

A TRIAL OF PHILOSOPHY

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To my family

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CHAPTER I

A TRIAL OF PHILOSOPHY

Introduction

By “a trial of philosophy,” I intend that the Book of Job (hereafter italicized as *Job* to distinguish the text from the character) offer a way that the issue of undergoing in contemporary philosophy may be re-examined. That philosophy begins by what the philosopher undergoes seems to be the proper level at which to reinvoke discussion between competing philosophical orientations.¹ For at that level, portraits emerge of the experiences that condition the possibility and character of philosophical reflection. Or to put the matter differently, the possibility of experience itself becomes a contested site. Just as philosophy registers a fracturing between orientations, so too our political and social world appears as fractured within these philosophies, but with important differences. *Job* – itself a fractured text – becomes a way to explore these differences in detail. *Job* places the issue of innocent suffering and its misidentification under intense scrutiny within the dynamic of a trial. Like philosophical reflection under conditions of a damaged capacity to experience, Job’s trial faces obstacles of a predominant order. This order has dimensions relating to law, administration and intelligibility. Each of these dimensions plays upon particular philosophers differently, as well as upon the very distinction between philosophy, literature, and art. In an attempt to keep *Job* central, I draw liberally across these distinctions, showing no particular allegiance to any orientation but rather allowing *Job* to help me reorient my disposition regarding each philosophical, literary or artistic figure. As a consequence, the

discussion will develop as a montage, which is fitting in that both *Job* and Job’s trial also display a lack of “proper” arrangement. Job’s trial must find and make its way against the pull of this predominant order, which threatens to dominate order altogether, thereby preempting the possibility of a trial in the sense of an order that binds together Job’s suffering in a way that might allow innocent suffering to register in its own terms. Consequently, Job’s trial shares a feature with philosophical reflection in that it must – against the grain – discover a mode of composition that does not default into normal, occlusive conditions. A trial thereby becomes a way to examine the conditions and possibility of success of another kind of arrangement of “material evidence” that does not renew suffering by perpetuating the very damage to experience that reflection attempts to disrupt. In short, “trial” becomes “radicalized” as an evidentiary mode that takes its own conditions of possibility immanently into account.

The first chapter, “The Trial of Philosophy,” sketches out the stakes of this trial: Predominant forms of law have both historical and contemporary dimensions (theodicy, eschatology, the epistemological subject, the authoritarian personality). I argue that due to the inadequacies of several theological and philosophical treatments of theodicy, there is a need to renew a discussion of suffering. I describe the critical vocabulary (*hearing, telling, arraignment*) – derived from my reading of *Job* – that will give shape to my treatment of undergoing in subsequent chapters. The second chapter, “A Homeless Cry of Pain and El the Un-maker,” features my reading of *Job*: a series of “lawful” displacements that the sufferer undergoes and a trial as an exploration of the possibility of form. The third chapter, “A Wayward Passage,” is my attempt to emerge from two incompatible philosophies – that

¹ I am referring especially to “critical theory” and “philosophical hermeneutics,” but also “deconstruction” and the “philosophy of the fragment.” These distinctions and the representatives that I will explore become clearer in the next

of Heidegger and Adorno – with a reinvigorated sense of how undergoing is connected to philosophy’s form or manner of composition. It is here that Benjamin and Kafka, as well as modernist art, begin to take on greater relevance. The fourth chapter, “Outsiders: ‘*ōb^erē derek* to Odradek,” explores marginality, law and storytelling. The “waywardness” of the previous chapter continues in the spirit of the wayfarers (‘*ōb^erē derek*) who, like Job, contest conventional wisdom. Derrida emerges as a potent ally to Job’s rejection of conventional hope, Benjamin describes the entanglement of the “outsider,” and Kafka allows a way to envision an arrangement of materials that forestalls the collapse into law in its hegemonic forms that mimes *Job*’s lack of narrative resolution. I suggest a particular modernist artwork (Graham’s *Machine for reading Lenz*) as a way to thematize a question of novelty. In the last chapter, “Fear the Text,” I attempt to disrupt “readings” of *Job* that mythologize the text by emphasizing simultaneously several material moments of tearing in *Job*. The “undecidable” and Adorno’s description of the modernist artwork reappear as potent modes of reading *Job*. Finally, I frame the juxtaposition of *Job* with contemporary social conditions as a *mise en abyme*, suggesting that a forestalling of a prioritizing of *Job* to read social conditions, or social conditions to read *Job*, is indicative of a transformative thinking-into repetition.

“Contemporary” Approaches to Theodicy

The issue of unjust suffering and theodicy is a great deal older than philosophy. In the Babylonian theodicy (approx. 1000 BCE), unjust suffering is thematized as a dimension of human experience long before Greek philosophy enters the scene, which in its own right contended with mythology. In Plato’s challenge to the poets (as to who should rightly found

paragraph.

the state), Plato set limits to theodicy. The *Symposium*, for example, presents the attribution of characteristics to Eros as manifesting a distorted concern for the truth.

When addressed from the perspective of traditional theodicy, suffering is a problem of the reconciliation between a good and all-powerful God and the occurrence of suffering in the world. Theodicy is an artifact of monotheism, in the sense that the problem of how to reconcile a single, good and all-powerful God with the fact of suffering in the world would otherwise not arise.² Of course, the term “theodicy” (*theos+dike*) comes from Leibniz, who takes his cue from arguments he finds in Augustine and Aquinas with the intention of taking them a step further in his *Théodicée*. The observable fact of suffering in the world seems to demand that either the omnipotence or the goodness of God be surrendered. Leibniz, however, argues that not only does God permit evil in order to obtain a greater good but also God has created the best of all possible worlds.³

Theodicy is only a formal aspect of a pervasive tendency to take particulars to be meaningful as instances of rules. Like Wittgenstein’s complaint that philosophy has hijacked the assertion from its embeddedness in ordinary practice, suffering results from the hijacking of meaningfulness from materiality by a set of presumptively rational propositions. Social integration occurs as the hegemony of intelligibility that attempts to legislate in advance the meaning of suffering. While I consider my philosophical orientation to be an ongoing project, I repeat much of the diagnosis the brokenness of social reality gained from “critical theory.” I pursue the thesis that theodicy is a counterpart to a perfected systematicity of statecraft that is inherited by and further articulated in what Adorno describes as our hyper-administrated world. In particular, I find that *Job* resonates with a

² Some Manichaeian theologies attempt to skirt this problem by the introduction of Satan (a figure that appears as a world-power in roughly the first century).

critique of those totalizing regimes of meaningfulness that are in concert with regimes of political and social order. From the materiality of *Job*, I attempt to demonstrate a *mise en abyme* of social and textual disarticulation. I explore this *mise en abyme* primarily in the chapter “Fear the Text.”

My general strategy is to employ (as with the mention of Wittgenstein above) multiple philosophers and also “literary” figures (most notably, Kafka) that can be brought into fruitful conversation with *Job*. For example, *Job*’s plight shows something akin to what Foucault might describe as the following: the condition for having a place to be is that the sufferer abandon her pain to the interpretive framework that stands in the same relationship as “languages of truth” do to the “disciplinary mechanisms” that cause suffering in the first place.⁴ As Adorno describes, every event is an occasion for the negation of its singularity; experience (always of difference) tends to be ruled out. Consequently, the predominant form of suffering can *not* be experienced in a robust sense; rather, one undergoes an excising of experience that is among the principal causes of suffering. As I will explore in greater detail in the chapter “A Wayward Passage,” philosophical engagement with the loss of experience requires experience: a moment when the way in which one is ordinarily disposed to a matter (a routine of apprehension) is at variance from how the matter appears (a heteronomy). In order to articulate the relationship between suffering (the result of an unlivable world in which subjective mastery is the rule) and a philosophy that challenges the presumption of subjective mastery, I explore the matter of *Erfahrung* (which is always bodily undergone rather than chosen) in its connections to the ability to envision alternatives to the same and the discursive demands of a transformed philosophy.

³ For the argument reduced to its syllogistic form: Gottfried W. Leibniz, The Philosophical Works of Leibniz, trans. George M. Duncan, (New Haven, CT: Tuttle, Morehouse & Taylor, 1890) 194-197, 202-204.

Social reality in the West tends to be gripped by an overriding sense that to be *really* real is to derive from an intelligible, rather than sensible, realm of facts (a Platonic heaven). The Platonic rift between the intelligible and the sensible attains a concrete, social reality in the predominance of a rationality in which all intelligibility proceeds from a sacrifice of the particular to the universal. Like an actual social instantiation of Kant's thought that an intuition cannot have cognitive significance unless conceptualized, materiality bears no intelligibility of its own apart from the imposition of order upon it. This order is a heavenly "kingdom of transcendent ends" that is...

...willed by a benevolent wisdom, by the absolute goodness of a God who is in some way defined by this super-natural goodness; or a widespread, invisible goodness in Nature and History, where it would command the paths which are, to be sure, painful, but which lead to the Good. Pain is henceforth meaningful, subordinated in one way or another to the metaphysical finality envisaged by faith or by a belief in progress...These supra-sensible perspectives are invoked in order to envisage in a suffering which is essentially gratuitous and absurd, and apparently arbitrary, a signification and an order.⁵

Suffering is justified by an ultimately magical appeal to a "supra-sensible" "heavenly kingdom of ends." Theodicy is the formal enterprise of justifying suffering in terms of a hidden, redeemable value. If the legislation of meaning is by a context-transcendent absolute, and includes a disavowed projection of inviolability upon that meaning, then I consider that meaning to be "theological." Allegedly lodged in a Platonic heaven, the calculus that the sufferer must contest is inaccessible and permanent.

⁴ Cf. Michel Foucault, "Two Lectures," Power/Knowledge, trans. Colin Gordon, et al., ed. Colin Gordon (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980) 78.

⁵ Emmanuel Lévinas. "Useless Suffering," The Provocation of Emmanuel Levinas: Re-thinking the Other, ed. Robert Bernasconi and David Wood (London: Routledge, 1988) 160-161.

The reasonableness that assigns a redeemable value to suffering is, in ways not fully appreciated, linked to the “contemporary” reasonableness that evaluates optional theories according to timeless epistemic standards. The “problem of evil” is typically taken up within contemporary debates (between historicism and positivism) without offering reflection as to why the contours of analysis should be so delimited. While a certain history of the “problem of evil” offers a corrective to the erroneous view that violence against “the jews” is an aberration particular to Nazi Germany, other historical approaches remain within an orbit that are eschatological in spirit and therefore historically blind.⁶

Pojman, for example, conducts a survey of theodicies as if both ancient and modern versions can be brought ahistorically alongside each other and evaluated according to “timeless” epistemic standards.⁷ To approach history as an allegedly free (ahistorical) subject is a way our inheritance of the epistemological model plays itself out in current practice. An analysis of the epistemic plusses and minuses of theodicies past and present is insufficiently reflective as to its own history and thereby occludes the very field of inquiry it presumes to open up. But not just that: The loss of experience is immanent to philosophy as eschatological desire. The complicity of a prevailing reasonableness with the reproduction of suffering lies in an authorized unreflectiveness about history. The obfuscation of the role of undergoing to philosophical reflection (in favor of “timeless” epistemic standards of reason) shares with suffering the evacuation of the meaningfulness of bodies by a regime of axiomatic presuppositions. As dependent response to undergoing, refection caries along the fingerprint of a singular undergoing, and may itself be “philosophical” in virtue of its alienation from philosophy’s ‘business as usual.’ It is not just philosophy’s ‘business as

⁶ That is not to say, however, that the Shoah is not singular as an ur-event; that is, it renders the myth of progressive history unrecoverable except on condition of the liquidation of subjectivity.

usual’ that constitutes a homogenization, but also the banishing of anything like a “unique” undergoing. The familiar position of the rational subject (for which materiality is “for” representation) performs the very fixation that produces an unlivable world (e.g., the subjugation of bodies for the sake of extracting an intelligible value: the greatest amount of labor). By default, “contemporary” approaches to theodicy unreflectively exhibit the “view from nowhere” (an eschatological horizon) and thereby fail to live up to the concept of the contemporary.

The story told from the *eschaton*

The usual story (which appears to be un-revisable because its origin in human valuation is obscured) is told from the *eschaton* as the alleged “necessity” of Reason, Nature, or God. So-called “original” causes are hypostases of actual causes that remain unexplained. The “canonical” tradition distorts history through a repression.⁸ Whether it is Christianity or Cartesianism⁹, the governing image is that truth resides in a Platonic Heaven (and is accessible in the first instance by the *daimonic*¹⁰ Christ, in the second instance via the “One, True” method). The elimination of embodiment (nature) is a radicalization of mythic fear.¹¹ Disembodied thought exercises power over the body as object. A mode of eschatological violence, the ideal rational subject (who is raced “white” and gendered “male”), anonymously authorizes the paring away of those deemed “incapable” of reason.¹²

⁷ Louis P. Pojman. Philosophy of Religion: An Anthology, 4th ed. (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 2002).

⁸ The usual story of the history of philosophy depends upon the exclusion of Judaic and Islamic philosophy.

⁹ The issue of *kairos* is less remote in its incarnation as Cartesianism. The Cartesian effort to break absolutely from the past on purely self-determined grounds is an enactment of history rather than its evasion.

¹⁰ In the “Symposium,” Eros is a daimon capable of mediating between gods and humanity.

¹¹ Cf. Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer, Dialectic of Enlightenment, Philosophical Fragments, trans. Edmund Jephcott, ed. Gunzelin Schmid Noerr (Stanford, CA: Stanford UP, 2002).

¹² Although the sufferer in *Job* is male, I thereby do not intend “maleness” to be emblematic of suffering, but rather consider Job’s trial to include, on my reading, a disruption of gender in keeping with the text of *Job*, for which genre distinctions are hopelessly problematic.

God disappears and is hypostasized in mind, the “I” positing itself. The imperative of complete self-knowledge is the “philosophical” aspect of the *eschaton* – a final judgment that presumes to render the past as utterly past from a “fully contemporary” vantage. When an unassailable position from which to criticize history is conceived as possible, even if such a position is held out only as a “regulative ideal,” that position reenacts the eschatology of philosophical modernity and a failure of memory.¹³ Because eschatology is law that distorts history, to reflect upon how undergoing is indissoluble from philosophical reflection is to contest law.

As part of a suppression of desire, sensibility is reduced to sight as a seductive retreat from the world. In the ancient Greek experience of Being, a disembodied intellectual “vision” is first envisioned as a total response to the massively *present*.¹⁴ The ancients responded to what they experienced as massively on-hand, but never thought that response/relatedness itself. For the ancients, there is not one dominant name for Being yet (e.g., truth, goodness, reality, the Form of forms, the Prime Mover, the four elements, Being, Becoming). But all such names share the common denominator that they are names for permanent presence. Hence things are thought to be real in accordance with how they conform to a permanently real *x*. And we inherit the result. What conventional truth ignores falls on dead ears – the fruits of a two thousand year-old tradition. Today, the disembodied exchange of information via the Internet has never accomplished a greater fury (a din without sound as in space). The place where this exchange happens (on apparently un-

¹³ This is intended to be a reference to Habermas but there is a very similar position taken by Putnam in the early 1980’s, which he described as “internal realism.” See Hilary Putnam, The Many Faces of Realism, The Paul Carus Lectures. (LaSalle: Open Court Publishing Co., 1987) 17.

¹⁴ This is Heidegger’s formulation, which I will stray from momentarily. For another way of stating the problem of the predominance of vision to conceptuality (namely, the relationship between binocularity and predation), see Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer, Dialectic of Enlightenment, Philosophical Fragments, trans. Edmund Jephcott, ed. Gunzelin Schmid Noerr (Stanford, CA: Stanford UP, 2002) 158.

situated) has never been in greater need of reflection about disembodiment as an impoverishment of experience and sociability (a matter that will return in the chapter “The State of Reading”).

The pervasiveness of the *eschaton* does not yield to simple identification and subsequently relinquish its grip on the possibilities that are envisioned by the philosophical imagination. Unreflectively subject to this desire, the common conception of philosophy¹⁵ is that it proceeds by argument, that there are winners and losers, that the subject must possess rules for the right conduct of reason, that the unit of thought is the proposition... As just described, mainstream philosophy is downstream from (very roughly) the transmission of an impoverished Plato, its magical augmentation in theology, the search for the “One True Method” by which the “One True Theory” is to be attained, and the afterlife of the “View from Nowhere” in the melancholic response of relativism. Philosophy as argument is an indication of a decadence, a regression following the disappearance of experience to philosophy. The disappearance of experience, or rather the impossibility that anything may be encountered “apart” from its hegemonic apprehension by a certain regime of conceptuality, brings to the fore the issue of the impossibility of reflection, which is a break with necessity, and imagination, which is the capacity to envision otherwise. That which stands for difference stands in the way of an imaginary unity (an indifference). In this context, to reflect is to be critical of this unity; the alternative is to repeat it. Specifically, as I will explore in the chapter “Fear the Text,” *Job* is often subject to an eschatological “reading” in which moments in the text are skewed in favor of anticipation of Christ. The reading that I propose argues for dispersal rather than finality.

¹⁵ I am referring to the way mainstream “analytic” philosophy in the U.S. and Great Britain is inflected in not just lay understanding but also in current practice.

Identification with Power

New Testament stories of suffering, as wartime literature,¹⁶ are a principle contributor to the pervasiveness of the eschatological model to thinking. *Kairos*, the eternal breaking into the temporal, is understood as the coming of Christ.¹⁷ While “the” *kairos* ostensibly institutes an utter difference,¹⁸ it actually ushers in an annihilation of difference: All events are claimed by a single, ultimate valuation, a mythical identity.¹⁹ All suffering is identified with the suffering of Christ.²⁰ Humanity is allegedly always already in debt to the infinite gift of the death of God. The pre-existent Logos comes to be embodied in Christ; all events prior to Christ are but preparatory.²¹ The end and aim of history, revealed by the Christ, is the Kingdom of God. The meaning and direction of history conforms to the law (the New Covenant of Acts 2:22-36).²² The Law ultimately administers selective extermination: eschatology falls inside Law and so must reject *apokatastasis* (the resurrection of all).²³ The form of hope encoded in the enlightenment is religiously formed. A more thorough discussion of hope will occur in the chapter “Outsiders: ‘ōb’rē derek to Odradek.”

In “The Dean and the Chosen People”, Richard L. Rubenstein explores the way in which authority is invoked to explain the *Shoah*.²⁴ Rubinstein recounts his interview with Dean Grüber, a German evangelist minister who protested the murder of the Jews at risk to

¹⁶ Cf. Elaine Pagels, The Origin of Satan (New York: Vintage Books, 1995).

¹⁷ Paul Tillich, “Kairos,” Handbook of Christian Theology, Definition Essays on Concepts and Movements of Thought in Contemporary Protestantism, ed. Marvin Halverson and Arthur A. Cohen (Cleveland: The World Publishing Co., 1964) 196.

¹⁸ Cf. Karl Barth insists on the utterly unique character of Christ’s appearance in the world. John E. Smith, “”History” Handbook of Christian Theology, 165.

¹⁹ John A. Hutchinson, “Being,” Handbook of Christian Theology, 34.

²⁰ Alexander Miller, “Evil,” Handbook of Christian Theology, 120.

²¹ H.A. Wolfson, “Logos,” Handbook of Christian Theology, 214.

²² Carl Michalson, “Authority,” Handbook of Christian Theology, 27.

²³ Paul Althaus, “Eschatology,” trans. Werner Rode, Handbook of Christian Theology, 104.

²⁴ Richard L. Rubenstein, “The Dean and the Chosen People,” Holocaust, Religious & Philosophical Implications, ed. John K. Roth and Michael Berenbaum (St. Paul, MN: Paragon House, 1989) 277-288.

himself and his family. Rubinstein discovers a frightening family resemblance in the Dean's commitment to a just God:

Even sixteen years after the close of hostilities, not only Eichmann, but apparently his defense counsel, seemed to feel that such servitude was self-justifying. Furthermore, in both the Dean and his demonic antagonist, the will of the master, in the one case God, in the other case Hitler, was unredeemed by a saving empiricism. Neither man preferred an inconsistency in logic to the consistency of accepting the gratuitous murder of six million. In neither individual was there even a trace of personal autonomy.²⁵

Both Eichmann and Grüber are both functionaries of their respective authorities. Both advocate for authority in the face of suffering. Regardless of the authority appealed to, that authority functions to justify suffering. Moreover, the appeal to authority allows this personality to produce its own justification in the same stroke. Eichmann makes murder orderly; Grüber protests murder but sees, after all, its orderliness. By a twist of logic, barbarity comes to signify lawfulness.

In "Education After Auschwitz", Adorno states that the prevention of another Auschwitz rests upon a "turn to the subject," by which he means that the roots have to be sought in the perpetrators and not the victims.²⁶ Seeing the limited prospects for changing societal and political conditions, he proposes we come to understand the mechanisms that make people capable of mass murder:

It is not the victims who are guilty, not even in the sophist and caricatures sense in which still today many like to construe it. Only those who unreflectingly vented their hate and aggression upon them are guilty. One must labor against this lack of reflection, must dissuade people from striking outward without reflecting upon

²⁵ Richard L. Rubenstein, After Auschwitz: Radical Theology and Contemporary Judaism, (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1966) 284.

²⁶ Theodor W. Adorno, "Education after Auschwitz," Critical Models, Interventions and Catchwords, trans. Henry W. Pickford (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998) 193. See also Adorno, "The Meaning of Working Through the Past" Ibid. 102.

themselves. The only education that has any sense at all is an education toward critical self-reflection.²⁷

The fact of power, rather than reflection upon its content, is the principle determinate of its appeal: “Authoritarian personalities identify themselves with real-existing power per se, prior to any particular contents”²⁸ Identification with the whole is substitute satisfaction for the satisfaction denied persons by a callous world.²⁹ Only with an improvement of the objective situation that renders people powerless will the real need for people to identify with power be eroded.

Adorno notes the “inability to have any immediate human experiences at all” as characteristic of the authoritarian personality.³⁰ As part of a habituation to a broken world, the subject responds to being overwhelmed by objective conditions (including a barrage of “news” of global suffering) by appeal to mythical forms of inevitability and reconciliation – and thereby relinquishes subjectivity in the process. The inability to respond to suffering, to have it grip us before it is conceptualized, is part of a larger alienation from experience resulting from the predominance of a certain regime of conceptuality. It is the inability to experience, this “coldness,” this “indifference to the fate of others,” that is a precondition for another disaster.³¹ Beside the need to address the pathology that exhibits itself in the identification with power, theological questions as to whether suffering is in fact the product of divine plan must be regarded as idle or worse.

²⁷ Critical Models, 193.

²⁸ Critical Models, 94.

²⁹ Critical Models, 96.

³⁰ Critical Models, 101,198.

³¹ Critical Models, 201-202.

Preserving “the Jews” I: A Faith “Without” Theodicy

In “Useless Suffering”, Levinas decries the atrociousness of theodicy after Auschwitz. The appeal to theodicy erases the horror of systematic murder. But if “faith”³² is relinquished along with theodicy, according to Levinas, one encounters a problem: What else but an affirmation of belief in God in the face of Auschwitz would succeed in preserving “the Jews”?³³ But such an affirmation resurrects straightaway the problem of theodicy, for the God one affirms should have prevented Auschwitz.

For Levinas, the problem of how to continue “in a faith without theodicy” requires that we recognize how suffering opens up the space of the inter-human.

Properly speaking, the inter-human lies in a non-indifference of one to another, in a responsibility of one for another. The inter-human is prior to the reciprocity of this responsibility, which inscribes itself in impersonal laws, and becomes superimposed on the pure altruism of this responsibility inscribed in the ethical position of the self as self. It is prior to every contact which would signify precisely the moment of reciprocity where it can, to be sure, continue, but where it can also attenuate or extinguish altruism and disinterestedness.³⁴

The space of the inter-human is prior to the instrumentalization of suffering. On Levinas’ view, the choice is between 1) either allowing suffering to be “for nothing” or 2) recognizing a pure altruism that inheres in the space of the inter-human prior to its enculturation. Levinas asks, “Are we not all pledged – like the Jewish people to their faithfulness – to the second term of this alternative?”³⁵ To state at once my exception to the way this pledge seems to be conceived by Levinas: “Faith” is by no means a prerequisite,

³² According to Lévinas, Auschwitz is commonly taken to be a “commandment to faithfulness.” The Provocation of Emmanuel Levinas, 163.

³³ I would add to Lévinas’ characterization of the problem that, if this call to faith is a call to a belief in God, and if belief in God is a prerequisite for belonging to this community “of Jews,” then there is something suspect at work.

³⁴ The Provocation of Emmanuel Levinas, 165.

neither for one's inclusion to Judaism nor for its survival, for Judaism is a civilization.³⁶ In addition, I maintain that Levinas' formula for a faith without theodicy ("useless in the Other," "meaningful in me"³⁷) avoids the problem that there can be no useless suffering.³⁸

Theodicy, for Levinas, invokes the proper sense of a metaphysical order, "an ethics which is invisible in the immediate lessons of moral consciousness."³⁹ Levinas makes clear that we are to take our responsibility to the Other as a corrective to theodicy:

...the for-the-other – the most upright relation to the Other – is the most profound adventure of subjectivity, its ultimate intimacy. But this intimacy can only be discreet. It could not be given as an example, or to be narrated as an edifying discourse. It could not be made a predication without being perverted.⁴⁰

According to Levinas, an ethical relationship inheres in the space of the inter-human prior to its mediation. But if we notice Levinas' description of this ethical space carefully, we notice features of this space that are troubling: It is the "ultimate intimacy of subjectivity" that eludes narration, and so is indistinguishable from the apophasic within which the "kingdom of transcendent ends" is enclosed. Moreover, this preferred, immanent domain is, on Levinas' view, *not* already mediated by factual systems of order.⁴¹

A pure responsibility that is magically prior to mediation ignores that mediation is unavoidable. The fact that suffering of the Other is always already "meaningful in me" is the very problem, and this presumption of meaningfulness haunts the sufferer as a presumption of guilt. The possibility of Levinas place of a pure altruism is always already preempted by

³⁵ [The Provocation of Emmanuel Levinas](#),164.

³⁶ This is the view of Judaism of the founder of Reconstructionist Judaism, Rabbi Mordecai Kaplan.

³⁷ [The Provocation of Emmanuel Levinas](#),164.

³⁸ The problem is one of no non-identity without sacrifice. "The subject's non-identity without sacrifice would be utopian." Theodor Adorno, [Negative Dialectics](#), trans. E.B. Ashton (New York: Seabury Press, 1973) 281.

³⁹ [The Provocation of Emmanuel Levinas](#),160.

⁴⁰ [The Provocation of Emmanuel Levinas](#),163.

an hegemony of uses (educative, imitative, etc.) for suffering. Contra Levinas's "Useless Suffering," I maintain that the problem to be considered is how suffering is available as subsumable. The sufferer confronts an *a priori* 'fit' of categories through which the singularity of suffering is intelligible as an instance of a rule. The predominance of theodicy manifests itself in the identification with power at the cost of the reality-principle – a retreat from reality to a "religion" that has already devolved to magic. However much Levinas contests theodicy (the kingdom of transcendent ends), he appears to have resurrected theodicy insofar as the space of unmediated responsibility is a mythical space. The appeal to a reality that is magically prior to mediation only confirms the fact of mediation.

Levinas has, however, noticed a problem: suffering is readily available for subsumption by regimes of conceptuality that repeal the significative weight of singularity (is 'inscribed within impersonal laws'). So that a critique of these laws is possible, there must be a moment of non-identity to suffering ("the un-subsumable of consciousness"). Yet insofar as the conditions are damaged for a self to be a self (wherein "the pure altruism" of responsibility is inscribed), there can be no "useless suffering."

Preserving "the Jews" II: A Value of "Sacrifice"

For Wiesel, and not unlike innocent suffering in *Job*, the *Shoah* calls for a trial of God. As Wiesel tells us, three rabbis solemnly conducted a trial of God over three days in Auschwitz and rendered the verdict of guilty.⁴² After rendering their verdict, the rabbis

⁴¹ By factual systems of order, Lévinas refers to "the order of politics – post-ethical or pre-ethical – which inaugurates the 'social contract.'" The Provocation of Emmanuel Levinas, 165.

⁴² The Long Search: Judaism, The Chosen People (Vol. 7), videotape, dir. Brian Lewis, narr. Ronald Eyre, BBC / Time-Life Video, 1977 (52 min.).

observed evening prayers.⁴³ Perhaps it is this moment of resumption of evening prayers that Wiesel attempts to convey in having his characters “choose to die as Jews.”⁴⁴

In his *The Trial of God*, Wiesel presents a play within a play: a *Purimschpiel* within which three *Purimschpielers* play the role of judges in a trial of God. The *Purimschpielers* must confront the reality of a pogrom and a father’s demand for justice. The one who defends God, God’s advocate or defense attorney, is introduced as a stranger, who later reveals that he is God’s “emissary.”⁴⁵ “Sam,” as he is known, argues for God’s infallible justice.⁴⁶ Whether there is some other justice that exists outside the human demand for justice – the justice of God – is the question the father, an innkeeper, raises:

I don’t want a minor, secondary justice, a poor man’s justice! I want no part of a justice that escapes me, diminishes me and makes a mockery out of mine! Justice is here for men and women – I therefore want it to be human, or let Him keep it!⁴⁷

The oldest and wisest of the judges tells us, “Purim signifies absence of knowledge, a refusal of knowledge.”⁴⁸ The refusal of knowledge is enacted by performances and masks. When another pogrom erupts, interrupting the verdict, the judges and the innkeeper choose to die as Jews despite a Priest who advises that they wear the mask of Christianity long enough to be spared from the mob.⁴⁹ The knowledge that Purim shields us from – the reality of state-sponsored murder – breaks through the form of the *Purimschpiel*, so that we are able to say with Avrémel, another judge,

⁴³ The Long Search. I can’t help but wonder what portion was read that evening.

⁴⁴ Elie Wiesel, *The Trial of God* (New York: Schocken Books, 1979) 152.

⁴⁵ The Trial of God, 158. I read Sam as Wiesel’s incarnation of the *haśšāṭān* in *Job*. The meaning of *haśšāṭān* – a title, “the adversary” – is adroitly captured by the sense of God’s attorney in Wiesel’s play.

⁴⁶ The Trial of God, 127.

⁴⁷ The Trial of God, 123.

⁴⁸ The Trial of God, 91.

⁴⁹ The Trial of God, 154-155.

I listen to you, innkeeper, and I imagine Purim without the miracle of Purim. And I know everything.⁵⁰

The damage to narcissism⁵¹ incurred by broken social reality is compensated by publicly sanctioned violence. The abject (e.g., “the jew”⁵² targeted by the pogrom) is the material condition for the disappearance of reflection. The “jew” is an ego-dystonic idea (only apparently coming from outside the ego) and part of a ready-made “pseudo-orientation” through stereotypy.⁵³

By having his heroes “choose to die as Jews” (implying that their deaths are a sacrifice for their “Jewishness”), Wiesel dilutes his other point of emphasis: that the trial needs to be ongoing in remembrance of those who cannot come back to life once the play has ended. *Shoah* attributes no redemptive meaning to systematic murder whereas a valuation is implied by “Holocaust.” I maintain that the deformation of memory occurs in the manner of Wiesel’s form of “remembrance,” especially when remembrance becomes an industry.

Because a meaning of sacrifice tends to override the capacity to experience the suffering of the other, the valuation of suffering remains to be addressed in Wiesel’s *The Trial of God*. Despite my objections to Wiesel, however, the scripted response of Job’s friends is captured in Wiesel’s character Sam. In addition, by “staging” elements (by placing elements in proximity to each other), the elements of a play become compelling in terms of inviting interpretation without allowing their meaning to become exhaustively discursively

⁵⁰ The Trial of God, 151.

⁵¹ Theodor Adorno. Minima Moralia, Reflections from Damaged Life. Trans. E.F.N Jephcott (New York: Verso, 2002) 65.

⁵² Lyotard employs a lower case “j” so that “the jews” might be stand for any persons targeted by hate, which creates its own object. Lyotard, Jean-François. Heidegger and “the jews.” Tr. Andreas Michel and Mark Roberts. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977.

