did not discern,  
things too wonderful for me, and I did not know.
- 42:4 "Hear, I tell you, and I will speak!  
I will ask you and you shall disclose."
- 42:5 By the hearing of the ear I heard Thee,  
and now my eye sees Thee.
- 42:6 So it is I melt and repent  
on dust and ashes.

Job here apparently quotes God in verses 3a and 4 (see Gordis, 1965, pp. 187–189), but it is as if he speaks to himself. Isn't this what happens in the climax of the revelation? He speaks to himself by quoting God, the One most far ("things too wonderful for me") and most near ("my eye sees Thee"). Or to say it in other words, it comes home to Job that he, as Adam, is made in the image of the invisible God.

To be a “person” is, in one sense, to assume a mask or role in a given situation, a mask or role which represents only a facet of the manifold reality of the individual. On the other hand, in modern English we place a great value on “full personhood.” To be a person connotes worth or, in some instances, status. So it is in the Hebrew Bible. Although the exact equivalent of our word “person” does not occur in ancient Hebrew, the word for “face,” *pānīm*, is certainly within the semantic range of what person means in English.<sup>10</sup> As one evidence of this, I would cite a few examples of biblical usage which indicate that role, status, or esteem is involved in the state of one’s face.

—Cain’s *face fell* when Yahweh accepted Abel’s offering rather than his (Gen 4:5). (Face expressing anger and depression—one feels unaccepted and diminished.)

—Abram *fell on his face* before God (Gen 17:3). (The worshiper abasing himself—lowering his face—before the divine Person.)

—Moses *hid his face* upon hearing the voice from the burning bush (Exod 3:6). (Similar to Gen 17:3, except here the awestruck human *yārē mēhabbîṭ ʔel-hāʔēlōhîm*, “was afraid to look at God.”)

—Yahweh spoke to Moses *face to face* as one would talk to a friend (Exod 33:11). (Facing the other as friend, the intimacy of talking face to face.)

—Yahweh *denies Moses sight of His face*, “for a human being (*hā-ʔādām*) shall not see me and live” (Exod 33:20). (Face as representation of the essence of the subject’s reality; God’s face in this sense cannot be seen.)

—*Faces are not to be regarded* in legal cases (Deut 1:17—*lô takkîrû pānîm bammišpāṭ*). (All have the same face or person before the law that God validates.)

—The suffering servant of Yahweh is *one from whom* people hide their face (Isa 53:3). (*Persona non grata* in the sense of being held in low esteem, not able to see the faces of others.)

—Jacob hopes that his *face will be lifted* by Esau: “I will appease him (*ʔakapperâ pānāyw*) . . . perhaps he will favor me” (*yîššā pānāy*) (Gen 32:21). (Being accepted or favored, having one’s face lifted.)

This last example is the idiom used in the epilogue as a prelude to Job’s restoration: the Lord favors Job and condemns the friends, so Job must pray for the friends, who offer propitiatory sacrifices. “. . . And

10. The counterpart of face as an overt constant in ongoing social relations would be *šēm*, “name.” Face and name form semantic configurations that are right at the center of my current research on “person” as metaphor and mystery in biblical thought.

Yahweh favored Job" (*wayyîššā yhwh et-pēnê ʿiyyôb*, 42:9). Job receives a *face lift*, he becomes more than ever *persona grata* before Yahweh. He stands now as Intercessor as well as Representative Man before the only One who can look into the face of Leviathan, the "(im)personation" of chaos:

Who [else] has opened the doors of his face?  
Surrounding his teeth is terror. (41:6)

With the "lifting of face" that occurs for Job in the epilogue his "face-off" with God reaches its resolution. Job had accused God of not exercising His role as sustainer of order, for He "covers the face of the judges" (9:24), i.e., he does not allow them to perform their proper judicial role. On the other hand, in the contradictory state of his soul, Job has told the friends that God, as the just judge, will rebuke them if they have "lifted faces" in secret (13:10), i.e., shown favor on the basis of someone's status or relationship to the judge. In this case the putative "favored person," the one "lifted of face," is God! Job has complained that his face is sad (9:27) and red with weeping (16:16), that is, his very person is affected by what God has done. Although formerly the light of his face had encouraged others (29:24), God has injured him to the point that he anticipates his death without hope. God is the one who changes the face of man and sends him away (14:20). Job's only petition, an expression of hope against the backdrop of despair, is to defend himself to God's *face* (13:15; 23:4), that is, in person to the "person" of God. Job did not realize he had been doing just that all along, making his case "in person" to God, and so precipitating God's joyous defense of his creation.

Who indeed, says God, is able to stand before me? (*ûmî hûʿ lēpānāy yityaššāb*, 41.2). Well, according to the prologue the *bēnê hāʿēlōhîm*, the divine members of the heavenly court, come to stand before the Lord (1:6; 2:1). And according to the epilogue Job is lifted up, refaced, "repersonalized" to the status of intercessor and spiritual giant before God.

"Who is able to stand before me?" He whom God favors, and this one is Job. The pulsating life of the cosmos is his heritage, though he can no more comprehend it than one could follow the wake of the Leviathan to his home (Alter). The grandeur of creation is the place of his dialogue with Yahweh (Lacocque), although from the human standpoint this world displays the face of a foreign and fascinating divinity. The full reality of the One speaking to him is always elsewhere than in the discourse Job can hear and the images he can see, but Job's reality is as mysterious as that of the Voice! He cannot see himself in the world God displays, but he knows himself spoken to.

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