⁵³ Cf. Theodor Adorno et al., The Authoritarian Personality. Studies in Prejudice (New York: W.W. Norton, 1969) 605.

rendered.⁵⁴ A play⁵⁵ can be a way of organizing elements nonviolently into a whole without subjecting those elements to the demands of a logical system or hierarchy.

Reading *Job*

The interpretive challenges of *Job* are largely thought in terms of ordinary standards for meaning (determination of authorship, historical horizon, genre, etc.). Whereas typical Biblical criticism can note the difficulty with employing its categories of understanding with respect to *Job*, rarely do those categories themselves become the subject of inquiry (as moments in the “law” of interpretation). The fact that the value of *Job* can not be redeemed in terms of standard interests begs the question as to the genealogy of those interests: the matter of meaning and intelligibility that tends to drive categorical determinations in the first place. Insofar as signification demands that the text be “healed” of its gaps and fissures, the interpreted text bears the stamp of teleology: instances of suffering are to mark progress toward a transcendent (natural, historical, divine) resolution.

Because it requires that we undergo the text as inherently at variance with our desire for presence, reading *Job* is an experience. The desire for presence is especially thwarted by *Job*, which contains the greatest concentration of *hapax legomena* in the whole of the Hebrew Bible. *Job* challenges coherence, wholeness, and integrity simply in terms of its materiality (an ancient text that has suffered dislocations, emendations, and an institutionalized “art of mistranslation.”)⁵⁶ *Job* challenges its use for the authorization of suffering by its absences (e.g., the lack of narrative resolution). The significance of the story

⁵⁴ Hence it would be too strong to assert that Wiesel insists upon a valuation, despite one being coded into his play.

⁵⁵ Wiesel attempted to write his account of the trial of God in Auschwitz many times, in many discursive forms, before discovering its formulation in a play. *The Trial of God*, vii.

⁵⁶ Wolfers describes this as “the institutionalized art of mistranslation.” David Wolfers. *Deep Things Out of Darkness: The Book of Job; Essays and a New English Translation* (Kampen: Kok Pharos Publishing, 1995) 25-45.

of *Job* is one that cannot be established without some repression to the text. But where violence to the text occurs, an interpretive predisposition consonant with theodicy is exposed, a desire to have undergoing sum to a meaningful whole. It is precisely *Job's* fragmentary materiality that is maddening to a certain scholarly sensibility.

Job possesses an intractable set of material difficulties to the systematic thinker. The attempt to distinguish “prose” from “poetry” sections, for example, is a response to the fact that *Job* confronts us with plural forms of address. *Job* is rich in detail that appears as purposeful and meaningful while resisting interpretation in terms of rational assertions. Non-conceptual transitions between elements (“emended” words, “euphemistic” phrases, “poetic” passages, even “dislocated” chapters) reverberate not referentially, but as having weight in themselves. In order for criticism to adequate itself to the sensuousness of such a work, interpretation in its normal modes (that is, our response to the work) must be made the subject of investigation. The desire to place things in their proper order is “subjective” in the sense of overwhelming the object. “Impartiality” in this context is to not expect that everything in the work must play a part in a system.

Any criticism that prioritizes intelligibility at the expense of sensuousness⁵⁷ must distort *Job*. Like many issues for us today, *Job* is familiar to us by way of a screen memory: a history that neglects and obscures while it discloses and skews. History largely transmits only that which does not contravene the favored identity of those who will be wielding it: As the effacement of the surfaces of monuments in ancient Egypt attest, history is a palimpsest whose legibility is conditioned by the victors. Like those elements of our philosophical past that do not constitute the usual story of the “canonical” tradition of

philosophy, *Job* comes to us sealed over by a summary judgment that not only misrepresents its actual content but also licenses its neglect. The way in which *Job* is not experienced is the foreground of an inability to experience suffering: actual suffering is prohibited to appear except in terms of a theology that attempts to legislate *a priori* the meaning of suffering. The book of *Job* unsettles the issue of suffering for us if we are prepared to read (that is, *experience*, the text). Reading encounters many moments of indeterminacy in *Job* that disrupts the pathological⁵⁸ expectation that any instance of suffering is determinable *a priori*. The neglect of *Job* is not entirely like that noticed by Nietzsche in the *Genealogy*: there too the philosopher (better, philologist!) must break through a theological prejudice and teach us again how to think historically.

Where we stand is in a nexus of screen memories that, as Nietzsche notices, allow the present to live, more comfortably perhaps, but at the expense of the future. A screen is projected upon legitimizing (religious) texts in order that a pious sentiment may shield itself from experiencing anything contrary to itself. The alleged “patience” of Job stands at the forefront of a screen memory of *Job*, ready to provide answers in substitution for reflection. Patience is simply not in the text.⁵⁹ Job’s cries for an intercessor allegedly receive a prefigured answer in the Christ.⁶⁰ The satan-character (*haśśātān*, who is part of YHWH’s heavenly counsel in *Job*) is conveniently assumed to be “Satan” (who doesn’t emerge as a world power until the 1st century) to deflect the blame for innocent suffering away from God. God restores Job. Case “closed.” In short, the categories of good and evil are a way a pious sensibility can occlude a text like *Job*.

⁵⁷ The tendency to give priority to the intelligible realm over sensibility is a tendency that goes unnoticed while one is being “radical” in other respects. Take for example Descartes, who by the second Meditation has lost the world (including his own body) to the sole certainty of the activity of thinking itself.

⁵⁸ I refer to the authoritarian personality. The Authoritarian Personality, 605.

⁵⁹ “Patience” stems from the 1st century commentary in James 5:10-11.

A theological prejudice (Nietzsche's term) that regards the categories of good and evil as hard-wired into "creation" is to be challenged through critical memory: a remembrance of the history of valuation under conditions of political subjugation. Genealogy contests the atrophying of historical thinking by disturbing the theological prejudice that disavows the work of valuation.⁶¹ The alleged divine authorship of good and evil relegated these categories to a Platonic heaven. Allegedly not within human jurisdiction (although we had in fact projected them there), values appear to be "unrevisable." Allegedly, the divine plan to which all events contribute is inscrutable to humanity; the meaning of events is enclosed within an apophatic dimension.⁶² What is indefensible about the dominant way of doing things is its silence *that it is*, which allows it to rule the day. In contrast, Adorno maintains that, "The need to lend a voice to suffering is a condition of all truth."⁶³

Job complains in 6:30 as follows: "Is there any wrong on my tongue? / Cannot my taste discern calamity?" Job's "consolers of pain/painful consolers" (16:2) seek to admonish and silence Job. Allegedly, because God only punishes the wicked and Job is punished, Job must be wicked.⁶⁴ Job's suffering is a spectacle explained: the only visible

⁶⁰ I explore this issue of Job's cries for an intercessor in the chapter, "Fear the Text."

⁶¹ Only a spiritual revenge remained as an option to those enslaved (for a real revolt would have been suicide as it turned out to be in 70 C.E.). There is a fascinating history here on the topic of religious response to oppression in Ancient Israel. First of all, it is only accurate to speak of responses given the occupying empire and the specific conquest strategy involved. For example, it is likely that the religion of Zoraster practiced by ancient Babylonians influence the development of the dichotomization of good and evil and its encoding in the Hebrew Bible – a consequence in no way separate from the Babylonian exile. Secondly, real revolt (rather than a spiritual one) was actually successful against the Greeks – which is why there is the Book of the Maccabees in the LXX. Thirdly, apocalypticism is not an independent development from the context of conquest: the more brutal the occupying power, the more likely that the end of the world becomes a realistic assessment of the situation! The Romans, for example, lined the roads to Jerusalem with crucified Jews. After the failed revolt in 70 C.E. that resulted in the destruction of the second Temple, a prohibition came into being in Judaism against following charismatic leaders.

⁶² For example, Zophar argues for the inscrutability of God's wisdom in *Job* 11.

⁶³ Theodor Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, trans. E.B. Ashton (New York: Seabury Press, 1973) 17-18.

⁶⁴ Zophar's speech in chapter 20 is a good illustration of this reasoning: the wicked alone are punished; Job is punished, therefore Job must be wicked. For another example, there is Eliphaz in 4:7: "Think now, who that was/ innocent ever perished?/ Or where were the upright/ cut off?"

part of the “justice” of God’s judgment.⁶⁵ The friends’ speeches attempt to prevent any claim to knowledge from issuing directly from Job’s suffering.⁶⁶ Rather, any instruction that is ‘of occasion’ is only that which comes with the seal of past ages (8:9). Far from being challenged by Job’s suffering, Job’s suffering becomes the occasion for Job’s friends to demonstrate their wisdom’s applicability. Job’s friends take it upon themselves to speak on God’s behalf.⁶⁷

The reasonableness that sees horrible, barbaric events as punishment from a just God is just as prevalent today.⁶⁸ The lesson Job’s friends impart is that if only Job would abandon his complaint, then there is hope that his suffering will be made utterly past.⁶⁹ Job’s friends demonstrate an inability to experience Job’s suffering through their reference to a distant realm of theological “facts.” Their simple act of designation attempts to substitute for redress.

The force of Nietzsche’s attack is that, just as with the speech-makers in the *Symposium*, the desire to see a God as having certain attributes turns out to be just desire through and through. As Nietzsche reminds us, the values are allegedly beyond our ability to

⁶⁵ “He will deliver you from six/ troubles;/ in seven no harm shall/ touch you.” (5:19) “He will yet fill your mouth with/ laughter,/ And your lips with shouts/ of joy.” (8:21) “Agree with God and be at/ peace;/ in this way good will come/ to you.” (22:21) “If you return to the Almighty,/ you will be restored.” (22:23)

⁶⁶ Cf. Lyotard refers to this conundrum as “damage accompanied by the loss of the means to prove the damage.” Jean-François Lyotard, The Differend, Phrases in Dispute, Theory and History of Literature Vol. 46, trans. Georges Van Den Abbeele (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988) 5.

⁶⁷ Which is precisely what Elihu declares that he is doing: “I have yet something to say/ on God’s behalf” (36:2) Zophar warns Job that “Should your babble put others to/ silence,/ and when you mock, shall no/ one shame you?/ For you say, ‘My conduct is/ pure,/ and I am clean in God’s/ sight./ But O that God would speak,/ and open his lips to you” (11:3-11:5).

⁶⁸ Take, for example, Fundamentalist Christian minister Jerry Falwell’s comment on the 700 Club religious program three days after the attacks of September 11th:

“The abortionists have got to bear some burden for this because God will not be mocked. And when we destroy 40 million little innocent babies, we make God mad. I really believe that the pagans, and the abortionists, and the feminists, and the gays and the lesbians who are actively trying to make that an alternative lifestyle, the ACLU, People For the American Way, all of them who have tried to secularize America. I point the finger in their face and say ‘you helped this happen’.”

Paul Johnson, “‘Gays to Blame’ Falwell,” 365 Gay.com, 14 Sept. 2001. Accessed 30 Sept. 2003, <<http://365gay.com/lifestylechannel/intime/months/911/Falwell.htm>>.

revalue (allegedly in the jurisdiction of the divine) are disavowed, human valuation. Until these categories are acknowledged to be the legacy of a human (resentful) response to slavery, reflection finds no motivation to consider whether the (ultimately self-imposed) moral binary represented a denuding of human potentiality. In place of a Platonic view that takes “good” and “evil” in their ultimate (timeless and universal) sense to be beyond our control, genealogy reminds us that “good” and “evil” are the result of a material, historical cause rather than a transcendent one. Because to be wise in the conventional sense is to already be sufficiently reflective, Job’s friends are incapable of reflection upon the fact that their wisdom consists in a set of false attributions to God – an ideal of their own making.⁷⁰

Christianity absorbed the Platonic thought of eternity as outside of time, becoming radically monotheistic and transcendentalist as a consequence.⁷¹ The opposition between spirit and matter is a legacy of Platonism and not the result of a biblical inheritance of the Hebrew bible (where soul is *nephesh*, “breath”). Negative freedom of a theological type (envisioned in terms of an eschatological horizon) is complicit with the reproduction rather than transformation of damaged life. The predominant “philosophical” “beginning” is envisioned as transcendence from a series of the same (a *kairos* that is the essence of Platonism⁷²). Transcendence is a desire for an angelic (i.e., not situated and therefore

⁶⁹ The attribution of either past or future tense to ancient Hebrew is a tricky matter, for it only has perfect and imperfect tenses.

⁷⁰ Job’s friends think of the alternative, that God is responsible for injustice, as patently absurd: “Is it for your piety that he reproves you/and enters into judgment/ with you?” (22:4) “Does God pervert justice?/ Or does the Almighty pervert/ the right?” (8:3)

⁷¹ Alexandre Kojève. Introduction to the Reading of Hegel. Lectures on the Phenomenology of Spirit. trans. James H. Nichols, Jr., Allan Bloom, ed. (Ithica: Cornell UP, 1969) 112.

⁷² Introduction to the Reading of Hegel, 104.

impossible) intuition.⁷³ Platonism or the gaining of access to a realm of an eternally unchanging and self-identical knowledge is only possible for an “angelic” intelligence.⁷⁴

In contrast to this eschatological tradition, the down-going (*Untergang*) of Nietzsche’s *Zarathustra* indicates an effort to think against the grain. As passivity, *Untergang* is difficult to think in Nietzsche because the conditionality of reflection is always a moment of past willing. Once we can no longer disavow that values are human creations, the first image of the will is “anything goes.” To think of the will in Nietzsche as “anything goes” is still too Platonic: the legacy of Platonism is not just realism but also relativism.⁷⁵ Envisioning a will thoroughly without constraints is simply the Platonic image with a negative sign before it. An “inverse Platonism” is under the aegis of Platonism and an enactment of history rather than its evasion. Whatever constrains the will “apart” from how constraints are normally envisioned (as legislated from “above” by a transcendental authority) must be discovered, as it were, through the activity of reflection itself. Perhaps that is why writing a *Zarathustra* could only have been an exploratory gesture. Thus whereas Nietzsche is instructive as to the history of valuation with respect to the attribution of “un-revisable” truth, passivity remains difficult to think in Nietzsche and requires a more persistent treatment of the role of the body and desire in valuation – presently in terms of values projected upon *Job*.

A harmony and unity of narrative is imposed upon *Job* for the sake of verifying theological commitments that are held in advance. If we must tell a story that neglects the text let it be that the original audience, in protest at the normal logic of divine punishment for transgression, required the debates in *Job* to give voice to outrage at unmerited and

⁷³ Cf. “infinite intuition” Martin Heidegger, *Kant and The Problem of Metaphysics*, trans. Richard Taft (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1997) 18-24.

recurrent disaster. My goal, however, is not to supply a narrative, but rather to contest narratives as such. Such a contesting of the synthetic moment of dialectic is possible due to the superabundance of indeterminacy in *Job*. Indeterminacy is evident, for example, in the wager between YHWH and *haśśāṭān*, the disruption of place by heavenly administration, and also Job's trial as the conjoining of material moments in without a super-ordinate law.

Due to the divine speeches that occur at the beginning of *Job*, the reader knows that Job suffers because God has made a wager and not due to a divine value assigned to suffering, such as punishment or education. As anti-theodicy, *Job* contests the Deuteronomistic calculus (a convention of retributive justice). Job's friends are the mouthpieces of prevailing wisdom.⁷⁴ In the Deuteronomistic texts, only those acts in accordance with heavenly order are rewarded and those acts at variance with heavenly order are punished: the northern tribes were wiped out in 722 as “punishment.” The typical argument presented by wisdom literature is that one will prosper if one can discern the order of creation and conduct one's life accordingly.⁷⁵ The example of integrity that Job sets, as opposed to the standard set by wisdom literature generally, is to act when justice is demanded even from God. The alternative, according to the JPS translation, would be for Job to abandon his “face” (9:27).

The disruption of place by El necessitates that Job deploy law differently. As the text modulates place from domesticity, the body, Job's immediate community, a council at law,

⁷⁴ Introduction to the Reading of Hegel, 126.

⁷⁵ Cf. The Many Faces of Realism, 23-40.

⁷⁶ When Job's friends take turns praising God and expounding His infallibility, the youngest – and least well versed (Elihu) – must defer to the elders as if their greater “experience with matters of God” should count toward accuracy in what they attribute to God. In actuality, however, the elders are just better masters of the form. Ultimately, what the arguments of Job's friend's reveal is that they have taken stock out in God's justice. However, with regard to reward for virtue, the God in Job is not a reliable partner to enter into contracts with.

⁷⁷ “The fundamental assumption, taken for granted in every representative of biblical wisdom, consisted of a conviction that being wise meant a search for and maintenance of order.” James L. Crenshaw, Old Testament Wisdom (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1981) 19.

and the cosmos, El “The Maker” is the un-maker of place. Job’s cry of pain must continually reach outward from community, council and cosmos, for throughout there is neither hope (*Job* 14) nor justice (*Job* 21). From catastrophic loss, physical affliction, the absence of loyalty (*hesed*, 16:14-21), the unavailability of a redeemer/arbiter, the impossibility of arraigning El, and finally the tempest that sends Job’s pain back into silence, suffering happens as a series of nested dislocations. My reading as to these displacements occurs principally in the chapter, “A Homeless Cry of Pain and El the Un-maker.” From Job tearing his robe (1:20) to El’s speeches from the whirlwind (*Job* 38-41), we are at an audible margin as opposed to the Seeing Eye (7:8). *Job* reworks the margins of law from a visual register (e.g., the ocularity of Plato) to an audible register. If he is to be heard, Job must protest his innocence by using the terms and modalities of law differently. Unless Job can estrange moralistic language, then the piety and partiality that his “painful consolers” (16:2) display will remain fixed as the only manner in which guilt and innocence is intelligible. The place that Job must contest is none other than the cosmic order of El and the way felicity to this order has been memorialized in traditional wisdom.

The necessity of Undergoing as a philosophical focus

Because transcendence of the past is its principle mode of reenactment, history is desired as something to be with-in a transformed way-rather than permanently overcome. Because the desire for emancipation is manifest as subjective mastery, however, a moment of passivity must mark a transformed philosophical reflection. A moment of heteronomy (with respect the presumption of subjective mastery over “passive” materiality) must be preserved inside philosophical reflection. Transformed philosophical reflection seeks to

retain a susceptibility to the objects of understanding rather than retain a bearing of consumptive incorporation toward those objects. Rather than merely transform philosophy for philosophy's sake, a transformed philosophy worthy of the name resists a regressive tendency in civilization.

Philosophy reneges on suffering as heteronomous by incorporating suffering into an aesthetic (lawful) whole (for example, in the reflective working-through of Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*).⁷⁸ As just an internal moment to a perfected system, philosophy becomes consonant with the reconciliation of the sufferer with the order of things. The aspiration of a perfect system is the appetite of an intelligible order that legislates over bodies. As allegedly identical with history, the realization of self-knowledge absorbs alterity over time.⁷⁹ Akin to how the epistemological subject (armed with the rules for the proper conduct of reason) understands a "purely passive" object, alterity is repressed through an assertion of subjective mastery, now gone megalomaniac as world history. Hegel, to be sure, is anti-theological in the sense that he equates the concept with history rather than relating it to an eternity.⁸⁰ Yet Hegel is eschatological: history (time) is the vehicle of the concept's fulfillment. For Hegel, "Reason is reconciliation with ruination" as Gadamer observes.⁸¹ It is Hegel's "self-apotheosis of thought" that Adorno contests by asserting that the whole is not true, but false.⁸² Consequently, a consideration of the incapacitation of novel reflection must take into account the tendency for the relationship of history to philosophizing to remain concealed even, or especially, in "historical" orientations. The *eschaton* is immanent

⁷⁸ Yet it is also possible to reemphasize Hegel's preference for a torn sock rather than a mended one [ref.] in order to read Hegel against Hegel.

⁷⁹ Jacques Derrida, "Force of Law: The Mystical Foundation of Authority," *Deconstruction and the Possibility of Justice*, trans. Mary Quaintance, ed. Drucilla Cornell et al. (New York: Routledge, 1992) 3.

⁸⁰ *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel*, 139.

⁸¹ Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Hegel's Dialectic, Five Hermeneutical Studies*, trans. P. Christopher Smith (New Haven: Yale UP, 1976) 105.

⁸² *Hegel's Dialectic*, 110

to philosophy as the myth of progressive human rationality. Repetition, the truth of history, is disguised by the myth of progressive history.⁸³ Reflection upon the presumption of subjective mastery over history is a minimum condition for the possibility of any genuinely novel reflection. Unless we are capable of philosophizing out of our immanent sense of how we are participating in history (though not at all in a way that can be fully present to us), then our continued participation in the brokenness of our age is guaranteed.

Only if it can compel us in terms of its non-identity can suffering indict philosophy to begin differently. Because suffering happens as deformed experience, the relationship of undergoing to reflection is damaged.

By reflecting upon the danger that reflection may disappear, I engage the philosophical question that Heidegger took himself to be engaging: how to begin to philosophize. Heidegger's provocation is aimed at the tendency to imagine that philosophy can proceed on purely self-determined grounds. As assuredly as we *are* as we do (one of the meanings of *Dasein*), there is no "later time" when the consequences of the things that I do catches up to me. In short, the question of how to begin to philosophize is necessarily connected to the question of how I should live. In what manner are we still holding out behind philosophy as if the question of how to live was elsewhere? The question of how to begin to philosophize is the question of how I should live (unblocked⁸⁴), which in turn is the question of Eros (I am blocked willingly – out of some complicity or displacement). Unless I can notice the ramifications in what I am living through, it is far too easy to be dismissive in general, as we should expect. In the atmosphere in which so many decisions are

⁸³ Eva Geulen, "Theodor Adorno on Tradition," The Actuality of Adorno: critical essays on Adorno and the postmodern, ed. Max Pensky (Albany: SUNY Press, 1997) 190.

⁸⁴ The attempt to raise the question of the meaning of Being is accompanied by ready-made reasons why one should dismiss the question and abandon the effort. The way that roadblocks function in Being and Time (anonymously,

experienced as not decisions at all but simply as the way things are, there rarely exists the motivation to discover otherwise. Fixed within the plight of not being able to reflect upon the grounds of the ease with which we are dismissive, “thinking” cleaves to a closed ontological circle (that is, remains caught within the aegis of Western Onto-Theology). Desires tend to be allocated otherwise, which permits the dominant atmosphere (of real objects for a properly attentive subject) to recur unreflectively. In other words, we need to be reflective about how the desire for a totalizing view enacts, rather than evades, the conditionality of thought – for then, what would be left to motivate a totalizing view?

A retreat from experience can take institutional form in philosophy as a cleaving to a competent reiteration of exemplarity rather than experience of the alien. The fate of many philosophers is to become lost in a doctrine⁸⁵ that is attributed to them and for that substitution to be lost as a possible item for reflection: the philosopher is thereby taken up within the same atmosphere of sanctioned neglect that was the initial subject of complaint. The actual encounter with historical effects within one’s own reflective efforts is forgone in favor of the analysis of the “argumentative content” of various narratives as to what constitutes our philosophical inheritance. If committing to a philosophical beginning devolves into simply requiring that one select from among competing accounts, then philosophy as undergoing is lost: the disengaged, and therefore self-deceived, standpoint from which such a choice would be made is the epistemological subject all over again. As a

authoritatively) encourage us to fall back into routine and to lose the capacity to reflect on that routine. Instead, we tend to see ourselves in the “reflected light” of our normal activities.

⁸⁵ For example, we are all too familiar with the standard Plato where the progression toward the really real departs from images and fulfills itself by contemplating the Good. Plato tends to be received as advocating the superiority of the intellectual realm (e.g., love of what makes all beautiful conversations beautiful) over the sensible realm. We are not as familiar, however, with the Plato that can not be summarized: philosophy progresses by desire and the condition for desire is a lack. As the uncanny character Diotima conveys, to progress in love requires that we be between wisdom and ignorance. A “positive” reading of Plato might assert that this between-ness is incompatible with doctrine: if we are loving properly, we are always only on the way to understanding lest we delude ourselves that we lack nothing. Because desire

response that is dependent upon its singular conditions, refection carries along the fingerprint of an undergoing, which however must be responded to with cognizance of philosophy's tendency for a flight to unconditionality.

We have perhaps also grown comfortable with ways to think historically in philosophy about the determinative-ness of reflection. One need only notice how easily one can acknowledge the determinative-ness of refection while remaining blind to how this admission is made too as if from nowhere. A loss of experience occurs immanently to philosophy today in the form of an admission that all thought is historically conditioned without discovering what that admission, made too as if from nowhere, could mean as a transformation of one's philosophical practice. If one admits that thought is historically conditioned without foregrounding how history plays itself out in one's thinking, one has made no admission at all. Insofar as it devolves into just an optional representation for today's theorizer of the real (i.e., taken up within a "philosophical" stockpiling), the admission of the conditionality of thought fails as an impetus for novel reflection, for that admission can only point toward an experience rather than substitute for one. Because of the tendency to regard philosophical inheritance at an imagined distance, and because this position of the disengaged subject is always more familiar than a transformed thinking, it is possible to simultaneously 1) acknowledge inheritance as an un-excisable element of the anticipatory structure of understanding and 2) make that acknowledgment a substitute for reflection.

stems from lack, and only the gods are wise, one would have to be embodied in a deformed way (displaced desire) to imagine oneself as wise.

Even today when postmodernism is taken to be the predominant ethos, an eschatological desire to render history utterly past tends to repeat itself in disguise.⁸⁶ Even philosophical post-modernism subtly performs its opposite when it is taken up as a portable method. Derrida identified a danger to deconstruction worse than its dismissal; namely, that it may become a portable method (a methodological option for an untransformed epistemological subject). In our “age of theory,” this danger has come to pass. Literary-critical interpretation, even “deconstruction,” reverts to the latest set of rational principles to deal with presumably passive texts. The arbitrariness of “choice” that coincides with the panorama of visual culture has rendered “deconstruction” available, when in fact Derrida’s thought is saturated with the unavailability of reflection due to the unreflective seizing of a “philosophical” beginning. By its worst practitioners, it has become part of the epicycles of fashion (concealing a stasis, an inactivity within an alleged difference). Or it has, like surrealism, become merely reactionary by either forming an alliance with irrationalism (thereby surrendering its claim to law altogether) or hypostasizing today’s irrationality as an irreducible strata of humanity. Thus we may regard deconstruction, despite its best efforts to be indigestible to a regressive tendency in society, to be susceptible to incorporation by an untransformed philosophical practice, even (perhaps) in virtue of its signature resistance to eschatology. Rather than license a reinvigorated dismissal of Derrida, however, the criticism above is an indication that we should read him all the more carefully in order to take the danger that he indicates with due seriousness. Like any philosopher that can become the subject of imitation while leaving a deformed embodiment intact, admission to the “acceptance-world” of untransformed practice indicates a failure, a regression.

⁸⁶ Thought of the “post” in postmodernism largely revolves around the question of the role and status of history to philosophizing. Cf. Philosophy in History, ed. Richard Rorty, J. B. Schneewind and Quentin Skinner (Cambridge:

Critical reflection is possible, but by no means guaranteed, whenever progressive history skips a beat and belies its mythological grip upon imagination. As in Atget's photographs that were telling of the decay of high capitalism for Benjamin, the ending of a way of life is the material condition for reflection upon its afterlife in regression. By disrupting philosophical depictions of site that still cleave to the tendency of mystification, we might sensitize our discrimination of today's iteration of the loss of history. Philosophy is likely to participate in barbarity unless we are capable of noticing how it can be recruited for a retreat into a myth of progress. Like Tillich's iteration of Heidegger's *existentialia* as spiritual *a priori*, one can simply enact an impoverished "history" (committed to the *eschaton*) even after having been inspired by a philosophical practice that begins by acknowledging that all thinking is historically conditioned.

Were we to fully appreciate the difficulty with beginning to philosophize, we would concern ourselves with how reflection is blocked for us here, with the concomitant demand that we understand what this here is exactly. How does suffering happen such that reflection is prevented? One could proceed "philosophically" and describe without experience what it "means" to undergo our broken world by careful exposition of this or that thinker. Or (and it is this latter approach that I attempt), we can attempt to sustain reflection upon undergoing as a broken capacity for experience. Thus the question here is still the question of how to begin to philosophize, but modified so that what is at stake is whether we can begin to philosophize given this brokenness.

The form (law) of philosophizing.

Job, like K, is before the law. Because the setting of *Job* is pre-historic (before the law of the covenant), *Job* is literally before the law and, consequently, displays a displacing of purposes, destinies, fate and necessity that is evident in Kafka's works as well. Like Job, K's claim to innocence comes too late, for it leaves intact the law in terms of which things can't fail to initially appear. The notion of law that emerges from these considerations is of a routinization, and thus the deadening, of life and the standardization of modes of apprehension. At stake is *situating* in the double sense of administration (placing things in their place) and also the administered world (site) as a field of integrating and marginalizing force.⁸⁷

From my reading of *Job* as a trial of law, a possibility emerges to estrange philosophical notions of *site* (the ‘situatedness’ of reflection) as *trial*. The notion of site (clearing/open region) is Heidegger’s critical concept that reminds philosophical reflection that philosophy tends to enact an effort to turn away from tradition,⁸⁸ an effort that tends to be heard by one as resolvable by a properly attentive subject. In Heidegger’s later language, site is that ontological atmosphere where/when things are “cleared” to be real in accordance with a dominant sense of the really real. This site legitimates our focus upon entities “as (actually or possibly, objectively, presently) cleared” and not on the eventuation of

⁸⁷ I am employing “administration,” not in its narrow sense as administrative bureaucracy, but rather an ordering principle in society that is irrational in that it is “alien to the immanent ratio of the object”: “For that which is administered, administration is an external affair by which it is subsumed rather than comprehended...administration necessarily represents – without subjective guilt and without individual will – the general against the particular...the administrative instance – according to its own prescriptions and nature – must for the most part refuse to become involved in questions of immanent quality which regard the truth of the thing itself or its objective bases in general.” Theodor Adorno, “Culture and Administration,” *The Culture Industry. Selected Essays on Mass Culture*, ed. J.M. Bernstein (New York: Routledge, 1991) 112-113.

⁸⁸ Roughly, tradition is thought here as traditional conceptions of 1) site (our cosmic surroundings), 2) clearing (cosmic comings and goings of “entities”), 3) revealing/concealing (making the meaning of these comings and goings conceptually explicit and accessible to ourselves by the adoption of the right method), and 4) errancy (and thus avoiding error and irrationality).

clearing/withdrawing.⁸⁹ My displacing of Heidegger's site as trial is my attempt to be rigorously consistent with Heidegger's mandate to respond to beings, and this displacing will avail itself of Adorno's attempt to remain responsive to the ontic, although differently there as well.

Even philosophical discourses that are designed to hold in reflection a tendency to overwhelm the object of understanding can nevertheless carry an apprehension or lawful detaining of the object. In Heidegger's meditative *Denken*, and differently in Adorno's determinate negation, undergoing is figured through the manner of philosophical "composition." Formal indication, through successive passes, of where thinking finds itself (Heidegger), reveals a certain outline of undergoing. Differently, negative dialectic and determinate negation (Adorno) reveal another outline of undergoing. I attempt to have my reading of *Job arraign*⁹⁰ competing philosophical modes of composition in order to weigh attempts to have thinking transform in response to undergoing rather than remain appetitive with respect to it.

The proximity with which I will place Adorno and Heidegger is meant to be disturbing so that my motivations for their separateness can be more readily discerned. The trial in *Job* is another taboo conjunction (albeit for those who ascribe to a divine, infallible moral system): a public declaration that attempts to bring into an intelligible relation the co-occurrence of innocence and suffering. The disconcerting proximity of these incompatible orientations is not my choice as a "free" epistemological subject who stands at an allegedly neutral position between competing "philosophies," but rather an attempt to describe where my thinking finds itself after having been challenged by an experience of "critical theory" to

⁸⁹ Heidegger's notion of site/clearing is the ontological atmosphere that 'clears' (for appearances and modes of comportment) by withdrawing (from thematization). Cf. Martin Heidegger, "On the Essence of Truth," Basic Writings, ed.

reorient my thinking from an initially Heideggarian orientation. As with conversation (which requires a willingness to be changed), the pain of defamiliarization, the threat of difference, tends to ward away the challenge of experience. Social brokenness registers in the institutions of philosophy in terms of a tendency to use one's orientation as a defense: "orientation" degenerates into a defense against an experience of other orientations. Just as experience is always of alterity, the demand of beginning to philosophize from experience necessitates that we betray any substitution for experience in the best possible way.

I attempt to engage the question of how to begin to philosophize (as Heidegger takes himself to be doing) by recognizing my participation in, and deformity with respect to, what Adorno describes as a damaged capacity for experience. Insofar as Heidegger's thinking translates the violence done to beings into a rarified idiom from which it becomes difficult to recognize violence in my own case (and thereby to initiate reflection), Heidegger's idiom must be translated into the *Da-* that governs today. Insofar as the ending of the tradition of metaphysics is inflected differently today, reflection finds its opposite within a mere reiteration of 'ready-to-hand' phraseology. Formulations of site (the "ending of metaphysics") show by their 'ritualistic,' academic availability the necessity for their translation, especially insofar as the ending Heidegger detects is both never simply past and is iterated rather than frozen. Even if a simple replication of the 'results' of *SZ* were all one desired (a perversion of thinking in any event), historicity is always only history differently. Ritualized speaking is the apophatic in disguise.

David Farrell Krell (New York: Harper & Row, 1977) 113.

⁹⁰ A term that we encounter in *Job* as *y'd* in 9:19.

The “magical” reconciliation of universal and particular is protected by a silence, a transcendental ineffability.⁹¹ In addition, silent decisions are made when you put a premium on being human to the extent that you are capable of taking the third-person perspective (i.e., to be objective). While Adorno is certainly committed to critique silence,⁹² a silence surrounds non-identity. On Adorno’s account, philosophy typically lapses into a false identity⁹³ that only the negation of the “positivity” of experience can remedy. Adorno’s descriptions of the endangerment of experience (the “absence” of subjectivity, judgment, reflection...) flirt with negative totality (i.e., complete occlusion) that cannot literally be true without undermining the very possibility of the thought that Adorno purports to be entertaining. Adorno’s position cannot be that a genuinely critical vantage is unavailable altogether without rendering mysterious the possibility of reflection. While effective in preventing an identification of the non-identical that would enable philosophy to “capitalize” upon it, Adorno’s expression of negative totality tend to obscure the bit of non-identity that informs negative dialectic from the start. Consequently, while in many ways my project favors a “critical theory” orientation, I also attempt to address the following questions that emerge: Is any “positive” conception of an experiential beginning *fated* to substitute a mythical immanence for critical practice? Does having a sense of some element of non-identity allow for something like Heidegger’s formal indication in a “critical theory”? Perhaps the notion of trial from *Job* can help generate a discussion of undergoing as enabling a creative transformation of having-been.⁹⁴ As either a writing of that which

⁹¹ Sarah Ley Roff “Benjamin and Psychoanalysis,” The Cambridge Companion to Walter Benjamin, ed. David S. Ferris (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2004) 125.

⁹² “The need to lend a voice to suffering is a condition of all truth.” Negative Dialectics 17-18 Heidegger’s silence regarding the Shoah is also of concern here.

⁹³ What H calls “Knowing” in SZ is not the same as TA’s identitarian thinking. TA’s account of identity thinking describes one “asserted” form of Heidegger’s knowing-the-vorhand.

⁹⁴ I will turn in a later section to Job’s “repetition” of the pious term “righteousness” as a matter of legal “innocence.”

presents itself as withdrawing (Heidegger) or of that which exceeds the concept (Adorno), these philosophical positions betray⁹⁵ deep conceptions of language.

Reading *Job* is a way I might come to understand better my philosophical commitments in order to come to be otherwise. I must be capable of something akin to Heidegger's experience of being blocked,⁹⁶ but in the present instance by the very philosophical dispositions (whether "phenomenological" or "critical") that are to orient us to experience. This experience is only possible other than either Heidegger or Adorno, for experience is always of difference. The ability to voice a matter differently is just what mastery of an orientation is: for otherwise, the redeployment of terms becomes a mere mentioning rather than indication of actual lived circumstances and "orientation" becomes appetitive rather than a revisable opening-toward.

Alternate Compositional Form

The possibility that matter in its recalcitrance to formation might orient thinking hibernates in philosophical aesthetics, although, as aesthetics, materialist discourse is marginalized (alienated from truth in its dominant form as a purportedly autonomous reason that determines a disenchanted, supposedly "dead" nature).⁹⁷ The attempt to write suffering must somehow stage its inherent antipathy to a dominant regime of meaning.⁹⁸ Job's trial (an attempt to bring into an intelligible relation the co-occurrence of innocence and

⁹⁵ With Derrida, I am interested here in how repression is betrayed (thereby traceable) by the attempt to have a desire leave no trace in terms of the textual "manifest content" of an authoritative discourse.

⁹⁶ Heidegger's philosophy begins with an experience of being blocked. The roadblocks that Heidegger experiences in the introduction to Being and Time prevent critical reflection of 'the historical and subjective mediation of truth' (to deliberately borrow the idiom of Adorno). Martin Heidegger, Being and Time, trans. Joan Stambaugh (New York: SUNY Press, 1996) 1-3.

⁹⁷ I am gesturing toward a philosophy of the fragment, which depends upon the loss of place, a "break in tradition" that delivers the classified in fragments. To impose an aesthetic harmony (a logical cohesiveness) upon fragments would reinstate the violence with which fragments had been rendered fragments. Cf. "Aesthetic alienation" in J.M. Bernstein, The Fate of Art, Aesthetic Alienation from Kant to Derrida and Adorno (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State UP, 1992).

suffering), in particular Job's linguistic subversion of the piety and partiality of his “painful consolers” (16:23), is a staging of this sort. Textual criticism, as an attempt to rescue the un-subsumable moments of the text from vanishing into an intelligible, exchange value (“the” meaning of indeterminate meaning) is also a thinking that returns to materiality – in this case that of the text.

Were Job to engage in traditional lament, he could only remain “unknown” to himself,⁹⁹ for the available language of protest skews what Job undergoes. Just as the lyre must be tuned differently so that it may “emit unaccustomed sounds,”¹⁰⁰ Job summons his audience to hear what is normally a moral issue as a legal one. A cluster of legal terms in *Job* 9 signals a decisive shift in Job’s manner of speaking from traditional lament to public statement.¹⁰¹ Under the auspices of the friends’ moral wisdom, the materiality of Job’s suffering is sacrificed to an intelligible ideal – the oldest and most common theodicy (that suffering is punishment). Job’s trial attempts to disrupt the force of discursiveness (the ideological assumptions of Psalmic wisdom).¹⁰²

An inability to respond to suffering, to have it grip us before it is conceptualized, is part of an alienation from sensibility as a bearer of meaning. Contrary to the philosophically modern reduction of sensibility to sight, Job’s trial (literally a *hearing*) helps us articulate the conditions under which listening might occur despite its regression. Between the tearing of Job’s robe (1:20) and the roar of El’s whirlwind (38-41), Job initiates a public testimony

⁹⁸ This is how we might think of Blanchot’s *L’Ecriture du désastre*. Maurice Blanchot, *The Writing of the Disaster*, trans. Ann Smock (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1995).

⁹⁹ “I do not know myself” (9:21).

¹⁰⁰ James L. Crenshaw, *Old Testament Wisdom, an Introduction* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press 1998) 103.

¹⁰¹ For legal terms in Job 9-10, Cf. Norman C. Habel, *The Book of Job: A Commentary (Old Testament Library)* (Philadelphia, Westminster Press, 1985) 188.

¹⁰² Specifically, this assumption is that a contrite petitioner uses the language of praise in an “unapologetically transactional” manner as “inducements for deliverance.” According to Newsom, Job’s use of legal terms fulfills three functions: 1) to parody the allegedly self-evident correctness of hymnic praise; 2) to focus his thoughts so that he can

in response to the oppression of Seeing Eye (7:8) and Watcher of Humans (7:20) that must arrange its place of intelligibility.¹⁰³ One is thereby called to appear differently in such a place, for to allow that which is alien to transform appearance in the direction of a new index is threatening – as evidenced by the repression marshaled against the inherent plurivocality of *Job*.

Rather than argue from a determination of Hebrew terms, which in any case is nothing short of suspect with a text such as *Job*, I understand *Job* to be radically heterodox: *Job*'s materiality resists being placed within *any* convention. Interpretation of *Job* requires something akin to a trial: In expecting that every material element of *Job* must play a role in an order, understanding turns cold. My strategy instead is to confront instances of a particular kind of coldness where questions of indeterminacy have been left in abeyance. In doing so, philosophical reflection undergoes the demand to transform its own law of composition (away from the normal demands of authorization, of *passage*), yielding to, instead of overcoming, impasse.

The Trial of Philosophy

There are several ways I see law as integral to the intransigence of empirical reality: 1) the administrative ordering of bodies, 2) the order of intelligibility and legitimacy, 3) routinization and habituation (including the dynamic of projection and disavowal), 4) the standardization of modes of apprehension and recognition, 5) a regime of conceptuality (not conceptuality as such) 6) “necessity” ascribed to “Nature,” “God,” etc., through authoritative discourses such as philosophy, and 7) mythical reconciliation of the sufferer

envision untraditional possibilities, and 3) to explore and reconfigure his situation. Carol A. Newsom, The Book of Job, A Contest of Moral Imaginations (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2003) 152-156.

with an extant order of things. The basic thought derives from Adorno's *Aesthetic Theory*: What is lacking is a rationality that is responsive to the articulateness of material itself (the singularity of each occurrence of suffering) rather than assertive of presumptive "rationality" over the presumptive "inarticulateness" of materiality. Thus a program emerges for a "trial" of philosophy: to explore the possibility that suffering can yet signify after a precise negation of that form (law in whichever of the overlapping senses above) that provokes suffering to signify other than according to its own index. With the next chapter, "A Wayward Passage," the trial begins.

¹⁰³ Once YHWH answers Job from the whirlwind, the sight of YHWH merely reduces Job to silence.

CHAPTER II

A HOMELESS CRY OF PAIN AND EL THE UN-MAKER

Introduction

At an emotional high point in 16:18-21, Job imagines his cry of pain wandering homeless.¹⁰⁴ Job conceives of his suffering¹⁰⁵ as potential testimony to his innocence rather than guilt. The Earth must not conceal the evidence and his outcry must continue to reverberate until it is heard.¹⁰⁶ Job briefly entertains that his cry will have no place until an advocate hears it, but he quickly rejects this as a hope beyond hope.¹⁰⁷ This chapter explores whether Job can successfully change the context within which innocence is decidable: it is critical that Job's litigation forms a public place so that he can be heard.

Place and meaning are interrelated in *Job*. First, the friends are situated within a traditional response to suffering as affliction for moral transgression. Second, YHWH's creation is one not only of order but also of chaos. As Job contends, El disrupts creation, misdirecting and undermining discernment for the nations and individuals. Third, Job institutes a public hearing to re-contextualize suffering as a legal case.

¹⁰⁴ “Oh Earth, cover not my blood and let my cry have no place” (16:18) is possibly an allusion to Abel’s innocent blood. “I cry out “Violence!” [hamas] but I get no answer; I call out, but there is no litigation.” (19:7) Norman C. Habel, *The Book of Job* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1985) 274, 290.

¹⁰⁵ Misery or trouble is denoted by the term ‘āmāl, which carries overtones of hardship and evil. The term ‘āmāl seems to refer to “punishment” when used by the friends, but refers to “agony” in Job’s speeches. In addition to ‘āmāl, the term rōgez appears to denote turmoil. The term ‘āmāl is a major concept in Qoheleth. *The Book of Job*, 103, 109.

¹⁰⁶ Edwin M. Good, *In Turns of Tempest, A Reading of Job with a Translation* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1990) 248.

¹⁰⁷ There are three such emotional high points in which Job hopes for someone powerful enough to intercede on his behalf in his dispute with El. The figures he calls upon are an arbiter (9:33), avenger (19:24-27) and advocate (16:20-21). Job concedes that this route is fantasy, however. Cf. *In Turns of Tempest*, 74, 264.

Terms that designate a place may also mark places of designation, in the sense that meaningfulness is determined by site.¹⁰⁸ The context wherein Job's suffering appears determines *how* it appears, as either real guilt (against the backdrop of conventional wisdom) or apparent guilt (against the backdrop of a court).

As an anti-theodicy, *Job* takes aim at the axiomatic unreason that interprets suffering as guilt. Were Job to adhere to the normal allocation of suffering to the jurisdiction of moral, retributive law, Job's innocence would remain unaddressed. By employing a different modality of lawfulness (forensic rather than moral), Job contests the jurisdiction of wisdom to his case. The pursuit of litigation is a departure from the conciliatory course with El that conventional wisdom prescribes. Presumably, El is exempt from accountability to human justice. Job's arraignment of El is a reversal of the normal role of God as the litigator against a wayward Israel.

Job must initiate a change in context from retributive justice to a lawsuit.¹⁰⁹ This change is accomplished through the appropriation of terms from their normal moral deployment. Job contests the limits of intelligibility as a limit to hearing (his friends can't hear Job, literally) by initiating a hearing (trial as recontextualization).

The hearing that Job seeks is both an audible margin and a legal proceeding against the oldest and most common theodicy (that suffering is punishment).¹¹⁰ Between the tearing of Job's robe (1:20) and the roar of El's whirlwind (38-41), Job protests through deploying law differently. Unless Job can establish a court through linguistic subversion, then the piety

¹⁰⁸ “The term *māqōm* [16:18, 28:1, and 30:23], with its specific connotation of ‘designated place’...remains suitably ambiguous and thus covers any “place,” be it a hiding place, a burial place, or a place of residence.” The Book of Job, 265. The term *māqōm* comes to be an epithet for YHWH.

¹⁰⁹ *Mišpāṭ*. See 9:19, 32.

¹¹⁰ Speaking of an atmosphere that pervades contemporary Christendom, Crenshaw states that “they have created an unholy trinity that comprises an authoritarian deity made in their own image, an inerrant and infallible Scripture, and self-proclaimed all-knowing interpreters who alone understand this non-existent text.” James L. Crenshaw, Defending God, Biblical Responses to the Problem of Evil (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005) 117, 181.

and partiality of his “painful consolers” (16:23) will remain as the only manner in which guilt and innocence are decidable. If Job cannot be heard, then his guilt remains a forgone conclusion. Unless Job can indict El in court (hearing as a trial), his guilt is ruled out of court.

Marginality in *Job* is audible. Job’s public saying builds a place (court) of intelligibility so that Job can be heard.

Oh that I had someone to hear me-
here is my mark; let Shaddai answer me-
and the inscription my accuser has written (31:35 Good)

Hearing normally has the educative connotation of attentive listening within Biblical literature.¹¹¹ Just as the lyre must be tuned differently so that it may “emit unaccustomed sounds.”¹¹² Job summons his audience to hear what is normally a moral issue as a legal one. In *Job* 12, Job wishes to speak (*ykh*) to the god so that his argument (*tōkahat*) and accusations (*rībōt*) can be heard.¹¹³ Job announces a consideration of legal preliminaries by repeatedly imploring others to hear (13:6,16,17). For example, in 13:17, Job says, “Listen closely to my arguments; Give my declarations a hearing.” Both Habel and Scholnick see the verb *pll* in 16:17b (“my plea [*pll*] is pure”) as the right to be heard.¹¹⁴ In *Job* 31, Job puts his signature (his mark) on the claim for a trial, wishes in return that he had the formal charges against him in written form, and asks that a court official (a “hearer”) might take up his claim.¹¹⁵

¹¹¹ Defending God, 188.

¹¹² James L. Crenshaw, Old Testament Wisdom, an Introduction (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press 1998) 103.

¹¹³ In Turns of Tempest, 236.

¹¹⁴ The Book of Job, 265. See also Sylvia H. Scholnick, “The Meaning of *Mispāṭ* in the Book of Job” JBL 101/4 (1982) 256.

¹¹⁵ Cf. In Turns of Tempest, 315.

The disruption of place is the immanent cause of suffering [Figure 1]. As the text modulates place from domesticity, the body, Job's immediate community, a council at law, and the cosmos, “The Maker” is an un-maker. El violently intervenes in nested spheres: the affliction of Job’s body, the destruction of his prosperity, the intimidation of the court should El show his face, and (appearing as Yahweh) the challenge from the whirlwind. Consequently, Job’s cry wanders homelessly (16:18) through these nested spheres and, as it encounters specific displacements, acquires form.¹¹⁶ From curse to legal challenge to oath of purity, Job’s complaint attains a range of articulations, requiring in each case a reflection upon place as disrupted.

If Job’s trial is successful in negating the normal meaning of suffering (punishment in accord with a just deity), will his suffering still signify? Does Job’s innocence simply remain unintelligible despite Job’s litigation?

The Presumption of Guilt and Job’s Suffering

Job’s description of his suffering is charged with frightening imagery.¹¹⁷ Job undergoes the murder of his children and the affliction of bodily sores from head to toe (1:13-19, 2:7-8). The accusation made by his “consolers of pain/painful consolers” (16:2) (that Job must have done something wrong to merit such “punishment”) intensifies his

¹¹⁶ Nemo writes, “no properly dramatic development can be detected...” and nevertheless, “Job’s mad discourse...albeit in a negative manner, acquires meaning.” I agree but with the following qualifications: displacement is the motor of “dramatic development,” and consequently, “acquires meaning” is too strong to capture the sense of trial that I am attempting here, in which meaning is precisely what is contested but not eschewed altogether. Philippe Nemo, *Job and the Excess of Evil*, trans. Michael Kigel (Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne UP, 1998) 78.

¹¹⁷ When I lie down I say, “When will I rise?” The night drags on and I cry, “I am fed up with twisting until dawn.” (7:4) At night he [El] bores out my bones, My gnawing pain never lies down (30:17 Good).

Figure 1:
El the (Un)Maker, Disruption of Place/Dislocation



COSMOS:

YHWH's Leviathan is supernatural chaos, kept within bounds
The cosmic insignificance of humanity, YHWH's susceptibility to provocation

CREATION:

YHWH's delight in the violence of animals according with their natures
YHWH's Behemoth is natural chaos, kept within bounds

TEMPEST:

YHWH's terrifying presence from the whirlwind, Intimidation of Proceedings, the Arm of El

OPRESSION OF THE SEEING EYE /THE SIEGE OF EL THE GIBBOR

Darkens the world and leads nations astray

TRIBE:

Job's lower status than even the outcasts, absence of consolers

FAMILY:

Murder of children and servants
Wife's provocation to curse God and die

BODY:

Job resembles dust and ash
Job's own clothes abhor him

suffering, for those he has loved best have turned against him (19:13-19). The inability to hear Job reveals that the friends are party to a “closed horizon of technical operations.”¹¹⁸

Eliphaz, Bildad, Zophar and Elihu embody the tribal wisdom of their respective places of origin. But each “reasons” from Job’s suffering to Job’s “guilt.”¹¹⁹ According to the hymnic traditions, “A degraded appearance was considered public evidence of past debauchery or present divine affliction.”¹²⁰ The presumption of Job’s guilt is based upon his pathetic appearance and misfortune: “My gaunt appearance testifies against me” (16:8).¹²¹ Job’s appearance is of emphatic mortality: he is dust and ashes not just in the standard sense of “mortal.” Job comes to resemble the clay from which mortals are made; his appearance is that of dust and ashes (30:19).¹²²

The friend’s positions are memorials to past wisdom: “Your old maxims are proverbs of ashes” (13:12).¹²³ The typical argument presented by wisdom literature is that one will prosper if one can discern the order of creation that is established by god and conduct one’s life accordingly.¹²⁴ To deploy the old maxims “plasters” over Job’s innocence: Job’s friends are “plasterers” (fabricators) of lies (13:4). Job’s friends are less “consolers of pain” as they are painful consolers.¹²⁵ The friends’ defense of El is knowledgeable partiality.

¹¹⁸ Job and the Excess of Evil, 69,70.

¹¹⁹ Eliphaz’s question, can a person be more righteous than Eloah, sets the stage thematically (4:17). Bildad emphasizes that it is simply impossible for God to act unjustly (8:3). Zophar (11:6c) argues that Job’s “punishment” is lenient. Elihu’s temper flares over Job’s insistence that he justify himself at the expense of God. Cf. James L. Crenshaw, Defending God, Biblical Responses to the Problem of Evil (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005) 120-127.

¹²⁰ The Book of Job, 271.

¹²¹ The Book of Job, 166.

¹²² The Book of Job, 420.

¹²³ Examples of this reasoning by the friends abound. To cite just one, Eliphaz states that Job’s suffering (‘āmāl) is evil reaped for sin (4:6).

¹²⁴ Roland E. Murphy, The Tree of Life, An Exploration of Biblical Wisdom Literature, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, UK: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1996) 115. Job’s pre-catastrophe piety (1:5) implies that he too “feared” El (i.e., he believed that righteousness garners protection and was anxious to perform rituals to protect his children).

¹²⁵ The conjunction in 16:23 of painful (‘āmāl) and consolers (*n̄hm*) allows for either reading. The Book of Job, 270.

According to Job, his friends lack loyalty (6:14). Job is insignificant in comparison to the theodicy that is to explain his plight, which is the true object of the friend's loyalty. Their loyalty is to a moral regime of conceptuality. Job is treated like something to be bartered over, like a commodity (6:27).¹²⁶ Their "reasoning" attempts to guarantee suffering's meaning by way of a context-transcendent absolute (i.e., a moral axiom). But in doing so, that reasoning entails no meaning in the sense that the capacity to experience Job has been driven out. Rather than be experienced, Job's consolers insist that his suffering is an instance of a rule (retributive justice).¹²⁷

According to his friends, Job must relinquish his complaint as misguided and acquiesce in the "justice" of God's judgment, of which Job's suffering is the only visible part. Because Job's suffering can't be heard in any other way than as just punishment, there is no hearing (experience) and Job's case is ruled literally 'out of court.' The friends absolve themselves by reference to a distant realm of theological "facts."

Because he is innocent, Job's suffering is non-identical to just punishment meted out according to a heavenly moral order. In order that his suffering be grounds for a critique of the attribution of moral order to the cosmos, Job must stage his suffering's antipathy to its normal meaning. Job implores that they clasp their hand over their mouths in astonishment and disgust that El could have done this for no reason (21:5).¹²⁸

¹²⁶ The Book of Job, 143.

Order/Disorder/Place

Job frustrates the explanation that suffering is “purposeful.” Unlike traditional (Leibnizian) theodicy, human suffering in *Job* is not part of God’s design.¹²⁹ God in *Job* is fallible in the sense of being susceptible to provocation by the Adversary and does not know the future (for otherwise the wager would be meaningless). Job’s suffering has “divine purpose” only in satisfying the conditions for a wager between Elohim and “the adversary” or “the prosecutor”¹³⁰ as to whether Job’s piety is “for nothing” (1:9, 2:3).¹³¹ Innocent suffering is the means of adjudication as to whether the divinity or the Adversary wins the wager between them.¹³²

Having been subject to unjustified cruelty as part of a wager, Job’s suffering reveals something about the character of El. Namely, that the cosmic order is not orderly at all: El is responsible for the dislodging of things from their place and “we know [yd’] not” (9:5-6). Job’s former place in society has been disrupted; everyone who was once near is now distant.¹³³ The disruption of place occurs as the immanent place of Job’s body: El is a violent warrior (*gibbor*¹³⁴) who “breaches” Job repeatedly (16:14).¹³⁵ Job’s *nephesh* (not just “soul” but Job’s whole, bodily being) has been dislodged.¹³⁶ To Job, God is an unrelenting

¹²⁷ One can argue that the divine, whatever it might be, could not be experienced either in such a system, for the divinity is reduced to the category of reaction (*In Search of Divine Presence*, 491)

¹²⁸ *In Turns of Tempest*, 266.

¹²⁹ Gottfried W. Leibniz, *Theodicy: Essays on the Goodness of God the Freedom of Man and the Origin of Evil*, trans. E. M. Huggard, ed. Austin Marsden Farrer (Chicago: Open Court Publishing Company, 1988).

¹³⁰ Citing the work of Vermeylen, Crenshaw states that the oldest form of the story of Job might have lacked the character *haśśātān* altogether, with Job’s wife and friends functioning as the Adversary. James L. Crenshaw, *Urgent Advice and Probing Questions, Collected Writings on Old Testament Wisdom* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1995) 437. Good prefers “Prosecutor” for *haśśātān*.

¹³¹ *Defending God*, 69.

¹³² The wager is whether disinterested piety exists. Means-ends rationality also finds expression in the moral axiom of retributive justice. James L. Crenshaw, *Old Testament Wisdom, an Introduction* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press 1998) 92.

¹³³ *r̥hq*. *In Turns of Tempest*, 255.

¹³⁴ Cf. Yahweh as warrior in Exodus 15:3 (where Yahweh is both warrior and healer), and Ps 39:13 (where the removal of Yahweh’s gaze is similar to Job 7:19).

¹³⁵ *The Book of Job*, 268.

¹³⁶ *Job and the Excess of Evil*, 37.

Seeing Eye (7:8) and Watcher of Humans (7:20). Job wishes he had a respite from God's gaze, even if it is just long enough to swallow (7:19). El's incessant watching (7:19) is a cruel, oppressive presence. Because he is that faithful servant who is tasked with spying on creation, the Adversary magnifies El's surveillance.

As he pursues an arraignment of El, Job considers that God is likely to disrupt a hearing were one to take place. Job implores El to spare Job his terrible hand and allow the legal proceedings to occur without intimidation (13:21).

In *Job* 12, “The disorder is both cosmic and social.”¹³⁷ God destroys the established orders of creation and society. He darkens the world and leads nations astray. Habel notes that “The governing image of this intricate poem [12:1-13:5] is one of aimless wandering” (217). The language in *Job* 12 is one of subversion, deprivation and contempt, of pre-creation darkness (v. 25a) and chaos (v. 24b).¹³⁸ God deprives leaders of sanity and subverts their authority. Despite being the author of the order of creation, El disrupts that order (9:5-6).¹³⁹

Hope

Although the friends advocate for a reconciliation with El, the sufferer’s need for pain to stop immediately renders patience for a future relief an impossible burden to fulfill.¹⁴⁰ “What strength have I to keep hoping? What future have I to keep going? Is my strength the strength of rocks? Or my flesh made of bronze?” (6:11,12).

¹³⁷ In *Turns of Tempest*, 235.

¹³⁸ In *Turns of Tempest*, 235.

¹³⁹ *The Book of Job*, 191.

¹⁴⁰ On the resiliency of narrative bodies versus real ones: Carol A. Newsom, *The Book of Job, A Contest of Moral Imaginations* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2003) 135.

Job rejects the possibility of an afterlife.¹⁴¹ Trees rather than humans can expect to renew after being cut down. Hope is for the trees (14:7). Time is running out:

He's going to kill me; I cannot wait, but I must argue my ways to his face (13:15 Good)

Job declares that he will prepare his charges against El: it is a middle way between hope (a tree has hope but not humans) and despair (relinquishing his claim to innocence). Job also considers the possibility that a powerful third party might intervene on his behalf, but he abandons this thought.¹⁴² The alternative to pursuing his case, according to the JPS translation of 9:27, would be for Job to abandon his “sorrow,” (literally “face”).¹⁴³ The regimen of acceptable speech prevents Job from airing, or even articulating in a way that might be heard, that his suffering is to be mourned.¹⁴⁴ Perhaps, in the seven days of Job’s silence following Job’s catastrophes – when his world was effectively un-made,¹⁴⁵ Job contemplated the problem that the condition for his appearance as a subject already denied him subjectivity, for “The public sphere is constituted in part by what can appear, and the regulation of the sphere of appearance is one way to establish what will count as reality, and what will not.”¹⁴⁶

¹⁴¹ For more on Job 14:13-17 and his rejection of an afterlife, Cf. James L. Crenshaw, "Flirting with the Language of Prayer," Prophets, Sages & Poets (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2006) 6-13, 201-03.

¹⁴² As for the notion of an intercessor (arbiter, redeemer and avenger): “This daring concept (9:33) disappears almost as abruptly as it occurs, only to return a second (16:19) and third time (19:25) with greater tenacity.” James L. Crenshaw, Old Testament Wisdom, an Introduction (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press 1998) 435. The outcry for some powerful agent of help appears to register moments of desperation rather than the supposition of an actual agent with the requisite power. I analyze 9:33, 16:19, and 19:25 in detail in the chapter, “Fear the Text.”

¹⁴³ Face, arraign (*y'd*, 9:19) and answer (*'nh*; 9:3, 14, 15, 16, 32) are intermingled within *Job*. When Job describes his friends as showing partiality as they argue God’s case, “showing partiality is literally ‘lifting the face.’” The Book of Job, A Contest of Moral Imaginations, 160. Job’s vulnerability and exposure to El’s ceaseless watching and violence indicates a terrible, oppressive presence. Now that he is afflicted, Job’s status concerning the outcasts has undergone a reversal and they show no hesitation to spit in Job’s face (30:1-11). “Yet I am not silenced by the thick darkness that covers my face” (23:17). On this last passage see The Book of Job, A Contest of Moral Imaginations, 165, and The Book of Job, 346.

¹⁴⁴ “It is precisely because one does not want to loose one’s status as a viable speaking being that one does not say what one thinks.” Judith Butler, Precarious Life, The Powers of Mourning and Violence (New York: Verso, 2004) xix-xx.

¹⁴⁵ Cf. Elaine Scarry, The Body in Pain, The Making and Unmaking of the World (New York: Oxford UP, 1985).

¹⁴⁶ Precarious Life, xx.

Undergoing

Job announces his determination to pursue his case by stating, “I do not know [yd’] myself” (9:21). Because El is the direct cause of unjust suffering, Job’s world has largely been rendered unintelligible.¹⁴⁷ Job’s effort to come to know himself must contend with the normal grounds of intelligibility for suffering (retributive justice) which provokes the appearance of guilt from the occurrence of suffering.

El’s siege against Job obstructs any way out.¹⁴⁸ As Newsom notes, “As torture annihilates bodily integrity, so it destroys the subjectivity necessary for selfhood.”¹⁴⁹ Job remains unknown to himself as a consequence of prevailing “order,” in the double sense of the retributive order and the divine wager.

Job’s public declaration is not an argument in a conventional sense (made to advance a position that the lawyer does not necessarily believe). Rather, Job’s “argument” is principally the prospect of shifting the context where guilt and innocence are decidable. Job’s argument cannot be something assembled from pre-given elements. Job’s case is constituted by what he has undergone, rather than what can be known through the wisdom of tradition.¹⁵⁰ Job must articulate his case as the precise difference from every way one is usually disposed to suffering and calamity moralistically (as punishment).

Job’s reasoning about guilt and innocence evolves:

¹⁴⁷ Nemo identifies this loss of world as the “excess of evil” and treats it under the concept of anxiety. However, I maintain that while Job’s bodily suffering is not necessarily distinct from a loss of world, bodily suffering does occupy moments of its own in *Job* that might collapse into the concept of anxiety too quickly. Accordingly, I attempt in my reading to provide both moments of displacement (of meaning *and* bodily “displacement”). For Nemo’s argument for a “predominance of the theme of anxiety over that of suffering,” cf. *Job and the Excess of Evil*, 18.

¹⁴⁸ “He has walled up my roadway; I cannot pass. He has covered my pathway with darkness” (Habel 19:8).

¹⁴⁹ Carol A. Newsom, *The Book of Job. A Contest of Moral Imaginations* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2003) 144.

¹⁵⁰ Whereas Job knows the wisdom his friends propose (12:3, 13:1-2), “Job’s case is the way (*derek*) he has lived.” *The Book of Job*, 230. *Derek* is “an expression which carries connotations in *Job* of ‘destiny / life record.’” *The Book of Job*, 230.

Of course, the friends could not conceive that the deity could be guilty, and therefore to them Job was the only possible candidate. Job began somewhere near there, but he came to think that perhaps the god is wicked (“Earth is given over to a wicked hand,” 9.24), then to think that the god’s structure of favor and blame was the opposite of that of humans (chap. 21), and later to think decisively that he, Job, was innocent and the god was guilty (chap. 27). In chap. 31 he pulled back, asserting only that he himself was innocent without detailing what the god was.¹⁵¹

The law that is being tested in Job’s public statement is the law (order) of intelligibility.

Language both opens and encloses envisioned possibilities (imagination) within a certain range; it inscribes the intelligible. Were Job to engage in traditional lament, he could only remain “unknown” to himself, for the available language of protest skews what Job undergoes.

Deploying Law Differently

The disruption of place by El necessitates that Job deploy law differently, for El is that performative force that seeks to ground law.¹⁵² Job’s case must contest the place where his alleged guilt is a matter of course; but the place he must contest is none other than the creation of El and the way fidelity to this order has been memorialized in traditional wisdom.

YHWH begins his initial speech from the whirlwind by claiming that Job (if Job is the one to which YHWH is referring) “darkens” the divine, creative design (38:2).

¹⁵¹ In *Turns of Tempest*, 355.

¹⁵² Nemo argues for the doxographical equivalence of God, Law, and World. *Job and the Excess of Evil*, 53. While they might achieve a certain conventional interchangeability in practice, I am not convinced that criticism should equate these terms. Rather, it seems better to follow Butler’s suggestion of a difference between sovereignty and law in her reading of Foucault: “Sovereignty...seeks to supply the ground for law with no particular aim in sight other than to show or exercise the self-grounding power of sovereignty itself: law is grounded in something other than itself, in sovereignty, but sovereignty is grounded in nothing besides itself.” *Precarious Life*, 94.

It seems to me that this initial speech also addresses the charge that God presides over a chaotic world, for in describing the creation of the world Yahweh uses language of precise measurement, secure foundations, and cornerstones. The same point is made differently when Yahweh claims to have laid a statute on the sea, commandments on the morning, and ordinances on the heavens. In Yahweh's view, even the rain has channels and lightning has paths, while snow and hail are held in abeyance until their proper time.¹⁵³

Despite the portrait YHWH draws of precise administration, the god that appears to Job is not that of traditional Wisdom. For as Crenshaw notes, Israel's wisdom maintained that "Where God and his will become manifest, life coheres."¹⁵⁴ In contrast, *Job* 12 paints quite a different picture of the effects of the god's administration.

Even if YHWH is able to refute the charges as Job articulates them in *Job* 12, Behemoth is the first of God's works (40:19), and Behemoth represents natural evil.¹⁵⁵ Consequently, "The author of the divine speeches in the book of Job seems to attribute the creation of chaos, or evil, to YHWH, unless first here means preeminence of rank rather than chronological priority."¹⁵⁶ Good's assessment of the divine speeches (38:2-40:2) echoes Job's complaints: "Yahweh's apparently single-minded self-glorification portrays an ambiguous world, whose order contains disorder, whose disorder undermines the order."¹⁵⁷

Job's legal claim is that El permits mortals to suffer regardless as to whether their guilt is real or only apparent.¹⁵⁸ Job's initial mode of protest is to utter curses designed to unmake the creation of the day of his birth. Because he cannot undo his birth, Job's co-opting of moral language is an attempt to make his circumstances intelligible and an attempt to build a public place to convince his community of his innocence and restore his standing.

¹⁵³ Urgent Advice and Probing Questions, 460.

¹⁵⁴ Urgent Advice and Probing Questions, 497.

¹⁵⁵ Urgent Advice and Probing Questions, 457. Behemoth = natural evil, Leviathan = supernatural evil

¹⁵⁶ James L. Crenshaw, Defending God, 187-188. Cf. Isa 45:7 for the view that Yahweh creates both weal and woe. In Sirach (and elsewhere under Stoic influence) dualism attempts to resolve the issue of opposites.

¹⁵⁷ In Turns of Tempest, 348.

Job's public-saying attempts to wrest from the hegemony of moral language the possibility of a novel (though not utterly novel) place; that is, that one may be innocent *and* afflicted. According to convention, *ṣdq* can either mean morally pure or legally innocent.¹⁵⁹ In 9:2-4, Job appropriates *ṣdq* from a moral-religious discourse (from Eliphaz's defense of divine justice) to a legal discourse.¹⁶⁰ As a moral issue, Job's case is already decided; as a legal issue, Job's case might be heard.

A cluster of legal terms in *Job* 9 signals a decisive shift in Job's manner of speaking from traditional lament to public statement ('*mr*). Due to a forensic context, Habel argues that the verb "speak" (*dbr*) in 13:3 is to "state one's case" or "specify charges."¹⁶¹ Job declares in *Job* 13 that he has prepared a case (*mišpāṭ*) and knows that he is innocent (*ṣdq*). Job spells out a formula for cross examination and invites the participation of the god: "Call, and I will answer, / or I will speak and you respond to me" (13:22 Good). Habel also argues that the verb "instruct" (*ykh* in 9:33, 32:12) is to "argue or arbitrate a case" and that *śīḥ* in 23:2 is "complaint."¹⁶²

An ideological assumption of psalmic wisdom is put on trial by Job's shift to legal terms.¹⁶³ Specifically, this assumption is that a contrite petitioner uses the language of praise in an "unapologetically transactional" manner as "inducements for deliverance."¹⁶⁴ According to Newsom, Job's use of legal terms fulfils three functions: 1) to parody the

¹⁵⁸ The Book of Job, 199.

¹⁵⁹ The Book of Job, A Contest of Moral Imaginations (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2003) 143, 185. In Turns of Tempest, 70.

¹⁶⁰ The Book of Job, A Contest of Moral Imaginations 151. Job 6:29 is the first instance where Job indicates that *ṣdq* is at stake. In 9:2-4, Habel translates Job as using *ṣdq* in a forensic sense as innocent. See also 19:14-15 for "righteous" (*ṣdq*) deployed as "innocent." Cf. Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament, Vol. 14, G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2004) 2.

¹⁶¹ The Book of Job, 223.

¹⁶² The Book of Job, 348. The noun *śīḥ* refers to meditation, usually thought of as a murmuring sound.

¹⁶³ Cf. The Book of Job, A Contest of Moral Imaginations, 152.

¹⁶⁴ The Book of Job, A Contest of Moral Imaginations, 156.

allegedly self-evident correctness of hymnic praise; 2) to focus his thoughts so that he can envision untraditional possibilities, and 3) to explore and reconfigure his situation.¹⁶⁵

Arraign and Answer

In *Job* 32-37, without any prior mention of him, the character Elihu suddenly appears in the text and appoints himself the arbiter in Job's case.¹⁶⁶ Elihu's contention is that a lawsuit to weigh one's righteousness is privately conducted in the body of the afflicted and not to be publically held.¹⁶⁷ Job is on a decidedly different course: he arraigns God who must appear publically.

Whereas resignation and silence would have let his affliction appear as guilt, Job's bitter complaint transforms the conditions for appearance. The wager (initiated by a God who is susceptible to provocation) and the court (initiated by Job) represent two different manners of appearance of suffering. Job's trial does not transform conditions utterly. Rather, a change in terminology occurs against a steady (psalmic) backdrop – the friends' predisposition remains the same. In addition, El's disruption of order still abounds. Job declares that were he able to find God's celestial abode, he would press his suit to His face (23:3-4). However, El's face (emphatic appearance) is terrifying if not lethal.

It is impossible to locate El in order to arraign him. Because finding El's heavenly court¹⁶⁸ is a remote possibility, Job attempts to force El to appear in court by flirting with calling the god "wicked" ("May my enemy be as a wicked man," 27:7).¹⁶⁹ Job's oath of

¹⁶⁵ [The Book of Job, A Contest of Moral Imaginations](#), 153-154.

¹⁶⁶ Elihu's speeches are thought to be a later, pious insertion into the text. Elihu is the only Israelite among those "comforting" Job; his name means "He is my God." [Old Testament Wisdom, an Introduction](#), 100.

¹⁶⁷ [The Book of Job](#), 469.

¹⁶⁸ For a discussion of the notion of a heavenly council, see [Defending God](#), 50-51.

¹⁶⁹ Good translates the provocation of 27:7 as, "Let my enemy be considered wicked, the one who rises against me, vicious." [In Turns of Tempest](#), 287.

innocence (*Job* 31) is a tactic to force the god to appear: El's failure to appear is tantamount to ruling Job innocent, for false testimony is punishable by death.¹⁷⁰ The forensic context carries the formal demand for El to be subject to disclosure. El must show himself, for to fail to do so is tantamount to Job's vindication. Job authors an order (the lawsuit) that is binding upon El, who must face Job.¹⁷¹ The forensic site is disposed (clears) to render Job innocent by default unless El appears and demonstrates otherwise.

Both the curses of his birth (*Job* 3) and his oath of purity (*Job* 31) manifest the powers that are called upon. Being a formal response to a charge, Job's oath of innocence inaugurates the legal proceedings.¹⁷² In essence, words perform the court just as a curse calls forces into play. Job's speech invokes the forum of a court and the metric of law. The court is in session at *Job* 29-31 and is confirmed to be in session by the divinity, who challenges Job by using legal terms in 40:2.¹⁷³ The conditions for appearance (time and place, presence and appearing as the *placed*) are satisfied by the lawsuit as performative speech.¹⁷⁴

Conclusions

Eloah displaces, obscures the way (3:23), so the way (if Job is to have one) must happen as a contending with displacement. From catastrophic loss, physical affliction, the absence of loyalty (*hesed*, 16:14-21), the unavailability of a redeemer/arbiter, the impossibility of arraigning El, and finally the tempest that sends Job's pain back into

¹⁷⁰ Old Testament Wisdom, an Introduction, 95.

¹⁷¹ Job's oath and its "bindingness" upon El (its impinging upon an "absolute" freedom of a divinity), if thought in modern terms, would be an instance of a magical overvaluation of a psychic act – a formulation found in Freud's Totem and Taboo. Sigmund Freud, Totem and Taboo (The Standard Edition), Trans. James Strachey (New York: W.W. Norton, 1989) 105. But as Adorno indicates, there can be no overvaluation when thought and the world have yet to be radically distinguished. Dialectic of Enlightenment 7.

¹⁷² In Turns of Tempest, 311.

¹⁷³ In 40:2, YHWH challenges Job using legal terms: the divinity refers to both counsel ('ēsah, legal debate), and Eloah's "arbiter" (mōkīah). On the strangeness of arbiter in this context: In Turns of Tempest, 348-349.

silence, suffering happens as a series of nested dislocations. Job's attempts to come to grips with these dislocations is an attempt at locating or pinpointing the manner and nature of the disruption: that innocence is no protection, that piety without knowledge is cruel, and that El is duplicitous and violently disposed toward his handiwork.¹⁷⁵

Job's lawsuit is an attempt to give form (lawfulness) where form has been deformed, from the violated integrity of the body to the cosmic order that permits random violence. The pain of these deformations (the murder of Job's children, his sores, the perversion of compassion by piety) is compounded by El's incessant watching – itself a kind of cruelty (7:19). The narrative effect of the displacements is a deferral of reconciliation and resolution.¹⁷⁶ Job's cry has no place (16:18) but the place of the cry itself: a cry that eventually seeks to locate El's court (ch.23) but can only wander until silenced by the superior strength of Job's adversary at law.

Job "finally realized the futility of arguing with one who rose above the law" (Crenshaw, 1998, 103). The friends' error was to assume that God was answerable to a principle of justice that had ontological priority.¹⁷⁷ The universe is not ruled by a rational principle of justice; rather, God's administration of creation is amoral, perhaps even incoherent, from the mortal standpoint.

Job's cry of pain must continually reach outward from community, council and cosmos, for throughout there is neither hope (*Job* 14) nor justice (*Job* 21) but always The Seeing Eye (7:8). In the face of destruction, disorientation, and murder, to call El to account, to face El, is Job's attempt to arraign (meaningfully bind) his innocence, affliction,

¹⁷⁴ Austin's "illocutionary act" is an act performed by an utterance. J. L. Austin, How to Do Things with Words, 2nd ed., ed. J. O. Urmson, Marina Sbisa (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1975).

¹⁷⁵ Cf., "violent intervention" and El "The Maker" The Book of Job, 191, 192.

¹⁷⁶ Janzen thinks resolution comes to Job in the form of the refreshing showers of *El Shaddai*. Gerald J. Janzen, At the Scent of Water, The Ground of Hope in the Book of Job (Cambridge, UK: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2009).

and El's injustice together. From curse, indictment of false friends, pretrial declaration and oath of purity, Job transforms protest from traditional lament to lawsuit as an effort to think that which is unthinkable from the perspective of retributive justice: the co-occurrence of innocence and suffering [Figure 2]. A calling forth of forces (curse) and the invocation of law (oath as inaugurating proceedings) explore form: the poetic as performing forensically rather than morally.

Because both apprehension and projection (in a word, *tradition*) govern the meaning-giving activity of the friends, there is nevertheless a human convention that remains viable for Job: the lawsuit. The suit must contest the grounds of meaning as projection of moral order and justice upon El. The alleged moral order of the cosmos turns out to be just a hopeful projection over its actual amorality.¹⁷⁸

The divine speeches make a mockery of human notions concerning a trial, as also do baseless accusations by Job's three friends and Elihu.¹⁷⁹

The lawsuit highlights the friends' desire to attribute moral order to El's creative activity rather than a confirmation of a divinely authored moral order. Within a fundamentally capricious universe, suffering has no cosmic meaning. YHWH's speeches from the whirlwind show innocence and guilt to be human constructions. Job's gambit is that the lawsuit might be a coherent, orderly place wherein meaning ("knowing oneself") might remain possible. Perhaps the riddle of Job's final words signals that he has discovered that the attribution and ascription of meaning and justice to God and the cosmos is *hebel* (mere wind or futility).

¹⁷⁷ Old Testament Wisdom, an Introduction, 105.

¹⁷⁸ The Book of Job, 65.

¹⁷⁹ Old Testament Wisdom, an Introduction, 108.

Figure 2
Curse to Oath: The Evolution of Form of Job's Homeless Cry



Job is suggestive of a set of related theses regarding theology: 1) Theology legislates the meaning of particularity by way of a context-transcendent absolute. It is an “axiomatic” explanatory order, a “kingdom of transcendent ends.”¹⁸⁰ 2) Inviolability is projected upon an un-revisable order that is lodged in a Platonic heaven, and that projection is disavowed. Following Nietzsche’s critique of the “theological attitude” in the *Genealogy of Morals*, an allegedly permanent, heavenly order is the result of valuation whose origins are occluded by an epochal inability to think historically. 3) Suffering is something other than itself as a matter of exchange value (redemptive, retributive, educative).

Job is suggestive of a set of interrelated theses about our “contemporary” life: Suffering is the result of an unlivable world. Life is given over to a regime of conceptuality (“regime” in the sense that the readily available means of “critique” serve only to justify its predominance). As part of that conceptual regime, suffering is provoked to appear such that blame is attributed to the victim (thus the need for Adorno’s “turn to the subject”).¹⁸¹ Suffering is in part a result of its signification: it is allegedly in accord with a heavenly, axiomatic, permanently present order (legitimizing its earthly, administrative, disciplinary counterpart). An attempt to render the meaningfulness of suffering must be responsive to its excess: that suffering is beyond (but always also *with*) the ordinary grounds of meaningfulness.

Since so much depends for Job’s success upon hearing (as a reconfiguration of the conditions of appearing and meaningfulness), not much has been accomplished without also

¹⁸⁰ The phrase “kingdom of transcendent ends” is from Emmanuel Lévinas, “Useless Suffering,” The Provocation of Emmanuel Levinas: Re-thinking the Other, ed. Robert Bernasconi and David Wood (London: Routledge, 1988) 156. There is an evolution toward this heavenly realm of permanently present law, which seems to be partially a matter of the relationship between Platonism and Christian theology. A strange evolution toward the concept of a life after death, in addition to the development of a purely immaterial realm of the spirit, takes place during the first century CE. In contrast, both the watery *Sheol* and the “soul” that is breath (*nephesh*) are intimately bound to the body.

¹⁸¹ Theodor W. Adorno, “Education after Auschwitz,” Critical Models, Interventions and Catchwords, trans. Henry W. Pickford (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998) 193.

turning our attention to the text itself and how it is heard. A defense of an interpretation, which this chapter has been, has rested upon translations that discern what is “there” in the archaic Hebrew of *Job*. Not unlike Kant’s moment of objectivity in the aesthetic experience, disagreement in translation is arbitrated by reference to the object rather than the subjectivity of the aesthetic experience itself.¹⁸² Because translating *Job* is an excursion into the highest concentration of *hapax legomena* in the Hebrew Bible, however, even “good” translations diverge:

So my lyre is tuned for lament
and my flute to accompany mourning. (30:31-2 Habel)

My lyre has become mourning,
My flute a weeping voice (30:31-2 Good)

The most we might say is, “According to a convention in translation, this word in *Job* means this....” But what about this phenomenon? Contemporary translation appears to be following its own momentum, and only on occasion is brought back to the indeterminacy of the text (Good, at least, leaves some portions untranslated altogether¹⁸³). The grip of the text’s amorphousness is eluded in most instances. The question of translatability, if you like, is often not accounted for directly. So at the zenith of Job’s attempt to make sense of what he is undergoing, we should place the question of the text itself and its inscrutability, lest we make the error of his consolers and assume to know rather than know that we do not know.

¹⁸² “The judgment of taste itself does not *postulate* everyone’s agreement (since only a logically universal judgment can do that, because it can adduce reasons); it merely requires this agreement from everyone, as an instance of the rule, an instance regarding which it expects confirmation not from concepts but from the agreement of others.” Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, trans. Werner S. Pluhar (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 1987) §8, p. 60.

¹⁸³ In particular, 19:25-26. “Having declared myself opposed to rewriting to make the passage mean what I wish it meant, I leave the lines blank, and I will not use them in thinking about meaning.” *In Turns of Tempest*, 100 note. His comment regarding the hapax ‘*tyn* in 21:24 displays his typical candor: “Perhaps a word that can be made to mean so many things cannot be made to mean anything.” *In Turns of Tempest*, 108 note.

CHAPTER III

A WAYWARD PASSAGE

Introduction

In satisfying the minimal requirement for a practice to be a practice, it would seem that philosophy must weave suffering into a story. However, philosophy is not committed to an attempt at meaning without any discursiveness. Rather, a transformed philosophy stands in a necessary relationship to those discursive practices that attempt to “say the unsayable.”¹⁸⁴ The trial of philosophy that I imagine examines transformed manners of composition (i.e., synthetic forms other than logical syntax). Even though these transformed manners of philosophizing attempt to give “passive” materiality its own moment of intelligibility, a role for suffering nevertheless emerges in terms of form. To be responsive to the potential articulateness of materiality is not equivalent to an eschewing of conceptuality altogether. An apotheosis of meaning looms near any attempt to distance philosophical “production” from conventional meaning.¹⁸⁵ The problem of whether suffering may yet signify *apart from* the ordinary grounds of meaningfulness is a problem of the status of this “apart.”

It is not an overstatement to say that *Job* simply *is* its gaps and dislocations and its passages between elements are just what projection places there and subsequently disavows. Modernist composition attempts an appearance of an *emerging* syntax while resisting the

¹⁸⁴ Those social practices that attempt to “say the unsayable” are uncommon with respect to dominant modes of knowing. Jay Bernstein, “Fragment, Fascination, Damaged Life: ‘The Truth About Hedda Gabler’,” The Actuality of Adorno, Critical Essays on Adorno and the Postmodern, ed. Max Pensky (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997) 163-164. If philosophy wishes to protest the suffering that occurs as the result of the brute ordering of society, then it is committed to interpreting the dysfunctional remnants of discursive practices we call artworks.

coldness of a finality to form (e.g., by resisting conventional notions of “finish”). Derrida calls experience a “non-road” – when an object’s alterity prevents our projects from ensuing as usual. Playing on the sense of course and passage as “lawful,” the following questions emerge: What passage (i.e., transition between elements) can avoid lapsing into law in its hegemonic forms? Is there a course other than that which would be a matter of course (i.e., un-routine) and thereby retain its critical force? How might practice become an “unlawful” passage that nevertheless remains intelligible? Because a transformed philosophy cannot eschew form altogether (lest it renounce intelligibility), to call its manner of proceeding an “unlawful” passage is too strong. Consequently, I have chosen the word “wayward” to indicate its position relative to law as at variance, blocked and un-routine. I have composed a wayward passage – an arraignment of Adorno and Heidegger. In particular, I focus upon these two competing philosophical orientations as it pertains to experience: the possibility and character of philosophical reflection.

Heidegger and Adorno share a certain common interest with Hegel: philosophical reflection begins in undergoing (*Erfahrung*). To cease to attempt an (ultimately self-deceived) evasion of history changes the object as well as the subject of thought – an insight that both Heidegger and Adorno share. For both, the fact that reflection¹⁸⁶ continues despite its endangerment evidences that the thinker is no longer thoroughly beholden to a dominant tradition. I intend this chapter to provide the possibility of a conversation between these orientations by approaching their differences at the level of undergoing.

¹⁸⁵ Cf. Susan Buck-Morss, The Origin of Negative Dialectic, Theodor W. Adorno, Walter Benjamin, and the Frankfurt Institute (New York: The Free Press, 1979) 188.

¹⁸⁶ Adorno’s conception of critical reflection is much more dependent upon the Continental European tradition of “Reflexion” (Cf. Herbert Schnädelbach, “Reflexion und Diskurs,” Fragen einer Logik der Philosophie (Frankfurt a. M., 1977). than Heidegger, who starts with Dilthey’s notion of *Selbstbesinnung*.

Below, I explore difficulties associated with Heidegger’s saving grace (the discernment of the danger that reflection may vanish). Also below, I explore difficulties associated with the solicitation of reflection by the non-identical “after” Adorno’s hyperbolic “vanishing” of reflection altogether. Undergoing is conspicuously at work in either philosophical orientation in order to generate either of these different forms of engagement. The purpose of this chapter is to critique form in philosophical engagement. Along the way, I will attempt to name difficulties accurately when they resist resolution.

My goal in this chapter is to initiate a trial in what I take to be rigorous consistency with Heidegger’s and Adorno’s mandate to respond to beings in their suffering. By arraigning Adorno and Heidegger (bringing into proximity otherwise incompatible orientations), the trial begins – for it is against this uneasy proximity that we might learn more about our philosophical commitments. In *Job*, suffering is threatened by a dominant form of intelligibility (the “guilt” of the sufferer). Just as Job risked arraigning¹⁸⁷ prevailing law, “bad” form seems to be just what is called for.¹⁸⁸

Taking my cue from *Job*, I contrast Heidegger and Adorno as attempts to emerge from a predominant form of law (eschatological or transcendent) without lapsing into a mode of its repetition in disguise. The complicity of a prevailing reasonableness in “philosophical” quarters with the reproduction of domination lies in an authorized unreflectiveness about history. The loss of experience is immanent to philosophy as eschatological desire. The obfuscation of the role of undergoing to philosophical reflection (e.g., by “timeless” epistemic standards) participates in the evacuation of the meaningfulness of bodies by the regime of axiomatic (administrative, lawful)

¹⁸⁷ ...a legal term that we encounter in *Job* as *y'd* in 9:19.

presuppositions of the social whole. For both Adorno and Heidegger, philosophy must transform its manner of making a case if it is to preserve its critical function with respect to the intransigence of society. Nevertheless, each proposes a different form of intervention – a path of thinking (Heidegger) versus determinate negations (Adorno).

In our philosophical climate, one's orientation is often employed as a defense against another's. To hear the others' concerns differently than the way we are predisposed to categorize or "understand" demands that my typical response, rather than the other orientation, become the "object" of understanding. As we learn, for example, from the Symposium, to be willing to be changed is a matter of Eros, and not all are embodied such that they may be philosophers (e.g., the discerning and chaotically embodied Alcibiades). In order to not presume a "neutral" standpoint between Adorno and Heidegger but rather foreground the matter of undergoing as it pertains to this immediate work of arraignment, I will attempt to remain true to what my own undergoing has made a reflective possibility: an enrichment of philosophical orientation by reading that which is alien; an interweaving of trauma and recovery that in no way commits me to a romanticism; my conversion to Judaism as assuming a responsibility to memory; and reading *Job*. Through a reading of *Job*, I have been examining the condition for the possibility of reflection upon an hegemony of law. Compounding Job's suffering is the perplexity of being before the law where a claim to innocence can only come too late. If it is not to fall prey to the theodicy of blaming the sufferer and instead is to challenge law, the displacements that the sufferer undergoes must condition an arraignment of materiality such that the singularity of the body (repressed by

¹⁸⁸ The parsing of so-called "argumentative" content of canonical philosophers for the "timeless questions of philosophy" is a form of decay under the implicit license of "good form."

law) has a forum. In what follows, I deploy the critical vocabulary of *hearing*, *telling* and *arraignment* where appropriate.

Experience

In distinction from the ordinary conception of lived experience as a given, temporalized stratum that can be formalized by science, Adorno's conception of experience is neither Kant's synthesis of concept and intuition nor Hegel's undergoing that "sublates" antitheses, but rather represents engagements with these philosophers (as well as with Freud and Marx) in an attempt to negate forms of domination to which we are beholden. Experience, for Adorno, is endangered: the social whole, dominated by exchange, reduces subjectivity to the reproduction of a regime of conceptuality that represses the potential that sensuousness might signify in its own right. "Consciousness" (in the form of an *a priori* 'fit' of categories through which the individual thing is appropriated as an instance of a rule) always already exhibits the initiative to the intelligibility of events. The synergy of economic forces and the culture industry induces one to willingly abandon life for substitute satisfactions that are nonetheless unsatisfactory for life. The schematism of production shrewdly replaces the individual's work of synthesis by offering technically sophisticated, pre-“synthesized” content. The domination of the culture industry usurps the role of imagination in preparing objects for their conceptualization.¹⁸⁹ The hyper-administered environment yields a “subject” who substitutes a pseudo-orientation for experience.¹⁹⁰ Adorno portrays the authoritarian personality as having an “inability to have any immediate

¹⁸⁹ Cliché is the adaptation of the imagination under “unalterable” conditions.

¹⁹⁰ “The senses are determined by the conceptual apparatus in advance of perception; the citizen sees the world as made *a priori* of the stuff from which he himself constructs it.” Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment, Philosophical Fragments*, trans. Edmund Jephcott, ed. Gunzelin Schmid Noerr (Stanford, CA: Stanford UP, 2002) 65.

human experiences at all.”¹⁹¹ Insofar as the routinization of life and mythological identity dominate consciousness, the “individual” is merely a token of the reified whole. Because of the hegemony of the administered world, therefore, Adorno asks whether there can still be any experience at all: even “alienation” requires a subject (rather than mere tokens of types).

For Adorno, the term “experience” is reserved just for the discernment of our distance from the object as non-identical other. Experience is an encounter with alterity, which is threatening to the narcissistic aspirations of the ego under conditions of a damaged sociality. False totality reproduces itself through the power to compel the weakened ego to desire mythical forms of reconciliation with the whole, and to identify with forms of power as substitute gratification for powerlessness.

An inability to respond to suffering, to have it grip us before it is conceptualized, is part of the alienation from sensibility as a bearer of meaning: The inability to experience, a “coldness,” an “indifference to the fate of others,” is a precondition for another disaster.¹⁹² Such coldness will always already possess, in virtue of it being in concert with the whole, a ring of authority over the desire to critique the motivations behind the intransigence of social reality.

Heidegger’s Experience

From a Heideggarian orientation, an “apotheosis” of experience (which in any case is not what Heidegger claims to be threatening reflection) would be (something like) things only ever appearing as either knowable or useable. As dependent upon our comportment toward beings as they come to be, our “experience” would be just as either theorizers or

¹⁹¹ Theodor Adorno, Critical Models, Interventions and Catchwords, trans. Henry W. Pickford (New York: Columbia UP, 1998)

users of stockpiled things. However, for Heidegger, these “theoretical” and “instrumental” manners of comportment are accompanied by a strong sense that they do not exhaust “life”,¹⁹³ and thereby give occasions to reflect upon this very hegemony. The ‘phenomenology of phenomenology’ that Heidegger takes himself to be doing depends upon the manner in which entities are given not just in terms of the ‘cleared space’ of tradition (the eventuation of Being) but also in such a way that the tradition itself becomes conspicuous. For something to be provoked to appear in terms of a dominant mode of disclosure is nevertheless for that something to appear precisely as provoked such that this ‘covering over’ is itself apparent. In the language of the later Heidegger, coming to presence “absences” itself; yet this absence-ing gives itself to be thought (although certainly never all at once or completely). Consequently, Heidegger’s thinking attempts to sustain in reflection the experience of not just how one is already disposed to disclose and deal with things, but also the distress with falling toward (*Verfallensein*) this founded way of relating to beings.

According to Heidegger, meditative *Denken* is a possibility of thinking always-with-yet-also-against our philosophical inheritance without either rejecting it (“rebelliously”) or naively repeating it (eschatologically, metaphysically). This reflective possibility is, at the same time, an exploration of this possibility that depends upon the appearance of things as subjected to an ill-suited ontological atmosphere. Because this ontological atmosphere appears as an imposition upon things, appearances are suggestive of other possibilities for “letting beings be.” But these other possibilities for appearing (which remain potential

¹⁰¹, 198.

¹⁰² *Critical Models*, 201-202.

¹⁹³ I place life in quotation marks due to Adorno’s critique of being-towards-death. Theodor Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, trans. E.B. Ashton (New York: Seabury Press, 1973) 368. For dying and the “what” that dies, Cf. *Negative Dialectics*, 362.

rather than given) require a careful diffusing of inherited modes of dismissal and critical foreclosure.

The possibility that Heidegger follows for reflection, however, is not universally accepted as real: the distance between rejecting one's philosophical inheritance and being absorbed within it naively is, by Adorno's lights, mythical, despite the fact that they both attempt to not repeat the self-deceived "emancipation" from tradition that cleaves to an eschatological spirit. If thinking can be only instrumental or dialectical, and if the objective and subjective moments of thinking exhaust our possible relatedness to things, then the "beyond" moment in Heidegger's thinking of the tradition must in some way be self-deceived. If self-deceived, Heidegger's "experience" of beings in terms of the ending of the dominant tradition must be subjective and the thinking that follows from that "experience" must neglect the proper theorization of "life." On Heidegger's account, the ending of the dominant tradition allows numerous opportunities for reflection. In contrast, Adorno's interventions suggest that experience is endangered in ways that make its occurrence far more rare than Heidegger presumes.

Adorno's "theoretical" commitments are by far the most salient features of critique rather than anything that might amount to a "phenomenology" of determinate conditions for reflection. Adorno's descriptions of the brokenness of social reality rely heavily upon Marx (e.g., the fungibility of particulars), and inverted Hegel, Freud (e.g., myth as compensatory satisfaction), and Kant (e.g., the transcendental subject read as a cipher for hyper-administrated reality). While Adorno deliberately "perverts" these sources where otherwise critique might be compromised by this legacy, Adorno's critical position prioritizes

“theorizing” (as a counterbalance to praxis as tending to give way to pseudo-activity) and the world that is thereby theorized retains the traditional language of the object.

The elusiveness of Adorno’s “position” is partially the result of the fact that his theoretical commitments appear to be modulating in response to the priority of the object that necessitates a particular intervention.¹⁹⁴ It is in the context of the priority of the object – in particular that constellations of thought are to reflect the contradictoriness of social reality – that we can understand Adorno’s refiguring of, for example, Kant and Hegel. Nevertheless, where Adorno seems to speak from an already realized alternative account to the obstructing “mythological” worldview. Adorno appears to be issuing a “voluntaristic” “counter-revolt” to “ontology” despite his insistence that “appetitive” thinking is violent. In the age of *Gestell*, the very idea of subjective mastery is already a response to the sense that everything is available (*beständig*) as always-already “cleared” in the manner of being enframed and set up (*ge-stellen*). If voluntaristic, Adorno’s criticisms are still too subject-centered to capture the atmosphere, the cleared site, where everything he complains about “happens.”

At the same time, voluntarism cannot be Adorno’s position insofar as he insists that the object’s non-identity is recognizable only having undergone its variance from our conceptual predispositions. In the absence of a “positive” description akin to Heidegger’s (that an occluded something is nevertheless an *appearance* of that something *as* occluded), Adorno seems to speak from *a priori* theoretical commitments. Adorno’s determinate negations often appear to be dialectical “demonstrations” of the contradictoriness inherent in social reality rather than a description of the undergoing that it takes to have achieved that very critical space (or displacement).

Adorno's critical theory seems to indicate that either 1) one is engaged in a kind of self-hypnosis that false satisfactions are real, or 2) one is reflective about the identitarian whole through a kind of ego-strength (which is under normal conditions rendered weak). Our circumstances render an "us," like Job, sitting upon the ashes of the social. Or so it seems so long as we take "the individual" to be a separate entity, and so long as the idea of such entities getting their very sense "in relation" is already "ontology." Since so much in Adorno is about false identity, what room is left for sufferers to gain a sense of what "we"¹⁹⁵ are going through that does not "automatically" become an abstract occlusion of the singular?

Adorno's reflection seems to stand in a negative relationship both to repression as understood by Freud and to false-consciousness as understood by Marx. Because, according to these models, repression and false-consciousness are ineliminable elements of thought, Adorno can deduce that Heidegger's reflection fails as alleged "instances" of denial and false consciousness. But as ineliminable, we can suppose that determinate negation should be marked as well, and that the critical position of the analyst is not one of magical immunity. Adorno is, in fact, reflective of this performative dimension of his philosophizing, having acknowledged that dialogue, having been damaged, forces him into a private "dialogue" in *Minima Moralia*.

The "Taboo" against Positivity and Solicitation by Non-Identity

If it is not to be "eschatological," critique must begin *and* end in the midst of things. In light of the view that it is never entirely free of its starting point, what informs negative

¹⁹⁴ Buck-Morss calls this dimension of Adorno's theory "quicksilver." The Origin of Negative Dialectic, 186.

dialectic from the start? How does it understand itself? What grants the special authoritative space of the critical theorist? If the brokenness of the world were complete, then where one stood in relationship to brokenness would in any case not afford any advantage to its diagnosis.

Presumably, if I exhibit a desire to supply the missing moment of non-identity that permits reflection, I have a kind of barometer by which I can come to know more about my “mythical” commitments. My reading in this section attempts to resist being at the service of the capitalization upon non-identity while nevertheless emphasizing the difficulties that Adorno’s strategy seems to entail, with the intention of drawing out a greater reflective, self-awareness.

Experience is a moment when the way in which a routine of apprehension is heteronomous to the appearance of a matter. Philosophical engagement with the loss of experience paradoxically requires the experience of that discovery. A total loss of experience (which Adorno’s formulations seem to depict at times as having occurred) erodes the very ground upon which thinking (the negation of false identity) presumes to stand. Adorno’s characterizations of totality, while targeted at specific forms of identity thinking, are nevertheless suggestive that our predicament is that of the world’s completed negativity – a condition of total occlusion whereby the resources for experience are completely bankrupt.

For example, by the phrase “the whole is the false,” Adorno negates both the priority Hegel gives to the universal and the thought of the integrated “I.”¹⁹⁵ Adorno observes that

¹⁹⁵ The “we” refers to those that I might be speaking to, who might recognize in their own experience what I am attempting to say. I resume the question of this “we” in the chapter, “Outsiders: ‘ōb’rē derek to Odradek.”

¹⁹⁶ Theodor Adorno, Minima Moralia, Reflections from Damaged Life, trans. E.F.N Jephcott (New York: Verso, 2002) 50, 64. Negative Dialectics, 265. Cf. Alexandre Kojève. Introduction to the Reading of Hegel. Lectures on the Phenomenology of Spirit, trans. James H. Nichols, Jr., Allan Bloom, ed. (Ithica: Cornell UP, 1969) 139.

the dialectic Hegel carefully avoids is that the whole is also the individual's otherness.¹⁹⁷

Because totality exhibits itself as a global ready-apprehension of things, reflection upon totality is “novel” only in the sense of no longer recognizing where we are (if “recognition” cannot fail to be instrumental). As literally true, however, “the whole is the false” is unthinkable.¹⁹⁸

...total despair is unintelligible, because as a minimal condition of the possibility of despairing determinately of the world as it is, consciousness must have a sense of some element which is not negative.¹⁹⁹

The position from which the ‘falseness of the whole’ is discerned is, strictly speaking, a non-position.²⁰⁰ Of course, the difficulty of a critical standpoint that is nevertheless not eschatological has not escaped Adorno, for genuine thought

...is also the utterly impossible thing, because it *presupposes a standpoint removed*, even though by a hair’s breath, from the scope of existence, whereas we well know that any possible knowledge must not only be first wrested from what is, if it shall hold good, *but is also marked*, for this very reason, by the same distortion and indigence which it seeks to escape.²⁰¹

Solicitation by the non-identical remains a brute fact solely “evidenced” by the occurrence of reflection.

Unless some concrete intimation of non-identity existed, some experience of non-identity possible, then reflection’s work would be indistinguishable from phantasy; or better, there would be no reflection. Adorno does not rule out the possibility of radical failure. Reflection does continue, we are solicited by the non-identical, but nothing guarantees this state of affairs.²⁰²

¹⁹⁷ Negative Dialectics, 315.

¹⁹⁸ Minima Moralia, 50.

¹⁹⁹ Simon Jarvis, Adorno, A Critical Introduction (New York: Routledge, 1998) 212, emphasis added.

²⁰⁰ Cf. The editor’s introduction in The Culture Industry, ed. J.M. Bernstein (New York: Routledge, 1991) 19.

²⁰¹ Minima Moralia, 247 emphasis added.

²⁰² J. M. Bernstein. The Fate of Art, Aesthetic Alienation from Kant to Derrida and Adorno (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State UP, 1992) 189. Emphasis added.

If literally true, negative totality (as discerned) is a view from nowhere and agency (or novelty) could only come outside time in the manner of apocalypticism, which is anathema to critical theory. Consequently,

A moment of unliteralness is non-liquidable from such claims to despair, because if they were meant with absolute literalness they could not even be thought.²⁰³

Bernstein “resolves” this bit of “epistemological impertinence” on Adorno’s part by attributing to expressions of negative totality the character of hyperbole.²⁰⁴

For Adorno, the only manner of, let’s say, “acknowledgment” of non-identity is the negation of precise forms of occlusion due to the rational and social whole. It is often possible to “reconstruct” the work of undergoing from the fact that Adorno’s interventions are exceedingly precise with regard to the false identity that attempts to gloss over a specific form of social brokenness. The negation of a specific identification “releases,” we might say, the experience of the difference from that identification. Just as each instance of false consciousness bears the trend of the whole, Adorno reassures us that “consummate negativity, once squarely faced, delineates the mirror image of its opposite.”²⁰⁵

Does “having a sense” of “some element” of non-identity show that there is another alternative to either positivity or negativity as Adorno understands them? The possibility that Adorno appears to be wary of is that if critique were to proclaim the availability of non-identity, its instrumental use would be enabled. If critique were to pronounce the availability

²⁰³ Simon Jarvis, Adorno, A Critical Introduction (New York: Routledge, 1998) 214.

²⁰⁴ J.M. Bernstein, “Fragment, Fascination, Damaged Life: ‘The Truth About Hedda Gabler’,” The Actuality of Adorno, Critical Essays on Adorno and the Postmodern, ed. Max Pensky (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997) 163-164.

²⁰⁵ Minima Moralia, 247.

of a non-anthropomorphic “truth,” critique would lapse into a myth of immanence. For philosophy to profit from an “element which is not negative” would be an instance of idealism as “belly turned mind.”²⁰⁶ It is as if Adorno anticipates that the sense of non-identity would, by default, become something *vorhand* that we would handle with our scientific and technocratic theories. By Adorno’s lights, any positive conception given to non-identity reinstates enlightenment in its regressive moment as myth.

Because hyperbole can only ever intimate the positive moment of non-identity that permits “total” falseness to be thinkable, hyperbole obscures the relationship between philosophical practice and the determinate conditions that are, after all, the point of determinate negations. So long as there is no experiential account of ‘coming to see that experience is threatened,’ and despite its negations being determinate (i.e., targeted at a specific societal occlusion), non-identity remains only mysteriously tied to the hyperbole that it entreats. If Adorno’s expressions of negative totality are obfuscation of a critical beginning to which he has already somehow availed himself, then expressions of negative totality are the philosophical equivalent of dragging a branch behind one’s horse.

When a non-identical element is expressed in the form of hyperbole, however, the articulation of that element avoids an eschatological “flight to health” (to borrow a phrase from the mental health profession). On this reading, hyperbole is interpretable as a counterweight thrown against the pull of a myth of emancipation. Hyperbole prevents the critical foreclosure that would result from an identification of a beginning.²⁰⁷ In other words, hyperbole might function as a kind of expression that both 1) highlights what stands in the way of a true account of a phenomena and 2) points us in the direction of that phenomenon

²⁰⁶ Negative Dialectics, 23.

²⁰⁷ The Fate of Art, 191-192.

without making the pointer more important than the phenomenon towards which it is trying to “guide” our thoughts. Just in these two senses, Adorno’s use of hyperbole functions similarly to Heidegger’s formal indication. For Heidegger, philosophy must avail itself in a “formally indicative” fashion; i.e., not as naming a thing or process in a representation, but as pointing us in the direction of an experience of relationship that we already live through—albeit while we are so absorbed in “ontic” matters that these atmospherics are “forgotten.”²⁰⁸

Determinate negation seems to treat non-identity as if it were unutterable in order to shield it from the possibility of being possessed and instrumentalized. In the unutterable, mythical enlightenment and culture-critique appear to converge. That apophatic dimension employed to shield law from revocability is to be distinguished however from the tetragrammaton, an unpronounceable that prevents divinity from becoming a possible possession. Due to the undesirability of shielding law from revocability, we might be tempted to leave non-identity as a kind of residue of a particular negation. However, if non-identity is “experiential” but not categorizable, then it is by definition not experienced (i.e., just a raw bit of intuition, on Kant’s account). Unutterability tends to be cast as mysticism or nonsense by a normative standard for utterability as a propositional, representative, objective and public account of an otherwise private “experience.” Adorno seems to have an ambiguous relationship to this notion of “experience,” which depends upon a traditional (virtually positivistic) conception of language – mostly in virtue of Adorno’s attempt to provide Kantian intuition with its own moment of intelligibility.

²⁰⁸ For letting beings “be,” Cf. Martin Heidegger, “The End of Philosophy and the Task of Thinking,” Basic Writings, ed. David Farrell Krell (New York: Harper & Row, 1977) 373.

The possibility of philosophical reflection

Adorno reserves the possibility that cogent thinking enables the “same” thought to occur again and elsewhere,²⁰⁹ and the hyperbolic “unavailability” of non-identity leaves the work of experience entirely up to us. Must Adorno reject Heidegger’s experience of the possibility of language as formal indication, especially given his employment of hyperbole?

From what position inside of damaged life is identity thinking most readily detectable? Adorno tells us that the non-identical must not be at our disposal but rather within “layers” of reality that are “inimical to the sphere of ideas.”²¹⁰ In order that instrumental rationality become conspicuous in a way that drives a reconsideration of our response to the object, to appear as ‘at our disposal’ must appear as ruinous.

Heidegger’s phenomenology hinges its possibility upon whether one’s customary retreat into the familiar can be unbearable. While things tend to disappear within our projects and leave no remainder, there persists (so long as there is reflection) the possibility of a remainder that might be responded to differently, if only as an acknowledgment of the endangerment of reflection.

In contrast to Adorno, Heidegger detects opportunities for reflection everywhere. Heidegger reads the possibility of reflection upon the hegemonic forms of appearance as a sign that the tradition of Western onto-theology (a ‘being in the truth’ of everything thought of in terms of essence) is ending. For Heidegger, what we are living through seems increasingly unsatisfactory, not in this or that way, but “globally.” Heidegger’s expression,

²⁰⁹ Theodor Adorno, “Resignation,” *The Culture Industry. Selected Essays on Mass Culture*, ed. J.M. Bernstein (New York: Routledge, 2003) 203.

²¹⁰ “non-identical layers, layers that are inimical to the sphere of ideas...”Adorno, as quoted in Albrecht Wellmer, “Adorno, Modernity, and the Sublime,” *The Actuality of Adorno: critical essays on Adorno and the postmodern*, ed. Max Pensky (Albany: SUNY Press, 1997) 121.

das Ge-Stell (“commandeering everything into assured availability”²¹¹), pertains to today’s administrative architecture by which one is literally *placed* (and singularity is *displaced*). The ontological atmosphere (of real objects for a properly attentive subject) is (to use the language of *Being and Time*) a founded (i.e., derivative rather than “originary”) mode of being-in-the-world.” The predominance of the permanently present is reflected not only in a very selective interpretation of phenomena that runs through the entire tradition, but also in the way history is treated as if from nowhere (e.g., *Historie* as a general story of what has been) rather than that which ‘always already’ conditions the manner in which we treat anything, including reflective activity itself. Undergoing ‘the past that is coming back at us from the future’ allows what we are living through “to be” such that other possibilities might be envisioned.

Experience (the appearance of a thing “apart” from its apprehension by certain regime of conceptuality), reflection (a break with necessity) and imagination (the capacity to envision otherwise) are bound up in conditions that endanger all three of these interrelated phenomena. But for Heidegger, for something to be obscured is for that something to nevertheless phenomenally appear precisely in *as* obscured – what might be called Heidegger’s “positivity” in this context. For Heidegger, the *Da-* that prevents reflection today can not be exhausted by *das Ge-Stell* without eliminating reflection altogether – for then there could be no occasion when “commandeering everything into assured availability”²¹² might become conspicuous and solicit something other than ordinary “concern.”

²¹¹ Martin Heidegger “Origin of the Work of Art” Addendum. Poetry, Language, Thought, trans. Albert Hofstadter (New York: Harper & Row, 1971) 84.

Critique of Heidegger

In the case of those who, in virtue of their embodiment, are a material condition for the vanishing of experience (Lyotard's "the jews"²¹³), "integration" is always precarious at best. Given that the necessary social constituents are always already in place (pathic projection²¹⁴), the projection of undesirability readily intensifies into murder (as evidenced by the history of pogroms and the Shoah). It is against these considerations that we have to understand both Adorno's objections to Heidegger and Adorno's exile in the United States. Any philosophy that fails to recognize the regressive tendency in society is a potential source for its renewal.

In order to demonstrate the movement of an alleged idealism immanent in Heidegger's path of thinking, Adorno must show Heidegger to be naively participating in a regressive tendency in society despite Heidegger's assurances that the purpose of his philosophy is to contest the intransigence of tradition. Rather than show in the dialectical reversals of subject-object a reflection of social truth as contradictory, Heidegger presents a third moment (Being) as if beyond subject-object.²¹⁵ For Adorno, Heidegger attempts to have the objective moment of thought ("Being" understood as a cipher of the object that attempts to repudiate itself as that cipher) without the subjective moment of thought (*Dasein* understood as a cipher of the subject²¹⁶ that attempts to repudiate itself as that cipher). According to Adorno, Heidegger's turn away from subjectivity (in contrast to Adorno's turn

²¹² Poetry, Language, Thought, 84.

²¹³ Jean-François Lyotard, Heidegger and "the jews", trans. Andreas Michel and Mark Roberts (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977).

²¹⁴ Minima Moralia, 105.

²¹⁵ "He pursues dialectics to the point of saying that neither the subject nor the object are immediate and ultimate; but he deserts dialectics in reaching for something immediate and primary beyond subject and object." Negative Dialectics, 106.

²¹⁶ "Dasein" is typically read erroneously as a synonym for "human entity considered as a subject rather than as an object."

to the subject) abandons the work of conceptual mediation by appearing to have collapsed (through its idiolect) the gulf between subject and object (thus lapsing into idealism).²¹⁷

According to Adorno, the subjective and objective moments of Heidegger's thought appear in disguise as a set of terms that position themselves as the relatedness between subject and object, but in practice avoid the remaining work of the concept: "Definition [of Being] would involve it in the dialectics of subject and object, in the very thing from which it is to be exempt."²¹⁸ Adorno characterizes the remaining dialectical work²¹⁹ as dependent upon an experience of the concept's non-identity to the object of understanding. Although Heidegger labors against the presumption of subjective mastery, his efforts allegedly vitiate conceptual mediation (presume access to a 'voice of Being') rather than sustain a critique of an ineliminable identitarian tendency. Adorno characterizes Heidegger's thinking as an invocation of a mythical realm that sustains "the illusion that transmission is immediacy."²²⁰ As if immediately available through an alleged "nonconceptuality," Heidegger's thought of Being abandons the concept (without which there can be no judgment but only an "as if" judgment).²²¹

Adorno maintains that the actual, social convolution of subject-object (e.g., their transposition under relations of production) is inflected (rather than sidestepped) through Heidegger's path of thinking. While Adorno acknowledges that Heidegger's thought "does of course presuppose a critique of the deification of Being," Adorno detects a desire to redeem religious values that have lost their obviousness as transcendent through the

²¹⁷ "...[Heidegger] becomes untrue where – not unlike Hegel – he talks as if the contents we want to rescue were thus directly in our minds." *Negative Dialectics*, 98.

²¹⁸ *Negative Dialectics*, 115.

²¹⁹ The demonstration of the convolution of subject and object is an expression of social truth.

²²⁰ *Negative Dialectics*, 123.

²²¹ "...the concept of entity – not at all unlike Heidegger's celebrated one of Being – is the concept which encompasses out-and-out nonconceptuality, that which is not exhausted by the concept, yet without ever expressing its difference from the encompassed." *Negative Dialectics*, 117.

subjective effort to reestablish those values in a secular register.²²² In their analyses of *Volk* and *Geist* respectively, Lyotard and Derrida have traced the operation of a disavowed politics in Heidegger's "piety of thought."²²³

Following the maxim that "myth is the deceptive unity of the undivided,"²²⁴ Heidegger's penchant for myth is evident in his "jargon of authenticity," as if the ancient languages were Being "speaking" without a subject.²²⁵ Adorno accuses Heidegger of having disguised (perhaps to himself?) his own voice as that of "Being."²²⁶ Heidegger depicts Being (a non-sensual "transcendent") as if sensed. In *The Jargon of Authenticity*, Adorno argues that the language of existentialism trades a felt contact with objects for an idealism that results when self-experience is thought to be identical with the object of thought²²⁷ - a reneging on experience by lapsing into its identitarian opposite).

For Adorno, the very movement in reflection through successive passes (from the varieties of the meaningfulness of beings, to being-in-the-world as such, to forms of caring and ultimately time-ish-ness) is the reifying movement of idealism that Heidegger's philosophy intended to contest. Despite its explicit aim to critique Western Onto-Theology (the manner in which beings are provoked/enframed) Heidegger's philosophy is, on Adorno's view, a fulfillment of ontology through its insistence upon the ontic-ontological difference.²²⁸ Adorno therefore presents the word "ontology" as descriptive of Heidegger's

²²² Cf. Negative Dialectics, 97.

²²³ Jacques Derrida, Of Spirit, Heidegger and The Question, trans. Geoffrey Bennington and Rachel Bowlby (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989). Despite his criticism of Heidegger, Derrida is still too "pious" for Lyotard.

²²⁴ Negative Dialectics, 118.

²²⁵ "He treats the historical languages as if they were those of Being, as romantically as any violent anti-romanticist." Negative Dialectic, 112.

²²⁶ Negative Dialectics, 88.

²²⁷ Theodor Adorno. The Jargon of Authenticity, trans. Knut Tarnowski and Frederic Will (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973) *xiii*

²²⁸ Cf. Negative Dialectics, 115.

project rather than what that project discovers as hegemonic.²²⁹ To Adorno, the thinking of the destining of Being, in its negative moment with respect to tradition (that is, in its claim to circumspection of naive repetition), is still theological in its ascension to an ‘ontological realm.’ On Adorno’s account, Heidegger’s tracing of the possibility of this experience into the poverty (i.e., untruth) of Being (that is, how the possibility of its hegemony seems to inhere in its scarcity as theme²³⁰) enacts “...a posture whose emigration from the profane powerlessly imitates the theological habit of the old doctrine of essence.”²³¹ As Adorno states, “The mainspring for dressing up the deficiency of the concept [of Being] as its surplus is in each case the old Platonic austerity: that whatever is nonsensual is more elevated.”²³² Despite the explicit aim to contest a delimitation of beings, Heidegger’s alleged desire to have history only negatively is a forgetfulness of beings. Because it is the ontic that is in need of rescue from ontology (as a vehicle of the world’s brokenness), Adorno finds in Heidegger path of thinking “an emigration from the profane”²³³ to an (ultimately chimeral) realm (something like the condition for all ontology) in which the ontic is abandoned through its glorification into something mysterious, poetic, and semi-sacred.²³⁴ Heidegger’s philosophical reflection has ‘departed from’ beings to Being, beings can no longer signify as having weight in themselves. Heidegger’s thinking enacts a magical flight to a realm of essence in which the thought of beings (in their actual historical suffering) ceases. On Adorno’s analysis, beings are subsequently abandoned by Heidegger as mere remains.

²²⁹ Cf. Simon Jarvis, Adorno, A Critical Introduction (New York: Routledge, 1998) 200.

²³⁰ Cf. ‘Inclining indirectly toward the inexpressible.’ Negative Dialectics, 110.

²³¹ Negative Dialectics, 113.

²³² Negative Dialectics, 121.

²³³ Negative Dialectics, 113.

²³⁴ Of Heidegger’s “definitions,” Adorno states that, “Their astral power and glory is as cold to the infamy and fallibility of historic reality as that reality is sanctioned as immutable.” Negative Dialectics, 119.

Adorno argues that Heidegger's historicity becomes a moment of the subsumption of beings and an obfuscation of their singularity. For Adorno, Heidegger's position of thinking "with" tradition has the effect of making it seem immutable, whereas his position "beyond" the tradition has the effect of jettisoning the work of the concept. What it means to be philosophizing at the "ending" of a tradition is taken by Adorno to have instantiated a powerlessness with respect to political and social reality by removing the possibility of change to a remote region of the destining of Being: "destined" as if a permanent condition. Adorno's claim is that, in practice, Heidegger's historicity renders every being equally remote and beings in their torment are allowed only one register – as provoked by Western Onto-Theology. As "transcendent," Heidegger's deployment of Being risks suppressing beings, even though he intends to highlight our involvement in the ontological "atmosphere" that lulls praxis into an hypnotic stasis through an "anonymous" authorization. On Adorno's account, Heidegger's historicity (a destructive history of Being in response to an ongoing "ending") hardens into an "inevitability" (hypostasis): "Heidegger transposes the empirical superiority of the way things are into the realm of essence."²³⁵

Having become the official canon of a regressive "culture," the supposedly "sublime" field of philosophy is enclosed within a potentially boundless delusion.²³⁶ Adorno detects this "sublimity" directly in Heidegger in terms of a repudiation of experience in a particular way, through a melancholic reaction to a "fated" Being that represses the ontic. Motivated by beings in their suffering, Adorno attempts to reverse the direction of Heidegger's thought toward the thought of beings rather than what Adorno takes to be Heidegger's reification of Being.

²³⁵ Negative Dialectics, 100.

²³⁶ Negative Dialectics, 93.

The activity of Heidegger’s “critique” and the passivity of the clearing can easily become conflated, such that a description of deplorable circumstances seems to take on an affirmative character once it is thought in terms of ontology. The indication of the dominant disclosure of beings and the attempt to loosen that hegemony can become indiscernible in Heidegger, especially to those motivated by theological concerns. Although thinking takes us back through the dominant philosophical inheritance in order to loosen that hegemony, Heidegger is easily received as if he were the last metaphysician, even though it is not Being which is central, but the question of Being. “Ontology” is taken to be Heidegger’s project rather than an attempt to wrest thinking from the teeth of how we tend to be with respect to ontology (as an hegemonic mode of disclosure). A sending from a “transcendental” “source” can appear to be a kind of incantation that reinvigorates myth with a potent new vocabulary. Heidegger’s “gift” is properly a solicitation by a non-identity to Being that brings a very selective interpretation of Being in the West to light. Nevertheless, Heidegger’s thought is precipitously near to those who would take “saving grace” to legitimate a further displacement of bodies into spirit – a displacement that Derrida detects in Heidegger as having already taken place in a way that mimes Marx (in its concern for bodies) but is very un-Marxian (as a “displaced” concern).²³⁷

Heidegger’s thought begins with a strong sense that our relationship with various technologies speak of other possible ways in which life is not just enframed and set up as “one” instrumentally conceives it. If no experience were possible (albeit not necessarily articulated as a “saving grace”), we could not recognize other possibilities at all and existence would be exhausted by perpetually becoming either knowers or users of stockpiled things. In contrast, a thinking that outrageously begins “after the end of reflection” attempts

²³⁷ Of Spirit, Heidegger and The Question, 46.

to take up the matter of a vanishing of experience into a regressive “subjectivity.” Because myth figures prominently in regression, such outrageous thinking breaks with any “saving power” as having a dangerous family resemblance to regression. The “impossibility” of this outrageous thinking is a matter that it attempts to sustain. In contrast to our typical demand for instrumentality, language becomes hopeless.²³⁸

For Adorno, Heidegger’s engagement with Being enables a use-value for Being – a reenlistment of philosophy for the purpose of re-mythologizing regressive elements in society.

Heidegger drills in religious customs, but all that he retains of them is the general confirmation of dependence and submissiveness as surrogates of the objective formal laws of thought. Like logical positivism, the structure clings to the initiate while permanently eluding him.²³⁹

The “initiates” get their traction in the “ontological” and march headlong into an irrational identification with nature.

Because Heidegger’s corpus is susceptible to mining by those who wish to revere Being (and thereby reproduce its violence to beings), one must ask whether a critical engagement other than Heidegger’s is necessary. To take up the question as to whether reflection today is possible at all would require ‘going to the encounter’ of *Ge-Stell* so that articulations other than Heidegger’s are possible. The danger that Adorno recognizes is that, by responding to a “destining,” the language of Being becomes divorced from its production and fetishized as a domain of pure spirituality. That which appears to be “immanent” in Heidegger is properly not an illusory access to an “un-manipulated” nature, however, but rather a genealogy of a dominant mode of disclosure for beings – and yet the

²³⁸ By outrageous, “impossible,” thinking, I am gesturing toward Maurice Blanchot, The Writing of the Disaster, trans. Ann Smock (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1995).

two are easily conflated. As with idealist aesthetics with respect to art, Adorno takes Heidegger to have attempted to make the significance of Being present (an appearance of a nature as if untouched by domination) that misses a critical relationship to the future – an ideality of the non-existing.²⁴⁰

Reconsideration

Although it is possible to take our cue from Heidegger's critique of the dominant tradition in order to undermine today's occlusive practices, Heidegger is also a resource for a far more prevalent average understanding. For Adorno, this average understanding is the reinvigoration of religious values with dangerous, romantic overtones. If Adorno wishes to place the impact of this average understanding on Heidegger's doorstep, Adorno must characterize Heidegger's worst possible reception as latent in Heidegger's approach. However, in doing so, Adorno attributes elements of an average understanding to Heidegger (*Dasein* and *Being* as ciphers for subject and object) that Heidegger himself complains about. In other words, Adorno judges Heidegger's technical variations on received cultural terms in accordance with what those terms already mean rather than in terms of what Heidegger says he wishes to do with them. In order to show what Heidegger "must" be doing despite Heidegger's statements to the contrary, Adorno acts as a psychoanalyst might: Heidegger thinks he is moving "beyond" the subject-object dichotomy when this "beyond" allegedly commits Heidegger to a bourgeois version of romanticism. Adorno judges Heidegger's technical variations of received philosophical terms in accordance with what those terms already mean. Once all the translations into what Heidegger "must" be doing

²³⁹ Negative Dialectics, 99.

have been put in place, we might ask whether there is any actual Heidegger left. While it is indeed possible that Adorno might be correct about Heidegger, what are the possibilities for transforming inherited terms?

At no time is room left for the question of whether someone can think against their inheritance without either rejecting it or being naively entrenched within it, and no distance is ever put between “what one usually means” and what reflection might make of it—except in the granting of a special authoritative space for the critical theorist who is able to inform us that this “repetition” of language is self-deceived. Because Adorno’s critical theory is more typically in the mode of a kind of diagnosis, the dialectical complexity of Adorno’s thinking takes on the air of a demonstration as if from nowhere. This granting of a special authoritative space is in danger of becoming indistinguishable from that of the hegemony of metaphysics, working normatively to distort the thought of someone who, as a thinker, is a different “phenomenon” altogether than the social “reality” wherein we are otherwise entrenched.

Plato’s dialogues show that people reveal more about themselves by speaking than they realize. But just as Job’s friends are only capable of deploying their moral categories, how we hear another (or fail to hear another) is revealing about a kind of attunement or embodiment that prepares for only certain kinds of openness to others and otherwise remains closed off.

Where the evidence is textual, the matter of diagnosing the “true” motivations of a philosopher is of course not as ingenious (that is to say, textually immaterial) as when I read “between the lines” (or even against the lines). To have presumed to detect a

²⁴⁰ Theodor Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory. Theory and History of Literature*, Vol 88, trans. Robert Hullot-Kentor, ed. Gretel Adorno and Rolf Tiedemann (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998) 82 Cf. l’avenir in Jacques Derrida,

philosopher's motivations is a dubious procedure, especially when such interpretation is contrary to their explicit statements (for reasons of counter-transference). Even, or especially, in cases of diagnostic "expertise," repression merely changes its modus operandi.²⁴¹ Due not least of all to the fact that transference is bi-directional, neither the expertise of the analyst nor the defenses of the analysand are proof against the sleight of hand of the unconscious. The ideal of a "pure" deployment of categories of neurosis is a distortion of psychoanalysis. Expertise is just the capacity to reflect that my motivation is never thoroughly a matter of my control or (what amounts to the same thing) my motivation to "control" is an expression of 'always already' being out of control; reflection in this context occurs as counter-transference becomes thematic as a disruption of the progress of critique. Projection, in the context of hearing, is when what I hear as the words and meaning of an "other" is actually my body.

This sudden feeling is as good as a testimony, through its unsettling strangeness, which "from the exterior" lies in reserve in the interior, hidden away and from where it can on occasion depart to return from the outside to assail the mind as if it were issued not from it but from the incidental situation.²⁴²

In the sense that it is bodily presented without representation, the "reserve of the unconscious" is that theoretical pointer towards a potential content - pointing as does the threatening excess that, for the traumatized, accompanies uncanny, incidental events. Once

Rogues, Two Essays on Reason, trans. Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas (Stanford: Standford UP, 2005).

²⁴¹ An instructive video in this regard is Albert Ellis' therapy session with a client, who becomes increasingly agitated (that is, irrational) as he informs the client (with greater and greater desperation) of *her* irrational thinking (to no effect). Three Approaches to Psychotherapy. No. 3: Dr. Albert Ellis, Psychological Films, inc. 16mm film reel (50 min.) 1965.

²⁴² Lyotard describes the aporias associated with "memorializing" an event of shock. Heidegger and "the jews", 12-13.

one admits that one's real motivations can conceal themselves, one is thereby obligated to notice that the monstrous in the other is perhaps an estranged dimension of oneself.²⁴³

Every time Heidegger takes up an uncommon possibility of thinking, he also must contend with the dismissive, authoritative, anonymous (largely epistemological) voice that claims that a novel attempt is either impossible or has already been accomplished to the extent possible. Thus the matter of thinking for Heidegger is never one of being traditionally ontological one moment and then magically emancipated the next. Rather, the matter is one of going into the future through a creative transformation of having-been (*Wiederholung*, altering repetition) as opposed to applying knowledge via decisions of the will to three separable "now" times of what has been, what we would like to become, and what we should do presently. Heidegger "repeats" tradition by resisting the (ultimately self-deceived) attempt to abandon or replace its contents. For Heidegger, one "repeats" in a novel way precisely by refusing to "abandon" anything or look for any "replacements."

Adorno's insistence that Heidegger has "ontologized" (hypostatized) history and also wishes "to discard tradition" washes out Heidegger's distinction between an ongoing 'awaiting' versus a 'taking up and handing down' of tradition. Rather than attribute immutability to Being, Heidegger attempts to loosen the hegemony of a very selective interpretation of Being that has congealed over time. The possibility of recovering "forgotten" dimensions of earlier figures is dependent upon whether the later figures through which we inherit the former can be opened up to novel reflection. In order to be capable of thinking Greek civilization's "collective trauma" to the massive on-handedness

²⁴³ Cf. Sigmund Freud, The Uncanny, trans. David McLintock (New York: Penguin, 2003) 121. Also, Julia Kristeva, Strangers to Ourselves, trans. Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia UP, 1991) 182-184

of Being, Heidegger must deconstruct this tradition (its ideation that grew as a forgetful response to massive onhanded-ness) from its latest representatives backward.

For Heidegger, “overcoming” tradition is a going into the future through a “repetition” (creative transformation or reuse) of having-been.²⁴⁴ Like Nietzsche, the experience of reflection for Heidegger turns our “having been” from a necessity (that always already spells out our future) into a currently hegemonic possibility – a tendency rather than inevitability. For Heidegger, “authenticity” can only ever be the recovery of a “history for life”²⁴⁵ as opposed to the tendency to turn history into a natural object (an ultimately “derivative” historical consciousness that conceals thrown-projection as the historical condition of ordinary temporality).²⁴⁶

To be philosophizing at the ending of the tradition means, for Heidegger, that we must try simultaneously to think the coming to pass in and for us of our inheritance and the creative taking up of that very inheritance in a repetition as creative re-use. If “in and for us” is interpreted from a third-person vantage as about the facts of a person’s life, then it does indeed create the portrait of someone who is determined to be what their reinforcement history has made her, because that is what any *Historie* eventually presents us – an abstract and general story of how things have been. Whereas, for Heidegger, “transcendence” is “across” the relatedness of Being and human being (or, alternatively, *Dasein*’s “transcending toward” whatever entities are encountered in terms of their Be-ing), Adorno appears to hear transcendence as “above” and “outside” the very ek-sistence to which Heidegger is trying to give voice, as a kind of as a ratification of the status quo through an

²⁴⁴ I will turn in a later section to Job’s “repetition” of the pious term “righteousness” as a matter of legal “innocence.”

²⁴⁵ Cf. Historical justice as annihilation. Cf. Friedrich Nietzsche On the Uses and Disadvantage of History for Life, trans. R.J. Hollingdale, ed. Charles Taylor (Cambridge, Cambridge UP, 1983) §7 p. 95.

²⁴⁶ Cf. Martin Heidegger, Being and Time, trans. Joan Stambaugh (New York: SUNY Press, 1996) § II V.

“anonymous authorization” of Being.²⁴⁷ Experience of the conditionality of thought is just what the term “historicity” is supposed to ‘formally indicate’ (rather than codify) so that reflection avoids unconscious calamity (a denial of conditionality). While it one thing to allege that Heidegger is engaging in a traditional form of transcendentalism in disguise, it is another to pin this “transcendentalism” to an ahistorical viewpoint²⁴⁸ in contradiction to Heidegger’s development through 1919-29 of a conception of thinking of what it means to “be” historical, to always be “in the midst of things” factically. For Heidegger, thinking comes to see by degrees how the desire for an emancipatory and comprehensive grasp of its situation is itself part of a predominating, inherited sense of the really real as permanent presence. For Heidegger, thinking no longer takes for granted how beings are “supposed” to be without noticing that tendency itself, yet the tendency is not thereby totally illuminated.

At least since Descartes, reflection (*Reflexion*) is a kind of decontextualization of thinking in which one merely deals with things as they are already available (*baständig*), enframed and set up (*ge-stellen*) as “objects to be represented.” On this account, *Reflexion* fails to reflect in a transformative way upon its very possibility. As a matter of describing experience, *Reflexion* is inadequate to, for example, the reflectiveness of a traumatized person who comes to know as a matter of having-been that they’re engaging in a coping behavior, say dissociation, to ward off pain. Instead, *Reflexion* has more in common with dissociation, as both dissociation and *Reflexion* leave intact the condition for the possibility of “repetition” in the decadent sense, even (or especially) if that condition is formally “understood.” Heidegger’s conception of reflection comes primarily from Dilthey’s notion

²⁴⁷ “Added to the mythologization of Being as the sphere of “sending” was Heidegger’s mythical *hubris*, his proclamation of the subject’s decree as a plan of supreme authority and his disguise of his own voice as that of Being.” Negative Dialectics, 88.

of *Selbstbesinnung* – an enhancement of self-awareness. In *SZ*, Heidegger says that we must already be “in the truth” of a “world” (which we must hear verbally, as a process) that can be “represented,” in which entities “get their reality” from “possessing properties” before we can discuss them in terms of “what” those entities “essentially” are, handle true and false propositions about them, etc. But this coming-to-be of this dominant possibility of world usually is neglected such that one simply handles true- and false-propositions in the customary way.

Heidegger’s deconstruction can be misunderstood theologically, metaphysically, transcendentally and “ontologically,” if by “ontological” we mean the transposition of ontic matters to an ontological realm as an effort to “cast off” tradition.²⁴⁹ In Adorno’s terms, Heidegger’s notion of withdrawal attempts the preservation in reflection of ‘that which exceeds the concept.’ For Heidegger, reflection is “formally indicative,” as pointing us in the direction of an experience rather than as the naming of a thing or a process in a representation. For Adorno, however, Heidegger has overreached articulation into the “expression of inexpressibility” that accounts for the “suspended state” of philosophy that might, like music, be in danger of falling silent.²⁵⁰

Heidegger has innervated this [suspended state] and literally transformed that specific trait of philosophy – perhaps because it is on the point of extinction – into a specialty, an objectivity of quasi-superior rank: a philosophy that knows it is judging neither facts nor concepts the way other things are judged, a philosophy that is not

²⁴⁸ Adorno: “...Heidegger, to save the privilege of Being, must condemn the concept’s critical labors as a history of decay, as if philosophy might occupy a historical standpoint beyond history while on the other hand obeying a history that is ontologized itself, as it existence.” Negative Dialectics, 118.

²⁴⁹ Adorno: “Under the weight of tradition, which Heidegger wants to shake off, the inexpressible becomes explicit and compact in the word “Being,” while protest against reification becomes reified, divorced from thinking, and irrational.” ND 110. Or, “There is no other way to break out of history than regression.” ND 106. For the contrary view and explanation of various misunderstandings, Cf. Hans-Georg Gadamer, “*Destruktion u. Dekonstruktion*,” Dialogue and Dialectic, (New York: SUNY Press, 1989).

²⁵⁰ Negative Dialectics, 109.

even sure what it is dealing with, would seek a positive content just the same, beyond facts, concepts, and judgments.²⁵¹

Adorno argues that where ‘expression of the inexpressible’ succeeds, as in music, its quality is evanescence and transitoriness attached to a process, and “not an indicative ‘That’s it.’”²⁵² But part of the impetus for Heidegger’s thinking is that beings are conscripted to appear as representations owned by us.²⁵³ Both Heidegger and Adorno appear concerned to remember something absent and to present it to the imagination in its plural possibilities (rather than render it present). But Adorno is committed to preventing that concern to register in ‘Heideggerese.’ In short, Heidegger might say, with Adorno, “Language becomes a measure of truth only when we are conscious of the nonidentity of an expression with that which we mean”²⁵⁴ – but strangely with an entirely different experience of language in mind.

Compositional Form: Heidegger’s Path

In the introductory remarks to *Being and Time*, Heidegger foregrounds the matter that will never be exhausted throughout his career: the notion that the beginning of philosophical reflection is not initiated by the philosopher, but by what the philosopher undergoes. From the age that “sanctions the neglect” of the Being-question onward, Heidegger embarks on an elaboration on this original problem of the situatedness of thinking. For Heidegger, the matter for philosophy becomes the coming to presence (event) of an ontological atmosphere that devalues forms of reality other than the permanent present as ‘always already’ secondary. Speaking in a critical theory vein, Heidegger’s thinking

²⁵¹ Negative Dialectics, 109-110.

²⁵² Negative Dialectics, 110.

²⁵³ The dominant sense of the real arrives in such a way that it implies that it is somehow “owned by us.” That is, we already tend to hear “thinking about the real” as a representational act, which makes things real insofar as they are real for a subject.

explicitly attempts to monitor the fact of mediation in other than a mode of evasion. In its self-consciousness about naïve repetition, Heidegger's philosophical reflection appears to not be so distant from Adorno's observation that,

The more passionately thought denies its conditionality for the sake of the unconditional, the more unconsciously, and so calamitously, it is delivered up to the world. Even its own impossibility it must at last comprehend for the sake of the possible.²⁵⁵

Heidegger's philosophical hermeneutics follows the consequences for thinking of an ending of a naïve occurrence of a closed ontological circle (Being as the 'really real' of phenomena as the permanently present); once thematic, our location relative to repetition shifts, but never such that we attain the metaphysical opposite, an "utterly open" ontology. For Heidegger, thinking no longer takes for granted how beings are "supposed" to be without noticing that tendency itself, yet the tendency is not thereby totally illuminated. Our location (in relation to "what" is ending) shifts, we might say, "progressively" but only so long as our location is itself the "object" of thought. It is in the continued articulation of the unavailability of absolute novelty that hermeneutical phenomenology advances, which is to say that "advance" might no longer be a relevant term. Heidegger's thinking "resolutely" stays with the poverty of Being's materials (the instances of our philosophical inheritance) in order to loosen its hegemony on thinking so that Being (as a constraint upon ways beings can appear) might appear otherwise than permanent presence.

Heidegger's thinking, although also having discursive, argumentative, and explicatory moments, exhibits a path. Through repeated passes, a downward spiral of Heidegger's thinking turns in on itself, asking the condition of possibility for the prior

²⁵⁴ Negative Dialectics, 111.

formulation of the *Da-* in which thinking finds itself. Formal indication articulates a precise sense of ‘that which withdraws’ from a prior articulation of situatedness – a demand that an indication be transformed precisely. In so doing, the possibility/endangering of thought (as it progresses through articulations as it discovers more about its situation) is the compositional form of Heidegger’s thinking, with the caveat that this form appears in the wake of thinking rather than as something decided upon in advance. The possibility of being-open for a possibly different future is worded differently on different passes. Heidegger describes the rigor of a downward hermeneutical spiral as following a “logic that is stricter than logic itself”²⁵⁶ – with and beyond the ordinary use of words rather than following a logical syntax.

Heidegger’s middle terms (*Dasein*, historicity, being-in-the-world, temporality) attempt to name the co-determination of subject and object²⁵⁷ while having also recognized that theorizing is not an “originary” mode of relatedness to things. Despite the dogma of native thinking as a proto-theorizing, subject and object are the articulations of a “founded mode of being in the world” that cannot tell us much of either the relation of Being and human being, or of their being given together.²⁵⁸ Heidegger attempts to think “with but beyond” the subject-object dichotomy through a phenomenology of *Da-sein* (by which Heidegger attempts to name our relatedness to things rather than a being) and a genealogy of Being (understood verbally rather than as a “super-object”). That is, Heidegger recognizes the hegemony of instrumentality.²⁵⁹ For Heidegger, “subject” and “object” are

²⁵⁵ *Mimima Moralia*, 247.

²⁵⁶ Cf. *Being and Time*, 6.

²⁵⁷ Subject and object are articulations of a “founded mode of being-in-the-world” and thereby remain incapable, on Heidegger’s account, of illuminating how they are given together as a pre-thematic understanding of Being.

²⁵⁸ On the point of “assuming” their togetherness, however, Adorno would answer: “The less identity can be assumed between subject and object, the more contradictory are the demands made upon the cognitive subject, upon its unfettered strength and candid [i.e., not formulaic] self-reflection. *Negative Dialectics*, 31.

²⁵⁹ TA’s account of identity thinking describes one “asserted” form of Heidegger’s knowing-the-vorhand.

names for the theoretical orientation that obtains when instrumentality, a more common mode of relatedness, breaks down. Having detected two modes of being-in-the-world, Heidegger can then make being-in-the-world as such a topic. Heidegger then can characterize ‘being-in-the-world as such’ as *Sorge* and the senses of timing that accompanies varieties of *Sorge*.

Historicity is not the condition of a subject nor object, but rather the ground from which thinking of things as subjects and objects constitutes a privileged mode of being. On Heidegger’s account, each enactment of thinking is a singular encounter with what thinking has already come to understand about its determinativeness. Once the eschatological moment of epistemology is discovered to be an enactment of history rather than its evasion, the very motivation for forgetfulness of the situatedness of thinking is eroded. Historicity is nothing apart from its enactment: Even if a simple replication of the ‘results’ of *SZ* were all one desired (a barbarization of thinking in any event), historicity is always only history differently. To understand historicity is to understand the situatedness of thinking, which (because it is always singular) could not possibly just reanimate Heidegger’s destruction of Metaphysics without a distortion of historicity itself. Thus thinking never encounters its historicity as an invariant, which (properly understood) is the very possibility of articulating through successive passes where thinking finds itself.

Heidegger understands his thought as responding to the necessity to name (with all the precision that a found/made language can muster) a sense of “that which withdraws” from the ordinary deployment of truth. Whereas Heidegger finds and makes a new idiolect (employing the resonances of Old High German) in an attempt to be accurate to the sense that withdraws from truth in its normal deployment, Adorno retains “subject” and “object”

and attempts to allow the contradictoriness of empirical reality to appear within dialectical reversals. The most obvious way in which both thought and the object transform as the result of a path of thinking is Heidegger's turn after *Being and Time*. The preoccupation with questioning in *Being and Time* (which is human/active/subjectivist) carries the expectation that the meaning of Being will appear as a kind of object.²⁶⁰ For Heidegger, the notion of the 'richness' of phenomena²⁶¹ that remains elusive to thinking is not extra-conceptual. Rather, the effort to articulate a relationship to a 'richer something' is qualitatively different from the effort to reform the subject, for it is a circumstance that is not only of a conditioned subject, but also the object as well.

Compositional Form: Adorno's Constellations

Rather than develop a new critical vocabulary, negative dialectics demythologizes how "subject" and "object" are inflected within the structure of a damaged social reality. Adorno's complex reversals of subject and object is a critical engagement that is cognizant of, and is thereby already somewhere other than, embedded within a naïve redeployment of these terms. As already somewhere else, Adorno can be said to be responding to a sense that the terms subject and object do not exhaust our relatedness to things. That they tend to constitute our normal reflective equipment is part of the problem under consideration. Adorno attempts to give priority to the object against the tendency to exhibit subjective mastery. Adorno insists that "cognition of the non-identical...is only possible as the collapse of subjective misrecognition of it."²⁶² I take Adorno to be describing here the

²⁶⁰ In the introductory sections of SZ (e.g., *Being and Time*, 37), Heidegger states that he will be looking for "a more authentic notion of Being." Cf. Otto Poeggeler "Heidegger Today," *Southern Journal of Philosophy* 8/4 (1970).

²⁶¹ That is to say, as not just useful nor objective, but perhaps something useful or objective that we have also invested with a subjective value.

²⁶² Adorno, A Critical Introduction, 223.

moment when my desire to have something appear in a certain way runs up against a resistance or interruption that throws me back upon my conceptual predispositions. Because the way I have ‘come to be’ is implicated, such an experience arouses repression in those who, weakened by social conditions, are incapable of withstanding being turned about. The manic that simply overwhelms the object in any case appears in Levinas’ thought that one can only kill a face.

Although skeptical about thought’s ability to transform its own means of production into something ultimately other than the structure of domination, Adorno is concerned to keep at bay the emergence of domination in theory by resisting the dominance of any term under consideration.²⁶³ The presupposition that any particular concept is self-identical (and consequently can remain a stable horizon upon which analysis may appear) repeats domination immanently. If any term were to be given an “ontological” function, the structure of domination reappears (even if that term is a “horizon” despite its attempt to undermine philosophical first principles). The whole of social reality is contradictory; consequently (and in order to be true), theory must reflect this contradictoriness in the dialectical movement of concepts. By a rigorous process of negation, Adorno allows these contradictions to transform the model of presentation, such that each category (e.g., culture) shows a transmutation into its polar opposite (e.g., nature). Demythologization is achieved in such a compositional form because the intransigence of social reality depends upon the mythological claim that each category is self-identical – the dominance of a particular term is a cipher for dominance in social reality.

²⁶³ The issue of domination itself is not exempt from scrutiny, but rather that which allowed to inhabit the moment of theorizing in order to disrupt it.

Because domination is in any case intractable, Adorno's critique exhibits an aspect of domination that is discernable, but not entirely eliminable, from thought. Unless it commit itself to alleging a total response to domination (and thereby lapse into eschatology), determinate negation must be marred by the very conditions that cannot be entirely "overcome." Rather than claiming to have suspended identity thinking altogether, therefore, negative dialectic attempts determinate negations of those forms of domination it discerns. Negative dialectic offers only concrete instances (thought models) of critique rather than any totalizing opposition. Given that any philosophical composition must reflect the conditions of its production (despite its best efforts to negate those conditions), determinate negation must reflect the brokenness of social reality – a "brokenness" that cannot be complete lest critique render its very possibility a mystery. Adorno attempts to thwart how identity thinking inhabits the space of philosophical composition – in particular those forms of composition that retain a mythical component.

Inward Turning of an Aesthetic Theory

Unless it claim a complete evasion of traditional philosophy, determinate negation must be damaged by the conditions of its production that can be found nowhere else but within the broken world that it aspires to critique. The wound of the broken social whole finds expression in Adorno in writing as refuge. Buck-Morss recognizes that Adorno, as exiled from Germany, underwent a displacement that required writing to be a home.²⁶⁴ As an expression of the woundedness of exile, writing could never fulfill the task of being a home. Adorno takes pains to articulate the damage incurred by thinking especially in *Minima Moralia*, in which thought is driven into an "interior dialogue" (an abomination) as

the result of the deformation of social reality, particularly the loss of real conversation partners such as Benjamin.²⁶⁵

According to Adorno, so long as action is motivated by fear of amorphous nature, only pseudo-activity can result: “Pseudo-activity is the attempt to preserve enclaves of immediacy in the midst of a thoroughly mediated and obdurate society.”²⁶⁶ In “Resignation,” Adorno holds out the possibility that non-participation (*nicht-mitmachen*) produces unmanipulated thought.

Repressive intolerance toward thought not immediately accompanied by instructions for action is founded in fear. Unmanipulated thought and the position that allows nothing to be deduced from this thought must be feared because that which cannot be admitted is perfectly clear: this thought is right.²⁶⁷

I interpret Adorno’s insistence on non-participation in terms of an “inward turning” of theory – a transformation of theory that models itself after Adorno’s consideration of aesthetic modernism. Non-participation has to be understood as a specific kind of “resignation” that still allows for the possibility of transformation. Buck-Morss detects in Adorno’s manner of composing essays a steady development of categories into their opposites – a kind of perpetual motion²⁶⁸ – that ultimately undermines theory as something that informs action.²⁶⁹ But how is the generation of a livable practice to find traction?

Adorno’s concept of non-participation asks that we resist damaged life without retreat into compensatory and false “satisfactions.”²⁷⁰ In contrast to those who portray Adorno as a “mandarin,” Adorno’s commitment to empirical study of the authoritarian

²⁶⁴ The Origin of Negative Dialectic, 190. Cf. “In his text, the writer sets up house.” Minima Moralia, 87.

²⁶⁵ Minima Moralia, 18.

²⁶⁶ The Culture Industry, 201

²⁶⁷ The Culture Industry, 200. Emphasis added

²⁶⁸ “In a philosophical text all the propositions ought to be equally close to the center.” Minima Moralia, 71.

²⁶⁹ The Origin of Negative Dialectic, 186

personality, his “turn to the subject” and concern for education, and his radio addresses attest to a sustained involvement with the possibility of transforming the conditions amenable to a catastrophe such as the Shoah. Against this continued involvement in political life, Heidegger’s silence regarding the Shoah appears to be an “inward turning” of an entirely other sort.

In *Aesthetic Theory* (itself intended to be an oxymoron), Adorno describes how modernist artworks not only turn away from the spectator and are only “for” the spectator by not being for the spectator, they also turn away from each other. The authenticity of the work is that it is an exemplary act of self-binding that nothing grounds except itself. They have an intelligible ludicrousness: an absence of a natural fit between their internal perspective and the external perspective. The embodied form of art is in the state of suspension; that is, it is only a promise. The modernist artwork appears completely self-absorbed.

In emulation to artworks, theory must carry the burden of the promise by showing that which is not present.²⁷¹ Through the presupposed authority of non-contextual axioms and absolutes, discursiveness sacrifices particularity and sensuality to the ideal of being fully communicable, without remainder. According to Adorno, what is lacking is a rationality that can be material in the world; that is, a rationality that is responsive to the articulateness of material itself (the singularity of each occurrence of suffering) rather than assertive of its order over the presumed inarticulateness of materiality. To avoid the incorporation of suffering into a system, Adorno transforms discursiveness (e.g., the requirement of logical consistency) away from hierarchical presentation. Just as reflection

²⁷⁰ “Only when sated with false pleasure...can men gain an idea of what experience might be.” *Minima Moralia*, 38.

upon the ‘falsehood of the whole’ is not part of the routine practices of society, Bernstein explains that those social practices that attempt to “say the unsayable” (an equally hyperbolic expression) are uncommon with respect to dominant modes of knowing.²⁷² Adorno’s anti-theories estrange truth from its conventional deployment, but Adorno recognized that his attempted “revolution” in philosophy’s “material production” comes at a cost. As Adorno notes of Schönberg, unconventional manners of arranging elements risk obscurity and ineffectuality. Taken as a model for critical theory, the dependent response to the artwork (a moment of seizure or arrest, of being undone) results in an ‘aestheticized’ theory – an arrangement of materials that, like the modernist artwork, attempts to give the sensual its own moment of rationality. But like modernist artworks also, aesthetic theory has no ‘natural fit’ between its ‘internal and external perspective’ but rather shows the domination of reified society. Hence Adorno appears to carry along with him what he wants to avoid with negative signs before it. Said differently, if reason can only be either instrumental or dialectical, then critical theory “has” at its “disposal” only determinate negation of reason in its instrumental or dialectical moments, which is puzzling for:

Grayness could not fill us with despair if our minds did not harbor the concept of *different colors, scattered traces* of which are not absent from the negative whole.²⁷³

Non-identity is glimpsed only as a kind of “after-image”, as blue-green can be glimpsed once our retinas have been saturated with red. The discovery of the non-identity requires the appearance of the excess of the object beyond its routine conceptualizations. Is the imagery evoked by determinate negations responsive to the experience of excess?

²⁷¹ Art needs critical philosophy to establish a new relationship to the world. “Aesthetic experience is not genuine experience unless it becomes philosophy.” Aesthetic Theory, 131. Art is not legitimate by itself. If art were legitimate by itself, it would instantiate a ‘Platonic heaven.’

With the rendering an experiential beginning “necessarily” indeterminate (as with the aesthetic object), philosophical practice is brought into proximity with aesthetic consciousness.²⁷⁴ Like artworks themselves, an aesthetic theory is cut out of practical life (i.e., is *a priori* dead) and yet also is the product of a *lived* practice. The thoroughness in suspending the possibility of theory’s instrumentality (i.e., licensing pseudo-activity) risks fetishizing theory an end-in-itself.²⁷⁵ Because hyperbolic expressions of totality efface the condition of the possibility of reflection, critical theory risks fetishism – i.e., appearing to be independent from its production (as do artworks that are charged with false consciousness as if exhibiting a domain of pure spirituality). But if Adorno’s caution against any positivity appears as wariness about the possibilities of transformation, Heidegger’s formal indication appears in contrast as an “overreaching” of articulation.

Conclusion

On the one hand, despite Adorno’s accuracy with which determinate negation detects the conditions that impair reflection, the intervention is coined in traditional formulations that, on the one hand, pick up deformations in social reality (e.g., the subject as the source of categories that produce an unlivable world) and yet, on the other, suggest that critical reflection is always also something traditional – a kind of voluntarism against a thoroughly occlusive external world. Adorno’s interventions suggests that thinking cannot help but be representational even though theorizing, as scientists sometimes disclose (and

²⁷² The Actuality of Adorno, 163-164.

²⁷³ Negative Dialectics, 377-378. Emphasis added

²⁷⁴ An experience of difference from instrumentality must be akin to the moment of uselessness that Kant required for aesthetic experience. In being of no use, modernist artworks show us what the world might look like if our practical interests, our acquisition of property, and our need for self-preservation could be suspended. But without something in our lives to which artworks (an element of non-identity in the social whole), we would have no grounds to care what art is said to be showing us. Beyond that precipice is transcendental illusion. Cf. The Fate of Art, 191-192.

²⁷⁵ The Origin of Negative Dialectic, 189.

Freud displays openly), can be a deeply reflective affair. On the other hand, despite Heidegger's detection of a possibility of a language that resists its representational moments, the possibility of thinking with and against the dominant philosophical tradition (and against its ordinary instantiation as *Gestell*) rests with a "saving grace." The dependency of *Denken* upon a quasi-mythical "source" is a dangerous gamble, especially wherever allusions to the founding of a folk, for example, undermine an attempted displacement of (onto-theological) *Geist* and appear to retain a role in legitimizing the worst politic precisely by claiming to be "before" all politics (via an alleged anteriority to undergoing). Curiously, Adorno suggests a kind of anteriority as well as that which "transmits the facts" to negative dialectics: "the objectivity heteronomous to the subject, the objectivity behind that which the subject can experience."²⁷⁶ By highlighting that these "pious" moments of Heidegger are problematic, but also taking seriously an antinomy regarding positivity in Adorno, I am attempting to selectively reinforce the political work I take Adorno to be doing in his criticisms of Heidegger, while also attempting to allow Heidegger to continue to speak regarding the possibilities of transforming inherited terms.

Insofar as philosophy incorporates "passive" materiality by means of rational assertion, suffering is absorbed back into the world of practice; that is, suffering is assigned a role. Philosophy's penchant for rational assertion is part of the problem to be considered for both Adorno and Heidegger; either can be said to have attempted to preserve undergoing in reflection rather than "assign a role" to undergoing *per se*. In that it exceeds intentionality, experience cannot serve as a standard for 'how to begin' to philosophize out of undergoing, just as it cannot serve any "purpose," conventionally understood. Even the phrase 'how to begin' has subjectivist, activist overtones that already signal a difficulty in

²⁷⁶ Negative Dialectics, 170.

the sense that experience is a dependent response that is bodily undergone rather than chosen (a dimension that Heidegger recognized as requiring a turn from the “questioning” stance of *Being and Time*).

Heidegger’s thought of the event of Being is the result of articulating, through repeated passes, the ontological ‘atmosphere’ that reveals beings as, for example predominantly “for” representation. As such, Heidegger’s “Being-language” is not intended as a further violence to beings but rather an attempt to defuse the authority of “what everybody knows” from the dominant philosophical tradition. Nevertheless, Heidegger’s reflection takes us from beings (e.g., technology, the artwork, mathematics, the thing) toward the inner possibility of appearing as a coming-to-presence that conceals itself. My efforts at philosophical reflection requires that I experience beings other than exclusively in terms of a predominant mode of disclosure, yet precisely how beings are damaged is but a moment in the trajectory of Heidegger’s thought toward the eventuation of Being. In contrast, Adorno’s determinate negations provide detail as to deformations of experience wherein thinking is to survive, and tend to remain decidedly “ontic.”

Akin to how the place of designation in *Job* is transformed by Job into a trial of law, the trial of philosophy is an *arraignment* in which the form or law of philosophizing (of incompatible philosophical orientations) is exhibited with respect to undergoing. The response of Job’s “consolers of pain/painful consolers” (16:2) seems to exhibit what Heidegger would term an “average understanding” or what Adorno might term “identity thinking.” Rather than rely upon spurious identifications, however, I take the materiality of the text of *Job* itself as my guide. Job, after all, asks that we respond to his suffering other than as materiality to be subsumed under a predominant regime of conceptuality

(“punishment” due to a divine, retributive calculus). Just as Job must contend against an *a priori* meaning of suffering as consonant with an allegedly infallible order of creation, my task is to read *Job* against the presumption to “discover” in the text an alleged *a priori* meaning of suffering. The *arraigning* of Heidegger and Adorno is an instance of *arraigning* as calling us to appear, and reading *Job* de-familiarizes texts away from an aptness “for” form. The fragmentary aspects of the text of *Job* recalls Adorno’s descriptions of the fracturing of form by the modernist artwork.

The portrait of place in *Job* that emerges is a *there* that estranges Heidegger’s *Da-* of *Dasein*: an administered world of integrating and marginalizing forces that place (provoke, apprehend) the singularity of Job’s suffering and displace his attempts to discern what he is living through and to be heard. El’s disruption of creation (*Job* 12) and the “certainty” of orderliness professed by Job’s consolers displays a family resemblance to Kafka’s *The Trial*: a world that is broken-as-administered and K’s “guilt.” The matter of undergoing that emerges from my reading of *Job* is that suffering is a being-displaced by prevailing law and its administration, a circumstance in which the sufferer must somehow contest a manifest intelligibility of suffering that is in service of the conditions that create suffering in the first place.

Job’s linguistic subversion appears to be consonant with Heidegger’s formal indication, a finding and making of language. However, the “pious” moments in Heidegger are opposed to Job’s creative repetition of pious terms (“righteousness”) in a legal context (“innocence”). Job’s obstacle is a moral “understanding” that wishes to reconcile Job’s presumed iniquity with a presumed, divinely authorized, orderliness in the world. In order to warrant the interpretation of Job’s plight as consonant with Heidegger, “pious” moments

in Heidegger (e.g., “saving grace”) would have to be evidenced by Job’s recourse to, as it were, a grace “before” piety (as with Heidegger’s *sending* “before” ontology²⁷⁷). As is evidenced in Job’s abandoning both his claim to innocence²⁷⁸ and the possibility of an intercessor,²⁷⁹ Job contests the given-ness of piety without appealing to piety in another form, but rather by contesting El’s chaotic administration of creation.

Adorno’s notion of the “culture industry” is significant as a portrait of a hyper-administered world, where, like Job, the ability to discern our circumstances differently is thwarted by standardization and exchange (e.g., the friends’ promise to Job that reconciliation with El will follow from Job’s admission of his “guilt”). While it is possible that Heidegger’s *Gestell* might accomplish the same interpretive task, Adorno also describes how the capacity for experience is covered over by narratives of mystical reconciliation and amelioration in a way that is consonant with Job’s plight: the disavowal of the projection of a divine, retributive calculus “in” the world.

Heidegger’s engagement with “religious” language (e.g., “only a god can save us”) reflect his affinity for Hölderlin rather than an affinity for an explicitly Christian God. However, it is possible to claim (as Adorno does) that Heidegger thereby betrays certain religious commitments that “leak through” Heidegger’s otherwise critical engagement with the intransigence of social reality. Alternately, it is also possible to claim that these “religious” moments are rather attempts to displace a damaging religious footprint in society. According to this last reading, Heidegger’s “religious” moments are at worst a hubristic playing with fire (“spirit is flame”).²⁸⁰ A critical engagement may always be

²⁷⁷ For “Sending” as *Führung*, Cf. Of Spirit, Heidegger and The Question, 32.

²⁷⁸ 42:6. Job’s claim to innocence can only come too late with respect to law.

²⁷⁹ By “intercessor” I refer to 9:33 (the arbiter), 16:19 (the witness), and 19:25 (the avenger), all of whom Job abandons as possible sources of assistance that might stand somehow authoritatively prior to El and Job.

²⁸⁰ Of Spirit, Heidegger and The Question, 84.

misunderstood. In contrast, Adorno's hyperbole as to "total" domination cannot be taken otherwise than as a condemnation of a broken sociality. In either case, however, critical engagement is not possible without some repression being in effect.²⁸¹

To be sure, Heidegger's *Geist* (as the possibility of thinking) is re-appropriated and displaced from its onto-theological counterpart in the dominant philosophical tradition. In particular, Heidegger appears to be concerned to displace Hegel, but in a way that remains susceptible to "military transposition."²⁸² In order to indict Heidegger's "ontology" as a new Aquinas,²⁸³ much of what Heidegger says must be translated into what he allegedly "must" be doing despite his insistence to the contrary. Nevertheless, a danger persists that in Heidegger's prioritization of undergoing, the "sending" of Being attains a kind of ur-metaphysics.²⁸⁴ Because of the persistence of "reading" *Job* as part of a redemptive story of suffering, Heidegger requires (on my reading) a further "turn" – not just the turn from a subjectivist-imbued fundamental ontology, but also something like Adorno's "turn to the subject." So much of my reading of *Job* depends upon deconstructing pious distortions to the materiality of the text that a more complete analysis of desire and myth is warranted (one akin to Adorno's critique of the "authoritarian personality").

Whether writing is either of that which appears-as-withdrawing or of that which exceeds the concept, texts betray deep conceptions of language (e.g., writing is either of 'that which presents itself as withdrawing' or of 'that which exceeds the concept'). Must the

²⁸¹ The regression in culture can be evident in aporias in texts. The warding off of memory by repression tends to mask more objects than just the intended trauma. Having pulled the trauma underground, the symptom of an elevated readiness for trauma remains available to consciousness only as an unspecified fear in otherwise incidental circumstances. As Freud observes, a traumatized organism will attempt to prevent future trauma by maintaining a raised guard – a hyper-vigilance that, contrary to the impression that "vigilance" is enhanced awareness, is nevertheless motivated by the unrepresented (the traumatic event itself). Under conditions of this elevated readiness, ideation, no matter how rigorously "theoretical" or "philosophical," is a defense against memory (a memorializing). In fact, the greater authority that a scientific or philosophical discourse carries, the greater its effectiveness in foreclosing matters in the form of "already known truths."

²⁸² David Wood, Thinking After Heidegger (Cambridge, UK: Polity, 2002) 110, 112-113.

possibility of passage be thought solely in “recuperative dialectical terms”?²⁸⁵ While my reading of *Job* requires something other than the reconfiguring of religious values in a “saving grace” (Heidegger), Adorno’s alternative (hyperbolic description of the world’s “completed” negativity) appears to function like Heidegger’s formal indication:²⁸⁶ a pointing without making the pointer more significant than what is being indicated. In this respect, Adorno seems to avail himself to a language that is different than “positivity” and “negativity” as he tends to describe them.

Buck-Morss observes that Adorno’s contribution to critical theory is in the novel arrangement of materials rather than the contribution of novel materials.²⁸⁷ Such a contribution of novel materials would seem to require exilic wandering rather than refuge per se. For example, Man Ray wandered by a shop window and discovered the iron that became “Cadeau” (1921). He declared to himself, “Now there’s something almost invisible!”²⁸⁸ In contrast, Adorno was reluctant to travel. Despite Adorno’s affinity to Benjamin, Benjamin’s ‘contribution of novel materials’ derives from a wandering through the debris left in the wake a stasis in mythical disguise. Benjamin devoted himself to the rescue of fragments – the ejected remains of broken social reality. The picture that emerges of the philosophical life is one marred by expulsion from the whole: the wounded subject wanders through apocryphal realms²⁸⁹ wherein the possibility of experience has retreated.

²⁸³ I am playing on Werner Brock’s assessment of Heidegger as the “new Aristotle” about human beings. Werner Brock, *Existence and Being*, (Chicago: Henry Regnery Co., 1949).

²⁸⁴ Cf. Theodor Adorno, “The Actuality of Philosophy,” trans. Benjamin Snow, *Telos* 31 (Spring 1977) 120-122.

²⁸⁵ David Wood, *Thinking After Heidegger* (Cambridge, UK: Polity, 2002) 32, 36. Wood describes the possibility of an experience of language that preserves the ethical as a finite, continually open engagement with alterity.

²⁸⁶ Heidegger’s formal indication as both a finding and making of language in order to name, with as much accuracy as can be mustered, that which withdraws from conventional language for phenomena.

²⁸⁷ Susan Buck-Morss, *The Origin of Negative Dialectic*, 186.

²⁸⁸ “Cadeau” is a flat iron to which Man Ray had affixed tacks (on the ironing surface) in a vertical line. Tate 18 July 2010 <http://www.tate.org.uk/images/cms/13767w_t07883manraycadeau_1small.jpg>

²⁸⁹ Because everything is leveled by the dominance of exchange, “apocryphal realms on the edges of civilization move suddenly into the center.” Adorno, quoted in *The Origin of Negative Dialectic*, 189.

The philosopher who attempts a transformed philosophy also an outsider of sorts who exhibits a sojourn, an inability to be at home, that is constitutive of undergoing one's difference from the whole (despite myths of reconciliation with the given-ness of things) and yet is also not self-deceived as to transcending one's circumstances altogether. In other words, the philosophical life resembles Benjamin's sojourn during the destruction of European Jewry – an incapacity to be at home – to “dwell” – even or especially poetically insofar as poetry becomes a melancholic refuge from, rather than a critical engagement with, social reality.

Perhaps like all passages, this wayward passage (like the modernist artwork) is a determinate failure. But in failing determinately, I perhaps stand to learn from this failure in conversation with others as to how I have externalized my own otherness as an attempted passage. While formally inconclusive, I have nevertheless exhibited a sojourn between orientations akin to Benjamin's reluctance to form a united front, even (as he reports) if it be with his own mother. What we undergo as damaged life is in no way merely imitative of an extant philosophy, but rather responds (as Heidegger and Adorno require of us, after all) to the demands of experience. A transformed (better, *transforming*) philosophy demands a continually revisable *Halakah*²⁹⁰ – a walk without a ground. With the subsequent chapters, the trial continues as this sojourn.

²⁹⁰ *Halakhah* (the body of Jewish law) has no doctrine (is not an ordered whole). Besides parables, it also contains instruction. It is subject to quotation, extrapolation, and elaboration.

CHAPTER IV

OUTSIDERS: ‘*ŌB^ERĒ DEREK* TO ODRADEK

Introduction

In this chapter, I consider suffering as a loss of experience. The loss of experience is authorized (i.e., lawful, “correct”). Its signature is a prevailing reasonableness that, however efficient it renders one (for example, the capacity for reflection has largely been reduced to quantification), also is a regression in which the presumed “subject” is not the locus of the synthesis required for experience. Damaged society weakens the ego; lack of self-love and disorientation is the impetus for rigid adherence to a pseudo-orientation provided by allegedly intrinsically true, supra-individual laws (e.g., stories told from the perspective of the *eschaton*). Suffering thereby occurs not just as the initial damage to ego-strength, but also as a loss of experience that issues from an abandoning of the reality-principle. Having come to require the “truth” of these supra-individual laws, the “individual” represses perceived threats to these truths by sanctioned violence against difference – difference itself having become a projection of characteristics upon socially permissible targets rather than the actual experience of difference. Once “the different” suffer dereliction like Job, the calculus that the sufferer must contest is presumed to be unrevisable because its origin in human valuation is disavowed.

The loss of experience has several dimensions pertaining to the book of *Job*: Job’s consolers presuppose a divine calculus of retributive justice; this presupposition prevents Job’s consolers from experiencing Job’s suffering as non-identical to divine punishment. Job’s suffering is compounded due to the fact that the materiality of Job’s suffering cannot

signify in its own right. The axiomatic presupposition that suffering has a redemptive value (provided one accepts one's "guilt") results in the loss of the capacity to experience the text of *Job*. *Job* has historically been "read" as part of a whole "story of redemption" with the "new" testament as a fulfillment of "the meaning" of suffering. As an anti-theodicy (opposed to a redemptive story of suffering), *Job* is an outsider-text. Teleology is also apparent in textual scholarship on *Job*: allegedly, the significance of the text depends upon the resolution of its numerous *hapax legomena* and dislocations, whereas I view gaps and fissures in intelligibility to be generative of possible meaning.

First, I will consider how *Job* is replete with characters from elsewhere. Next, I discuss attempts to reconstruct the history of *Job* in terms of the "death" of the original. I then discuss the lack of hope in *Job* against the backdrop of the founding of law and eschatology. The discussion of hope will prepare the way for Kafka to enter the discussion in terms of how *Job* is before the law. By the introduction of Kafka (and later Georg Büchner and contemporary artist Rodney Graham), I deliberately cross the law of genre in order to enrich notions of law as administration and myths of transcendence. I then describe the instability of margins in terms of *Job*'s lack of a written indictment, the wager between YHWH and *haśśātān*, and YHWH's "limiting" of the chaos embodied by Behemoth and Leviathan. The hegemony of law requires that I question whether there can still be any outsiders at all, for "alienation" requires a subject. Because *Job* is outcast from a theological administration (the created "order" and its depiction in wisdom literature), *Job* speaks to the wounding of the individual who, as a mode of violence, is de-legitimated and expelled. This prepares the way for a discussion of the possibility of having stories (Benjamin), the alienation of art, and finally *Job*'s trial as akin to modernist composition (Adorno). From

Kafka's character of Odradek who resembles *Job* by its many loose threads, to the ‘ōb^erē derek (“wayfarers” in 21:29) whose word from afar is discounted, this chapter considers the notion of the “outsider” in its multi-dimensionality.

Outsiders

In *Job*, we find ourselves among a cast of characters from elsewhere. Among those present in YHWH's courtly assembly are the “sons of God.” Among these heavenly beings is *haśśāṭān* or “the satan.” The article *ha-* indicates that *haśśāṭān* is a title or sign of office. *Haśśāṭān* is a position; it is a functionary whose role as “the adversary” is to seek out contradictions in creation and challenge its creator. The roving challenger, *haśśāṭān*, who has been stomping about creation, indicates a troubling ambiguity with respect to Job's piety: Job might be pious simply because YHWH has “hedged” him around with protection and bounty. In addition to a roaming challenger, we encounter the afflicted and exemplary, Job. Job is from Uz, a place legendary for its wise inhabitants.²⁹¹ In 13:24, Job (’iyyōb) is perplexed why El should count him as “the enemy” (’ōyēb). Job is castigated by the outcast:

Between the bushes they bray,
huddled together under the nettles –
churls, nobodies,
whipped out of the land.
And now I am their song,
I've become the word for them (30:7-9)

These nobodies are of fathers that Job “disdained to station among my sheepdogs” (30:1). Job is lesser than the nobodies, for his former status counts against him.

²⁹¹ Norman C. Habel, *The Book of Job: A Commentary (Old Testament Library)* (Philadelphia, Westminster Press, 1985) 86.

To the characters of the roving challenger, Job and the nobodies, we must add elders of distant tribes. The friends, Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite, Zophar the Naamanthite (as evidenced by their reference to the divinity by local names, Eloah or Shaddai) carry the wisdom particular to their respective places. To this growing cast of characters from elsewhere, we must add that marginality is emphatically represented through the elemental monsters that contest law as such; namely, behemoth (the embodiment of natural evil), and leviathan (the embodiment of supernatural evil).²⁹² Finally, the most impetuous and zealous among the friends, Elihu, is an outsider of another sort. His name, Elihu, indicates that he is not a “foreigner.” Elihu is the only Israelite among those “comforting” Job; his name translates as “He is my God.”²⁹³ Habel asks, “Is it accidental that the only speaker with an Israelite name (cf. Sam 1:1, I Chron. 26:7) attempts, as a late intruder, to gainsay the arguments of those who bear alien names?”²⁹⁴ The sudden appearance of Elihu in the text is often regarded as a later, pious interpolation: a loose thread in the unraveling, wayward “integrity” (*tummā*) of *Job*. *Job* itself is an outsider of sorts: like the usual story of the “canonical” thinkers in the history of philosophy (which excludes Judaic and Islamic philosophy), the “story of redemption” (of which *Job* is assumed to be a part) preempts reading *Job*.

Hope for the “original” *Job*

Like the human body that bears upon it the marks of repeated trauma, the history of the text of *Job* is of accumulated deformations. It is usually assumed that an older “folk

²⁹² James L. Crenshaw, Urgent Advice and Probing Questions. Collected Writings on Old Testament Wisdom (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1995) 457. On the monstrous, Cf. Richard Kearney, Strangers, Gods and Monsters. Interpreting Otherness (New York: Routledge, 2003).

²⁹³ James L. Crenshaw, Old Testament Wisdom, an Introduction (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press 1998) 100.

²⁹⁴ The Book of Job, 448.

tale” version of *Job* frames the more recent poetry/debate section that was added in the 5c. BCE.²⁹⁵ What is increasingly noteworthy is not the textual difficulties in *Job*, however, but rather the scholarly desires that difficulties in *Job* provoke.

A difference of ideas between one passage and another becomes an occasion for proposing different authors for different parts of the text. To understand a text by this method becomes an attempt to reconstruct a sequence of events in the life of the text, and without a sense of that sequence, we think we cannot go on to understand. This reduces a work to a series of events outside of the work, which we clamp deterministically upon the work.²⁹⁶

In an attempt to come to grips with the absence of sense, scholars attempt to designate untranslatable words and phrases as being “archaisms” (words that time has forgotten), ancient “euphemisms” (phrases that time has forgotten) or “Aramaisms” (another language altogether, though often lacking any definite parallel in any Aramaic text).²⁹⁷ Without any referent against which one can compare a phrase or word in *Job*, the designation of any passage as an archaism, euphemism, or Aramaism is a shaky enterprise.

Archaisms are terms with no grammatical explanation. Rather than assist us with understanding *Job*, an “archaism” simply names an interpretive difficulty. The appropriateness of the designation of anything as an “archaism,” however, is uncertain: *Job*

²⁹⁵ The debates between the friends and Job might have emerged in retellings. The poet(s) of *Job* might have been an exile in Babylon, in which case the outcry against unintelligible disaster finds expression through the character Job. Cf. Edwin M. Good, In Turns of Tempest, A Reading of Job with a translation, (Stanford, CA: Stanford UP: 1990) 132. For the question of genre in *Job*, Cf. Robert Gordis, The Book of Job: Commentary, New Translation and Special Studies (New York: JTS Press, 1978) 347.

²⁹⁶ In Turns of Tempest, 183.

²⁹⁷ *Job* abounds with morphological archaisms (forms of words with no grammatical explanation) (Michael Cheney “Dust, Wind and Agony: Character, Speech and Genre in Job,” Coniectanea Biblica Old Testament Series Vol. 36 (1994) 227. The attempt is made to look for parallels in other ancient near east (ANE) languages (e.g., Ugaritic, Aramaic). If such a parallel is found, then the anomalous form can be designated an “Aramaism” (just in case that the parallel is in an Aramaic text). There are archaisms that are unique to *Job* in all the Hebrew Bible (219-223).

is in a dialect that is unique to the Hebrew Bible. But the diversity of dialects to the Hebrew Bible complicates the attribution of “archaisms” to *Job*.²⁹⁸

Job’s characterization of his competence and compulsion to speak (16:4-6) is an example of a particularly dense cluster of “archaisms.” The archaism *lēmō* is used by Yahweh to address Job (38:40) and by Job to address Yahweh (40:4). Job says in 40:4, “How can I reply to you? I lay my hand on my mouth.” The question of Job’s speaking is redoubled by the matter of such archaisms, which occur in the dialogue between Job and the divinity no less, where one might otherwise hope for a resolution to the narrative.

An archaism might help locate a text historically if we could refer to an occurrence of the same archaic term in another text whose date we have determined. There are not any such texts with respect to *Job*. Even if such referents were available, there is a further difficulty: Is the archaic term contemporaneous with its author or was an older term used by the author to lend the ancient setting of *Job* an air of realism? If it is the former, then the term is archaic and can help us date the book (but only if we can find a dateable parallel text). If it is the latter, then the term is “archaizing” and is a trope as in the practice of retrojection (the practice of temporally setting prophets before the events that they “predict”²⁹⁹). Whether we should regard any single anomalous grammatical form as either “archaic” or “archaizing” is irresolvable.

Reconstructed histories of the text and presumed tamperings with an “original” are at best speculative.³⁰⁰ The competing reconstructions and histories only compound the

²⁹⁸ The dialectical diversity of the Hebrew Bible is such that the determination of an archaism or dialect can only be speculative at best.

²⁹⁹ In Biblical Hebrew, the prophetic perfect tense is the use of a past-tense verb while speaking about the future: whatever is prophesized is as good as done.

³⁰⁰ cf. Zuckerman’s speculative history of the text in Urgent Advice, 450.

fractures they were hoping to mend.³⁰¹ With respect to an ultimately fictive wholeness (due to dislocations and interpolations³⁰²), *Job* wanders. *Job* speaks to us from an indeterminate historical origin.

Reading *Job* places us in contact with what in the text belongs especially to language: the death of the original and the persistent desire to construct one. The translator of *Job* encounters the impossibility of possessing an original *Job*.³⁰³ Translation demonstrates that the original is always already disarticulated and dismembered.³⁰⁴ From the perspective of the desire for the redemption of a pure language (*reine Sprache*), the “death” of the original is a shortcoming. Benjamin wrests theological motifs from their native contexts in order to call attention to the essential disarticulation of language, its permanent exile from idealized meaning.³⁰⁵ Benjamin employs messianic tropes, but also

...displaces them in such a way as to put the original in motion, to de-canonize the original, giving it a movement which is a movement of disintegration, of fragmentation. This movement of the original is a wandering, an *errance*, a kind of permanent exile if you wish, but it is not really an exile, for there is no homeland, nothing from which one has been exiled.³⁰⁶

Benjamin’s “theological” moments counter the desire for a source and guarantor of reference.³⁰⁷ From the mythical perspective of an extra-linguistic guarantor of stability in reference, the wandering of language is deemed “errant.” But the mythical guarantor of

³⁰¹ On normal dealings with incoherence and postulating a coherent original: In Turns of Tempest, 183.

³⁰² The possibility of interpolation that the sudden appearance of Elihu suggests that the Elihu speeches are a later interpolation.

³⁰³ Cf. In Turns of Tempest, 15.

³⁰⁴ Paul De Man, “‘Conclusions’: Walter Benjamin’s ‘Task of the Translator,’” The Resistance to Theory (Theory and History of Literature, Vol. 33) (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986) 84.

³⁰⁵ For example, Benjamin shows how Kafka’s definition of original sin in *Der Prozess* has been wrenched from its native context. Walter Benjamin, “Franz Kafka,” Illuminations, Essays and Reflections, trans. Harry Zohn, ed. Hannah Arendt (New York: Schocken, 1968) 114.

³⁰⁶ The Resistance to Theory, 92.

³⁰⁷ This is de Man’s reading of Benjamin. Derrida, however, does not find in Benjamin a destruction capable of carrying off the critique of law sufficient to the memory of the *Shoah*. Cf. Jacques Derrida, “Force of Law: The Mystical

“meaning” is in fact the apotheosis of meaning; for the intelligible ideal that would provide a guarantor sacrifices the possibility that sensuousness might signify in the world.³⁰⁸ The ability of materiality to signify has been replaced by a univocal nominalism. The teleology of a restoration of wholeness is not just evident in textual scholarship, but also in the way *Job* is “read” in terms of “hope.”

Hope and Law

As anti-theodicy, *Job* is a trial of hope. In contrast to mythological time that is part of a replacement theology today, the so-called “Old Testament” is allegedly to be read in terms of *kerygma*, the “abiding truth” that is contained within all events that precede the coming of Christ.³⁰⁹ The tetragrammaton demonstrates that there is no word for hope; instead, it represents a prohibition against preparation and calculation.³¹⁰ The form of hope encoded in the enlightenment (progressive human rationality) is the *eschaton*. Our tradition is haunted by a reduction of sensibility to sight and the desire for a fully-frontal ocularity.³¹¹ A deformed embodiment, the result of damaged society, results in a regressive desire to ward off despair: that we might hold the past in its entirety at arm’s length through a trans-historical “vision.” The right of law is connected to rectitude, a repression of the body.³¹²

Foundation of Authority,” Deconstruction and the Possibility of Justice, trans. Mary Quaintance, ed. Drucilla Cornell et al. (New York: Routledge, 1992) 63.

³⁰⁸ “The reshaping of the heathen ritual of sacrifice not only took place in worship and in the mind but determined the form of the labor process.” Dialectic of Enlightenment, 146. According to Hartt, the Christian tradition maintains that language can be sufficiently relieved of its defects to make it a faithful instrument of divine truth. The appropriateness of images and terms are to be decided by revelation rather than by analysis of language. Julian N. Hartt, “Language,” Handbook of Christian Theology. Definition Essays on Concepts and Movements of Thought in Contemporary Protestantism, ed. Marvin Halverson and Arthur A. Cohen (Cleveland: The World Publishing Co., 1964) 202.

³⁰⁹ Erich Dinkler, “Myth (Demythologizing),” Handbook of Christian Theology. Definition Essays on Concepts and Movements of Thought in Contemporary Protestantism (Cleveland: The World Publishing Co., 1964) 242.

³¹⁰ On the political achievement in the ancient world of rendering the word for God unpronounceable – an attempt to prevent its possession by any single tribe, Cf. Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, Dialectic of Enlightenment. Philosophical Fragments, trans. Edmund Jephcott, ed. Gunzelin Schmid Noerr (Stanford, CA: Stanford UP, 2002).

³¹¹ Transcend (lit. to climb across): “There is no thinking of limits that does not deploy a certain model of space.” David Wood Philosophy at the Limit (London, Unwin Hyman: 1990) xvi.

³¹² Deconstruction and the Possibility of Justice, 24.

The most purely formal law repudiates the truth-content of bodies, enacting law as purely intelligible rather than sensible.³¹³

Through eschatological narrative, the elimination of the outsider is given a “divine” mandate. In apocalypticism as in trauma, a violent past reappears in symptomatic, displaced form.³¹⁴ Apocalypticism depends upon repression: the agency denied actual subjects in their subjection to power is compensated by God’s agency at an end-time. The elimination of social subjects, actual in terms of mechanization and social coordination, is displaced to an immanent future as amorphous anxiety (cataclysm).

The founding of law depends upon its mythical valuation in terms of a future anterior: a deformation of memory – a concealing of the performative violence in the right of law to law.

In these situations said to found law (*droit*) or state, the grammatical category of the future anterior all too well resembles a modification of the present to describe the violence in progress. It consists, precisely, in feigning the presence or simple modalization of presence. Those who say “our time,” while thinking “our present” in light of a future anterior present do not know very well, by definition, what they are saying. It is precisely in this ignorance that the eventness of the event consists, what we naively call its presence.³¹⁵

Law comes to legitimate itself retrospectively after the violence that founds it. The present consists in the debarring of reflection from “entry into” the history of law (genealogy) in non-law, in *épokhè*.³¹⁶

³¹³ For example, when we engage in physics we move away from sensuousness to the allegedly “real” thoughts about nature – a Cartesian “withdrawal of assent” from what our senses tell us. By the second Meditation, Descartes has lost the world for the sake of a purely intelligible realm where he ironically asserts a complete self-possession.

³¹⁴ In Freud’s analysis of trauma, “what appears to be reality is in truth the refracted image of a forgotten past.” Sigmund Freud, Beyond the Pleasure Principle, trans. James Strachey (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1961) 13.

³¹⁵ Deconstruction and the Possibility of Justice, 35.

³¹⁶ Deconstruction and the Possibility of Justice, 36

For Kafka, decrepit courtrooms, distortions of form, and illegible circumstances become modalities whereby our lot before the law is told. Like Kafka's K, Job's claim to innocence comes too late, always after the founding violence of law and its subsequent displacement of memory. A moment of hesitation occurs for those who wish to gain entry to the law:

...but as he now takes a closer look at the doorkeeper in his fur coat, with his big sharp nose and long, thin, black Tartar beard, he decides that it is better to wait until he gets permission to enter.³¹⁷

The law of the law cannot be exhibited, for that would require an impossible place.³¹⁸ Such a place of absolute disclosure requires the presumption of the God's-Eye-View – the surveillance of the Seeing Eye that constitutes Job's oppression (7:8, 20).

Derrida calls for *rapprochement* of the guardian of the law (Huter) and the shepherd of Being (Hirt), but under the “proximity, or perhaps the metonymy (law, another name for Being, Being another name for law.”³¹⁹ I understand this *rapprochement* as an occasion to reorient Being toward an engagement with its “lawful” moments, already suggested by *Gestell* but not pursued by Heidegger as the possibility of political organization including the portrait of our damaged world pursued by Kafka and Adorno as a hyper-administration. For, the shepherd of Being attempts to be “before” all politics by being led by a “sending” as *Führung*.³²⁰ Consequently, I invite many marginal figures, not just from *Job* but also Kafka, into this chapter. By providing hospitality to a plurality of marginal figures from

³¹⁷ Kafka “Before the Law” *The Complete Stories*, ed. Nahum N. Glatzer (New York: Schocken, 1971) 3.

³¹⁸ Jacques Derrida, *Acts of Literature* ed. Derek Attridge (New York: Routledge, 1992) 196, 197. The disclosure of the law as law would require a ‘fully-frontal’ understanding (an allegedly totalizing view that depends upon a repression). Were we to desire a disclosure of an origin of law (as perhaps with Heideggarian discourse of law as the axiomatic and its destiny in “Modern Science, Metaphysics, and Mathematics”) we would fall inside of the hegemony of law by desiring an impossible presence.

³¹⁹ *Acts of Literature*, 206.

Kafka to *Job*, I attempt to bring together different materials (and nevertheless preserve their differences) for the following purpose: The arbitrariness of the juxtapositions of materials (as in Benjamin's dialectical images) might come to reflect the arbitrary social coordination (arbitrary with respect to singularity to which social coordination is blind) that produces deformed subjectivities. It is through these deformed subjectivities that a desire to be led by a "saving" power is manifest – an unreflective and regressive attachment that is certainly not Heidegger's intent, but nevertheless Heidegger's language of the "saving grace" is proximal to the piety of the authoritarian personality. In contrast, Benjamin's texts incorporate messianic tropes the way in which Manet incorporated tropes of the academy on his canvases, to simultaneously quote and undermine them, rather than (as I take Heidegger to be doing) giving them an "ontological" function.³²¹

As allegedly subject to a predominant rendering of all events as judgment by the *eschaton*, we are before the law as a present defined by looking back from a projected future. The guardian forbids access to the un-calculable moment of at the core of law. It is the moment of hesitation (*yhl*) that Job refuses to abide: by his oath of purity, Job is prepared to provoke the appearance of El even though to do so risks death.

The friends' assurances of a future reconciliation between Job and El rely upon the apophatic; the apophatic is theoretical negation, a postponement of responsibility for the sake of a projected "salvation." From the perspective of someone undergoing pain, the assurance that reconciliation is an eventuality (given that Job admits his "guilt") is empty at best. With respect to the "consolation" offered by his friends, Job is, as it were, before a

³²⁰ Jacques Derrida, Of Spirit, Heidegger and The Question, trans. Geoffrey Bennington and Rachel Bowlby (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989) 32.

³²¹ This is how I understand de Man's reading. Cf. The Resistance to Theory, 103. As for Manet, I refer to *Olympia* (1863). "Manet, Olympia 1863.jpg," Picasa, 10 July 2010 <http://picasaweb.google.com/lh/photo/E9_Zsrkf_uUaO9pWcWwKmA>

doorkeeper such as Leibniz.³²² Pain, however, has made waiting (*yhl*) for a reconciliation intolerable. Good takes exception to the KJV translation of the verb *yhl* in 13:15, which yields...

Behold though he slay me,
yet will I trust [*yhl*] in him.

Using as evidence its usage in 6.11; 14.14; 29.21, 23; and 30.26, Good does not find the meaning of “trust” or “hope” in the verb *yhl*: “The verb has to do with waiting, tarrying.”³²³ The “him” (*l*, Qere) is *l'* (Ketib) “not.”³²⁴ Good’s translation is as follows:

He is going to kill me; I cannot wait [*yhl*].

There is no time to waste, for futurity for the sufferer is radically truncated because of the intolerability of pain and the possibility of immanent death.³²⁵ Job concludes,

Now a tree has hope!³²⁶
If felled, it will renew itself...
But mortals die and remain lifeless (14:7,10 Habel)

Instead of acquiescing with the suggestion of his friends that he trust in divinely authorized law of which Job’s “punishment” is a manifestation, Job rejects this futurity and pursues a trial whereby the law of retributive justice can be shown to be a faulty projection in light of El’s chaotic administration of creation. Like the predicament of Kafka’s K, it is the courtrooms (e.g., the heavenly court wherein YHWH’s wager with *haśāṭān* was first conceived) that constitute Job’s principal obstacle. In opposition to the oppression of the

³²² Parasites who live off of the administration of law.

³²³ In Turns of Tempest, 39, 84 note.

³²⁴ In Turns of Tempest, 39.

³²⁵ Cf. Carol A. Newsom, The Book of Job, A Contest of Moral Imaginations (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2003).

³²⁶ While the Job of the MT complains that there is hope for a tree but not for humans (14:7), the OG “corrects” this situation by adding, “And it is written, He will rise again with those whom the Lord will raise” (42:17a).

Seeing Eye (7.8, 20), Job's trial is an attempt to have the materiality of his suffering in its full sensuousness have significative weight. Job's friends' presumption of wisdom is akin to the pseudo-orientation of the authoritarian personality, who disavow their projection of lawfulness to an "un-revisable" heaven that is reminiscent also of the Platonic heaven where axiomatic truths allegedly reside in the dominant philosophical tradition.

The Instability of Margins

Sociality requires some form of unified projection.³²⁷ Paranoid projection has become a vital component of the social order – for example, the allegedly universal characteristics projected upon "the jews."³²⁸ The margin is constructed through the repression of socially undesirable aspects of the self that are subsequently projected upon the abject.³²⁹ "Outside" is actually "inside."

Law is that which determines what is outside; strictly speaking, there is no "outside law." The "outside" of transcendence must always remain mythical, for it corresponds to, in Kantian terms, a realm of an angelic (non-human), non-temporal, non-spatial intuition.³³⁰ Law is always law of the father; thus the "outside" is also of the father.

Law is represented in Kafka by being of the family. The place of the law is the family circle.³³¹ Everything of the family is of a fate and destiny, and the distortions of space and form confirm the inescapability of law because its rule is indiscernable to those

³²⁷ Some form of repression is necessary. What is projected is a function of concrete, material conditions. False projection is in response to instincts for survival – a product of ideology. Dialectic of Enlightenment, 155.

³²⁸ Jean-François Lyotard, Heidegger and "the jews", trans. Andreas Michel and Mark Roberts (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977) 3.

³²⁹ Cf. Theodor Adorno et al., The Authoritarian Personality. Studies in Prejudice (New York: W.W. Norton, 1969) 605.

³³⁰ Immanuel Kant, Critique of Pure Reason, trans. Norman Kemp Smith (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1965) B139, 145. Cf. Martin Heidegger, Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics, trans. Richard Taft (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1997) 17.

³³¹ Walter Benjamin, "Franz Kafka," Illuminations, Essays and Reflections, trans. Harry Zohn, ed. Hannah Arendt (New York: Schocken, 1969) 116.

ruled. In “The Cares of a Family Man,” Odradek is the structure of the family in miniature: “the whole thing looks senseless enough, but in its own way perfectly finished.”³³² To be of the family is to be bound to a certain perplexing inheritance.³³³ This living, inhuman thing that is attached to the family (and yet too nimble to be caught) might forever be discovered “rolling down the stairs, with ends of thread trailing after him, right before the feet of my children, and my children’s children.”³³⁴

Speaking of the father who suddenly appears in the full measure of his might to condemn the son, Benjamin states,

The father is the one who punishes; guilt attracts him as it does the court officials. There is much to indicate that the world of the officials and the world of the fathers are the same for Kafka.³³⁵

Like Job, K’s claim to innocence in *The Trial* comes too late. Being subject to an unwritten law, transgression for K has always already occurred. Rather than being legible, the moment of transgression against law for K, as for Job, is sudden and incomprehensible.

Laws and definite norms remain unwritten in the prehistoric world. A man can transgress them without suspecting it and thus become subject to atonement. But no matter how hard it may hit the unsuspecting, the transgression in the sense of the law is not accidental but fated, a destiny which appears in all its ambiguity...It takes us back beyond the time of the giving of the Law on twelve tablets to a prehistoric world, written law being one of the first victories scored over this world. In Kafka the written law is contained in books, but these are secret; by basing itself on them the prehistoric world exerts its rule all the more ruthlessly.³³⁶

³³² Franz Kafka Kafka, “The Cares of a Family Man” *The Complete Stories*, ed. Nahum N. Glatzer (New York: Schocken, 1971) 428.

³³³ Like the Cat-Lamb of “A Crossbreed” *The Complete Stories*, 426.

³³⁴ *The Complete Stories*, 429.

³³⁵ *Illuminations*, 113.

³³⁶ *Illuminations*, 114-115. Compare the “unwritten lawbooks” that prescribe ways to avoid “conscience-ridden language.” *Minima Moralia*, 137.

The old, dog-eared volumes of the law are, when glimpsed by K, illegible.³³⁷ They contain the absent-mindedness of the officials; the doodles within them – more distorted figures – are distortions of memory. As with Justice conjoined with Victory, the looming, shadowy figures of Titorelli's pictures are as irresolvable as the lawbooks.³³⁸ Like the law books K is forbidden to see, it is essential to the wager made by god that Job be sentenced not only in innocence but also in ignorance. Job complains that he has no access to the indictment written by his adversary at law (31:35-31:37).

Compounding the fact that Job's transgression is indeterminate, Job's suffering issues from indeterminacy itself: Job's suffering issues directly from a command of YHWH for the sake of a wager between YHWH and *haśśāṭān*. Because the wager disrupts the axiomatic presupposition of divinely authorized justice, Job cannot discern the meaning of his suffering by any conventional place-marker: it cannot be punishment in accord with a divinely authorized, perfect order – but what else *can* it be?

Job is cast out upon the ash heap and is physically returning to dust (30:19).³³⁹ The outskirts of the community are also outskirts where, from Job's point of view, the normal sense of things is in ashes as well. Because a wager depends upon indeterminacy, the meaning of suffering cannot be ascribed to the theodicy of an assuredly good, but indiscernible, end.

Lest one wish to ascribe to God a degree of constancy, YHWH is susceptible to the stories told by *haśśāṭān*.³⁴⁰ Job endures the destruction of his prosperity and the murder of

³³⁷ The woman that has led K to a chamber near an empty courtroom says, “it is an essential part of the justice dispensed here that you should be condemned not only in innocence but also in ignorance.” Franz Kafka, The Trial, trans. Willa and Edwin Muir, ed. E. M. Butler (New York: Schocken Books, 1974) 50-52.

³³⁸ The Trial, 163.

³³⁹ Cf. The Book of Job: A Commentary, 420.

³⁴⁰ In 1:12, YHWH dispatches *haśśāṭān* with permission to murder Job's children and servants, and destroy his possessions: “Very well, all that he has is in your power; only do not stretch out your hand against him!” Not only Job's livestock but also his children are killed as a result. Soon afterwards, YHWH dispatches *haśśāṭān* for a second time,

his children, and YHWH says to *haśśātān*: “He still persists in his integrity, although you incited me against him, to destroy him for no reason” (2:3). YHWH cannot tell the future and cannot discern what is in Job’s heart.

The intelligibility of transgression depends upon a demarcation (a law) that is crossed. However, the instability of demarcation in *Job* renders transgression itself as having lost its moorings.³⁴¹ From ash heap to whirlwind, the limits and borders in *Job* are less stable demarcations than fluctuations within a fragmentary text. We encounter the notion of limit [*b^ead*] in the provocation by *haśśātān* that Job is feigning integrity to save his own skin: “skin up to [*b^ead*] skin”(2:4).³⁴² Also, Job invokes the sense of limit in time:

I wish you’d conceal me in Sheol,
hide me till your anger stops,
set me a limit and remember me (14:13)

A legal sentence and decree (*ḥōq*) is also a boundary and limit (23:12, 14a). *Hōq* also refers to natural law, as in the limits of the sea and statutes of the sky.³⁴³

We are simultaneously in the languages of law and of creation – those two realms of thought to which Job turns so repeatedly: “You’ve set him limits / laws that he cannot [or ‘will not’ or ‘does not’] exceed / transgress [‘br].³⁴⁴

Behemoth and Leviathan are “creatures whose very excesses are the point – whatever the point may be.”³⁴⁵ Job wishes Leviathan would awake to unmake the day of his birth (3:8).

resulting in the affliction of Job with sores from head to foot. *Haśśātān* has not yet developed historically into the Satan that is described as a world power in Rev 12:9 and the father of lies in John 8:44-45. Instead, in *Job*, the satan is a functionary and part of the heavenly counsel.

³⁴¹ Modes of demarcation (natural, divine, juridical *mišpāṭ*) are deployed in ways that unsettle and contest each other.

³⁴² In Turns of Tempest, 52 note. Good renders *b^ead* as beyond or up to a boundary.

³⁴³ In Turns of Tempest, 346.

³⁴⁴ In Turns of Tempest, 239.

³⁴⁵ In Turns of Tempest, 361.

Monolithic social reality symptomatically appears in mythical forms of the monstrous.

These mythical monsters are forces of unmaking.

Despite the limits YHWH has imposed upon Behemoth and Leviathan, the created order is disorderly in its own right. El disrupts place (body, family, community and cosmos), and this disruption is the principle mode of Job's suffering. Punishment and reward become arbitrary manifestations that, without warning, exchange positions with respect to righteousness. Children are replaced (42:13-14). With El's intimidating show of force from the whirlwind, the divine and the monstrous are transposed.

Oh, any expectation of him [Leviathan] is false.
Is El himself thrown down at the sight of him?
None is fierce enough to rouse him.
(Then who will take a stand before me?
Who confronts me? I'll repay him!) (41:1-2)

Behemoth and Leviathan, showpieces for the triumph of divine law over chaos, settle the issue of divine strength rather than justice. The presumptive “order” of creation is a disorder; the vanquishing of primordial chaos (Behemoth and Leviathan) merely institute chaos in another register.

Caravans wrench away from the road,
go up to the waste and perish
Tema's caravans are eager,
Sheba's travelers expectant.
They're ashamed because they trusted;
come to the place, they're abashed. (6:18-20 Good)

Because of a basic instability of place, the hopeful sojourn of the caravans is in vain. Place is already iterability; enforcement of the seal of law upon the past requires that law be made

where it is to be conserved.³⁴⁶ The exhibition of El's strength in pacifying Behemoth and Leviathan is not the only aspect of El that reduces Job to silence: Job has undergone law as elementally violent. YHWH's secret weapon against chaos is that the author of law necessarily has resort to chaos as well. YHWH's "limit" to chaos is a displacing, a mobility of marks and boundaries.

"Outsiders" without Subjects?

Each manifestation of the social whole encodes its contradictions and antitheses. In Benjamin's analysis of Baudelaire, for example, the prostitute, gambler and *flâneur* are telling distortions of experience of a certain *Zeitraum*. Corresponding to the prostitute, gambler and *flâneur*, the "autonomous" commodity, the "progress" of fashion, and the "interiority" of the 19th Century Arcade represent mystifications of object, time and space.³⁴⁷ Once the Arcade became an outmoded form of capitalism, its decay attracted outsiders, eccentrics, and collectors who correspond to the remains of the Arcade. The *flâneur*, for example, is an instantiation of marginality.³⁴⁸

Let the many attend to their daily affairs; the man of leisure can indulge in the perambulations of the *flâneur* only if as such he is already out of place.³⁴⁹

Despite being out of place, which they cultivate so that they might be conspicuous as "outsiders," the perambulations of the *flâneur* have little transformative effect upon the whole.

³⁴⁶ Deconstruction and the Possibility of Justice, 38.

³⁴⁷ Illuminations, 155.

³⁴⁸ Illuminations, 172

³⁴⁹ Illuminations, 172.

Even in the diagnosis that attempts to rob the violence of the social whole of its blindness, the outsider performs an inescapable entanglement.

The detached observer is as much entangled as the active participant; the only advantage of the former is insight into his entanglement, and the infinitesimal freedom that lies in knowledge as such. His own distance from business at large is a luxury which only that business confers. This is why the very movement of withdrawal bears features of what it negates. It is forced to develop a coldness indistinguishable from that of the bourgeois. Even where it protests, the monadological principle conceals the dominant universal.³⁵⁰

The distance from entanglement required by critique is at the same time an entanglement.

As Adorno discusses in *Minima Moralia*, criticism is caught inside of a deformed antithesis to the social whole.

Even the man spared the ignominy of direct co-ordination bears, as his special mark, this very exception, an illusory, unreal existence in the life process of society.³⁵¹

Those who are ejected from the social whole are marked as de-legitimated and ghostly.

Those who integrate, on the other hand, display a “legitimacy” but at the cost of experience.

The administered world is of nothing but things that are designated by number rather than names. “Anything that is not reified, cannot be counted and measured, ceases to exist.”³⁵²

The perceiver is no longer present in the process of perception. He or she is incapable of the active passivity of cognition, in which categorical elements are appropriately reshaped by preformed conventional schemata and vice versa, so that justice is done to the perceived object. In the field of the social sciences, as in that of individual experience, blind intuition and empty concepts are brought together rigidly and without mediation.³⁵³

³⁵⁰ Theodor Adorno, *Minima Moralia, Reflections from Damaged Life*, trans. E.F.N Jephcott (New York: Verso, 2002) 26.
³⁵¹ *Minima Moralia*, 33.

Without the active passivity of cognition, would-be “individuals” are liquidated into a single, collective (and paranoid) psyche. The technical fettering of consciousness is a placing that displaces the schematizing of the individual.

According to Kantian schematism, a secret mechanism within the psyche preformed immediate data to fit them into the system of pure reason. That secret has now been unraveled. Although the operations of the mechanism appear to be planned by those who supply the data, the culture industry, the planning is in fact imposed on the industry by the inertia of a society irrational despite all its rationalization, and this calamitous tendency, in passing through the agencies of business, takes on the shrewd intentionality peculiar to them. For the consumer there is nothing left to classify, since the classification has already been preempted by the schematism of production.³⁵⁴

The inertia of society is evident in formulaic behavior and stereotypy. The compulsion to repeat, which Freud identified as capable of thrusting aside the pleasure principle, belies the regressive character of drives.³⁵⁵ Read as social truth, the primordial state of undifferentiated nature to which reversion tends is expressed in the apotheosis of subjectivity by social integration. Experience (thereby enabling us to envision otherwise than totality) is displaced, for no experience can occur without individuals. Once articulated and augmented by the schematism of production, the regressive tendency of society adopts its characteristic shrewdness and technical sophistication. The individual’s contribution to experience, the “secret mechanism in the psyche,” has been relieved of its task by the schematism of production. Synthesis today is the vanishing of synthesis: a passivity rather than activity with respect to the objective social structure.³⁵⁶ The role of imagination in

³⁵² *Minima Moralia*, 47.

³⁵³ *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 167.

³⁵⁴ *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 98.

³⁵⁵ *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, 29-31.

³⁵⁶ Socialization is displaced into the false cathexis of online socialization.

preparing objects for their conceptualization is usurped and imagination becomes a province of cliché.³⁵⁷

Rather than manifest an evasion of the social whole, the outsider is one of its productions, a mode of violence like the “individual.” Because ordinary modes of apprehension and recognition constitute an hegemony, anyone ejected from the whole and having no place can scarcely recognize their whereabouts, while “Those who integrate are lost.”³⁵⁸ Even those who integrate manifest an unreal existence, for “Dwelling, in the proper sense, is now impossible.”³⁵⁹

Following Lukács, psychological structure mirrors the structure of commodities. The rigidity of personality type is the result of its unmediated reflection of the social structure that produces it. As alienated from the processes of their “production,” people themselves are reified in the sense that reflection upon objective social forces is prevented. The “individual” is absorbed into the preconditioned reflexes of a subject-less reproduction of cliché and slogan.³⁶⁰ The social structure produces a stasis in psychological structure that guarantees repetition of the societal structure. According to Adorno’s description of the culture industry, the unity of our sensory manifold is no longer the work of synthesis of the subject³⁶¹ but rather reflects the integration of the would-be “subject” into the structure of

³⁵⁷ Cliché is the adaptation of the imagination under “unalterable” conditions. Dialectic of Enlightenment, 166. Thought today “has assimilated itself into the surrounding apparatus.” Minima Moralia, 197. Also, Theodor Adorno, “How to Look at Television,” The Culture Industry Selected Essays on Mass Culture, ed. J.M. Bernstein (New York: Routledge, 1991) 171.

³⁵⁸ Minima Moralia, 240.

³⁵⁹ Minima Moralia, 38.

³⁶⁰ Dialectic of Enlightenment, 166.

³⁶¹ Synthesis is for Kant our mental activity that renders its materials cognitively significant via conceptualization – a way of taking things up within our projects. “By *synthesis*...I understand the act of putting different representations together, and of grasping what is manifold in them in one [act of] knowledge” (B 103). Synthesis has two aspects: The first, which is found in the Transcendental Deduction in A, is mathematical (production in accordance with rules) – the self is depicted as synthesizer. The second, which is found in the Transcendental Deduction in B, is the subordination of representations under a concept (and is the carrying out of the Metaphysical Deduction). It is shown that what the mind – the synthesizer – must have in order to have knowledge is unity of the self. The mind’s self-awareness is then shown in its relation to synthesis and unity.

commodities, even or especially where “individuality” is proffered as a sign of a recovered subjectivity. The “individual” is a heightened display of individualism; its content consists in standardized signifiers of formulaic “difference.” To willingly integrate into the collective is irrational insofar as it constitutes the surrender of the rational interests of persons, and yet occurs under the rubric of enlightened self-interest.³⁶² By mystifying isolation as if it could constitute an actualized uniqueness, one’s actual integration is made desirable.

In the midst of standardized, organized human units the individual persists. He is even protected and gaining monopoly value. But he is in reality no more than the mere function of his uniqueness, an exhibition piece, like the foetuses that once drew the wonderment and laughter of children.³⁶³

Individuality is proffered as an exhibition-piece but in actuality has been hollowed-out. It is permitted non-conformism. The emphatic “individual” only appears human in outline.

According again to Benjamin, a vanishing subjectivity is linked to the crowd, who guard themselves against the shock (*Chockerlebnis*) of a hyper-stimulating environment.³⁶⁴

The greater share of the shock factor in particular impressions, the more constantly consciousness has to be alert as a screen against stimuli; the more efficiently it does so, the less do these impressions enter experience (*Erfahrung*), tending to remain in the sphere of a certain hour in one’s life (*Erlebnis*). Perhaps the special achievement of shock defense may be seen in its function of assigning to an incident a precise point in time in consciousness at the cost of the integrity of its contents. This would be a peak achievement of the intellect; it would turn the incident into a moment that has been lived (*Erlebnis*).³⁶⁵

³⁶² “Without admitting it they sense that their lives would be completely intolerable as soon as they no longer clung to satisfactions which are none at all.” Theodor Adorno, “Culture Industry Reconsidered,” The Culture Industry, Selected Essays on Mass Culture, ed. J.M. Bernstein (New York: Routledge, 2003) 103.

³⁶³ Minima Moralia, 135.

³⁶⁴ Compare “Estrangement shows itself precisely in the elimination of distance between people.” Mimima Moralia, 41.

³⁶⁵ Illuminations, 163.

The ability to assign events to a precise time is a defense against Proustian remembrances.

In contrast to *Erlebnis*, *Erfahrung* is always bodily undergone rather than chosen. In its adaptation³⁶⁶ to a hyper-stimulating environment, consciousness regulates stimulation. Yet what Benjamin credits as an achievement of the intellect – the shock defense – is not to be understood as the achievement of subjectivity but rather that which conditions the disappearance of subjectivity insofar as habituation to shock follows the path of least resistance toward formulae for behavior.

The pseudo-orientation provided by the societalized environment, an unmediated binding of blind intuition to empty concept, is disorientation insofar as one can still attain to awareness of the powerlessness of the individual in comparison to the monolithic whole.

Their totality is their otherness at the same time; this is the dialectic carefully ignored by the Hegelian one. Insofar as the individuals are at all aware of taking a back seat to unity, its priority reflects to them the being-in-itself of the universal which they encounter in fact: it is inflicted upon them, all the way into their inmost core, even when they inflict it on themselves.³⁶⁷

The integration of individuals, *insofar as it is experienced*, is the immanent otherness of the individual and an indication of the initiative of totality with respect to legitimating identities.

On this account of the outsider's performance of an inescapable entanglement, the problem for Job is that he is conspicuously “outside” (e.g., on the ash heap and “blighted”) but not emancipated (as if his suffering could render his circumstances legible in its entirety). The production of the outsider by the social whole is evident in the responses of

³⁶⁶ Progressively more potent forms of shock pierce one's habituation to intense stimuli, as is evident in the history of film. *Illuminations*, 175.

³⁶⁷ Theodor Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, trans. E.B. Ashton (New York: Seabury Press, 1973) 315. Compare “In the culture industry the individual is an illusion...” *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 154.

the friends: having suffered, Job has become un-mournable³⁶⁸ – his suffering can only attain meaningfulness in terms supplied by “the whole” (i.e., the heavenly mechanism of retributive justice). The friends, on this model, are akin to a single, paranoid psyche into which contemporary, weakened egos (e.g., due to conditions described by Marx in the 1844 manuscripts regarding human requirements³⁶⁹) willingly disappear in order to mend a narcissistic wound (a being-outmatched). In compensation for this vanishing, they receive a ready-made pseudo-orientation toward the world. Those that signify difference – such as Job to the friends – provide the screen upon which unacknowledged aspects of the psyche are projected.

Those who are excluded from humanity against their will, like those who excluded themselves from it out of longing for humanity, knew that the pathological cohesion of the established group was strengthened by persecuting them.³⁷⁰

Job’s task, on this model, cannot be remedied except by a trial of this pseudo-orientation itself, and this pseudo-orientation can be a matter for experience for Job alone in that his suffering has demonstrated (however darkly and fragmentarily) its falsehood.

Circumspection and Legibility

The possibility of a novel account of the social whole rests with the suffering, for who better to critique the law of the social order than those who have undergone its violence? The marginalized, like Job, often literally bear the telltale marks of the violence of the social order upon the body. But like the condemned in “In the Penal Colony,” the

³⁶⁸ Adorno maintains that “mourning, more than all else, is disfigured” as a stigma in relation to an hegemony of purposes and market value. Dialectic of Enlightenment, 179.

³⁶⁹ Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844 and the Communist Manifesto, trans. Martin Milligan (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 1988) 115-134.

“writing” of the law upon the body has deformed it, and consequently the possibility that a novel perspective might be fashioned from this wounding is damaged.

In 21:29, being a wayfarer appears as a condition both for the possibility of having stories and the de-legitimation of those stories. So that he might convince his friends that divine order is actually disorder, Job implores his friends to consider the stories of the wayfarers.

Have you never asked the wayfarers [‘ōb^erē derek]?
You cannot deny their evidence. (21:29)

The evidence of the wayfarers, Job maintains, would support Job’s contention that, contrary to the pious view that El cannot fail to be just, the Tyrants of afar have not been obliterated. Their escape from divine retribution invalidates an alleged moral order of the world.³⁷¹

Wayfarers, “those who pass on the road” (v. 29), nomads, or at best traveling caravaneers – people not welcome in the polite society of Job and his friends – have a sense of the world better attuned, Job suggests, to reality.³⁷²

The wayfarers bear the possibility that the social order might be taken into account differently, for they encounter things outside the ordinary realm of experience. The problem, of course, is that no one has asked the wayfarers, because they are wayfarers.

Sitting upon ashes at the outskirts of his community, Job faces a similar dismissal of his testimony: Suffering might not be intelligible in any other way than that which authorizes his expulsion. Having been ejected from the whole, the outcast might bear counsel but for the damaged legibility of what they undergo as outcast.

³⁷⁰ Dialectic of Enlightenment, 163.

³⁷¹ The Book of Job, 330

³⁷² In Turns of Tempest, 270.

In Kafka's "In the Penal Colony," law is administered by the apparatus – revered by the officer as the fulfillment of enlightened governance. The writing performed by the apparatus culminates in a mythical moment of legibility, when the eyes of the condemned suddenly go wide with comprehension. The condemned in the colony receive law with the receptivity of parchment, like writing embedded in copper (*sēper*, 19:23).

As part of their wounding, outsiders exhibit a hyper-vigilance akin to victims of trauma.

We deplore the beggars in the South, forgetting that their persistence in front of our noses is as justified as a scholar's before a difficult text. No shadow of hesitation, no slightest wish or deliberation in our faces escapes their notice. The telepathy of the coachman who, by accosting us, makes known to us our previously unsuspected inclination to board his vehicle, and of the shopkeeper who extracts from his junk the single chain or cameo that could delight us, is of the same order.³⁷³

The beggars and the scholars alike owe their attentiveness to the same order. Their deformation endows the outsider with a special perspicacity. Just as traumatic neurosis offers a clear view of the function of the psyche,³⁷⁴ absorption into the urban crowd belies a regression behind presumptive progress. For the integrated, the wounding of subjectivity manifests in an isolation and loss of the possibility of dialogue. For the outsider, who incurs the isolation of the abject, a circumspection arises. The moment of indecision in the faces in the crowd draws the attention of the outcast like a wick. This circumspection can only be a wounded legibility of the social whole, for the law that prescribes their expulsion has the initiative to legitimacy and intelligibility.

³⁷³ *Illuminations*, 92.

³⁷⁴ *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, 23-27.

As instantiations of a utopian expectation or phantasmagoria, commodities take on attributes of subjects. Registering the violence of subjection to exchange and mechanization, subjects assume the characteristics of objects.³⁷⁵ The transposition of subjects and objects, the impairment of experience and delusional screen, impairs the legibility of historical truth. Paradoxically, it is from impairment that we can be afforded a genuinely historical perspective. For example, it is from the failure of the Avant-garde that we are afforded the perspective whereby we can come to know more about the possibility of art to be in terms of its “highest vocation.”³⁷⁶ The ending of a way of life is the material condition for reflection upon its afterlife as the inertia within civilization.

The myth of progress becomes legible as untrue in the debris that has been ejected by exchange. It is in the debris of commodity-culture that the narrative of progress can be momentarily arrested. Exchange produces corpses in which myth can become visible as such. Commodities lose their ability to mystify once they are discarded as useless. Sheen and allure appear instead as “a faintly disreputable quaintness.”³⁷⁷ Remains speak of a self-imposed subjection, a compulsion to repeat, and regression: repetition of the same represents the inertia in organic life to revert to a prior, inorganic state.³⁷⁸ Rather than progress, remains betray a tendency to regress to a “primal past” of undifferentiated nature.³⁷⁹ The novelty by which they might have compensated for devalued life is visible as an empty promise of satisfaction.

³⁷⁵ Eva Geulen, “Theodor Adorno on Tradition,” The Actuality of Adorno: critical essays on Adorno and the postmodern, ed. Max Pensky (Albany: SUNY Press, 1997) 184.

³⁷⁶ This explanation of the history of the avant-garde roughly follows the argument presented by Peter Bürger in his Theory of the Avant-Garde. Peter Bürger, Theory of the Avant-Garde, trans. Michael Shaw (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984).

³⁷⁷ Max Pensky, “Method and time: Benjamin’s dialectical images,” The Cambridge Companion to Walter Benjamin, ed. David S. Ferris (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2004) 187. / compare Adorno, “The expression of history in things is no other than that of past torment.” Minima Moralia, 49.

³⁷⁸ Beyond the Pleasure Principle, 29-31.

³⁷⁹ Actuality of Adorno, 184, 187.

Appearing as the debris of repetition rather than progress, remains allow for their reconfiguration and recontextualization. By their citability, fragments occasion a possible remembrance of repetition as such. Having been ejected from exchange, remains can be recombined such that their juxtaposition renders suspect not only the violence done to things, but also violence done to the social outsider as neither integrated nor emancipated but just roaming.

The fragments of Job's life – the debris left after the destruction of his prosperity, the corpses of his dead children, his ruptured body – are the material moments by which a testimony (*a telling*) might develop, but the means by which he might assemble (*arraign*) these material moments would immediately become falsified were he to avail himself of the ordinary “mode of composition”: catastrophe as the fault of the sufferer.

Unfinished ones

Adorno discovers that there is, in the authoritarian personality, an irrational way in which the enormity of suffering of the *Shoah* is made to count against those who suffered:

The enormity of what was perpetrated works to justify this: a lax consciousness consoles itself with the thought that such a thing surely could not have happened unless the victims had in some way or another furnished some kind of instigation, and this “some kind of” may then be multiplied at will.³⁸⁰

Blame for suffering is assigned to the victims. Job's affliction is taken to be “proof” of guilt – suffering is allegedly in order as the mark of having transgressed. As in Kafka, the ruthlessness of officialdom is exerted in the form of blindness.

³⁸⁰ Theodor Adorno, “The Meaning of Working Through the Past,” *Critical Models, Interventions and Catchwords*, trans. Henry W. Pickford (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998) 91.

The intelligibility of suffering is subject to the jurisdiction of the social whole. If it is to be heard, a case of innocent suffering must be wrested from its embeddedness in law – to be unfolded from formation so that it can suggest to imagination possible forms while committing to none of them. In our hyper-administered world, the would-be subject is increasingly bereft of dialogue and incapable of counsel. To have counsel is to be able to reflect upon one’s involvement in a story that, as unfolding, presents to imagination plural possibilities.³⁸¹ A story that suspends the finality of law (and its commandments) wrests the possibility of counsel from the claim of law.³⁸² As the form of law that is immanently impinging upon life, administration apprehends singularity by law. Yet insofar as the force of law is experienced as somehow unwarranted despite all warrant appearing to already be of law, despite force appearing as the only possible “realization” of the individual, the possibility of counsel is *as endangered*. Counsel shares the fate Benjamin describes of storytelling: “no event any longer comes to us without already being shot through with explanation.”³⁸³

...by now almost nothing that happens benefits storytelling; almost everything benefits information. Actually, it is half the art of storytelling to keep a story free from explanation as one reproduces it.³⁸⁴

Repetition of our hyper-administered world is not inevitable, lest we ascribe to it the fatalism of a machine. Nevertheless, a form that retains a perspicacity as to its

³⁸¹ That “counsel” has an old fashioned ring indicates that the communicability of experience is decreasing. Walter Benjamin “The Storyteller,” Illuminations, Essays and Reflections, trans. Harry Zohn, ed. Hannah Arendt (New York: Schocken, 1969) 86.

³⁸² Transmissibility depends upon the possibilities that open to the imagination when stories are free of explanation. Today, transmissibility is a function of command.

³⁸³ Benjamin argues that the advent of the novel, both as a commodity and as a mode of production, must be seen together with its corresponding mode of subjectivity, the isolated individual. The novel had announced the decline in storytelling. Illuminations, 89.

³⁸⁴ Illuminations, 89.

“administrative” default must somehow attempt a form with moments of disruption “internal” to it – an attempt that raises again the matter of a perfected systematicity that would only consign alterity to another fungibility.

Kafka represents the middle ground between unintelligibility on the one hand (utter lack of form) and ready-made apprehension on the other (hegemony of form) by his unfinished characters. Having escaped the spell of the law, the unfinished ones suggest many possible, final forms and commit to none of them.

...Kafka’s entire work constitutes a code of gestures which surely had no definite symbolic meaning for the author from the outset; rather, the author tried to derive such a meaning from them in ever-changing contexts and experimental groupings.³⁸⁵

The normal context of human gestures is a constraint upon possible meaning. Kafka displaces gestures among impossible structures, deformations of space, ages of a pre-history: “he [Kafka] divests the human gesture of its traditional supports and then has a subject for reflection without end.”³⁸⁶

Like stories themselves, the unfinished ones exhibit a lack upon which the transmissibility of stories depends. They embody transmissibility as messengers. Not quite human, they are not doomed to a labyrinthine stasis as is K. Unfinished-ness mark an escape from law in a peculiar way. As Benjamin observes, “None has a firm place in the world, firm, inalienable outlines.”³⁸⁷ And yet, these unfinished beings are also not formless. Utter formlessness would undermine stories, which necessarily have form. Instead of being either finalized or formless, these figures both depend upon and twist free from formation, or law, in a particular way.

³⁸⁵ Illuminations, 120.

The ones who have yet to be finished off, whose formation is still ongoing (who bodily register the vicissitudes of experience), are drawn to things that are being worked upon and have yet to be finalized.

For children are particularly fond of haunting any site where things are being worked upon. They are irresistibly drawn by the detritus generated by building, gardening, housework, tailoring, or carpentry. In waste products they recognize the face of the world of things turns directly and solely to them. In using these things they do not so much imitate the works of adults as bring together, in the artifact produced in play, materials of widely differing kinds in a new, intuitive relationship.³⁸⁸

In the remains of production, in slag and refuse, an aspect of the world turns to the children alone. The children – the unfinished ones – are capable of juxtaposing the remains of bourgeois activity in novel, intuitive ways.

Job is in a sense “unfinished.” Catastrophe has rendered Job an *enfant terrible* – deprived of everything that might visibly count toward maturation is undone (prosperity, children, clothing) and outrageous in his words. Unlike the assignment to time that defines *Erlebnis, Erfahrung* is unfinished. In the disparity between his “bare life” and its “waste products” and the order that proclaims this reduction as just,³⁸⁹ the “face of the world” turns directly to him.

Evasion as Repetition

Art cultivates an “outside.” Art relies upon its institutional separateness from society for its capacity to critique society. In order to level a claim against the hegemony of truth

³⁸⁶ Illuminations, 122.

³⁸⁷ Illuminations, 117.

³⁸⁸ Illuminations, 69.

that is instantiated by reason in its dominant form, art maintains an antithesis to the social whole.³⁹⁰ Modernist artworks attempt to distinguish themselves from the everyday as a matter of self-definition.³⁹¹ The modernist work protests against the excessiveness of a regime of presumptively “rational” order through a non-violent synthesis of elements (in the mode of semblance).

However, an attempt at being “outside” ends in the discovery of an initially hidden complicity. It is art’s institutional separateness that the avant-garde criticized: As long as art is entombed within the museum, it cannot make good on its critical insights.³⁹² The avant-garde succeeded in radically challenging principle features of the institution of art (the categories of genius and work, the necessity of art to have a certain ‘look’). However, the avant-garde art managed to be entombed within the museum as well.

A similar reversal occurs in the concept of the “new” in artworks with respect to the Neo-avant-garde. The “negativity of form” in art is its antithesis of the everyday: the “new.”³⁹³ However, a limit to the concept of the new is encountered in aesthetic hardening such that the distinction is lost between expressions of reified consciousness and the denouncing of that consciousness.³⁹⁴ Consequently, the Neo-avant-garde “becomes a manifestation that is void of sense and permits the positing of any meaning whatever.”³⁹⁵ As in a film by Warhol, the camera can point anywhere.

³⁸⁹ Giorgio Agamben, Homo Sacer, Sovereign Power and Bare Life, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1995).

³⁹⁰ According to Weber and Habermas, art’s separateness is constitutive of modernity. Cf. J.M. Bernstein, The Fate of Art, Aesthetic Alienation from Kant to Derrida and Adorno (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State UP, 1992) 2

³⁹¹ Arthur C. Danto, The Wake of Art, Criticism, Philosophy and the Ends of Taste, ed. Gregg Horowitz and Tom Huhn (Amsterdam: Overseas Publishers Association, 1998) 35.

³⁹² Theory of the Avant-Garde, 13.

³⁹³ The Wake of Art, 44.

³⁹⁴ Theodor Adorno, Aesthetic Theory, Theory and History of Literature, Vol 88, trans. Robert Hullot-Kentor, ed. Gretel Adorno and Rolf Tiedemann (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998) 179.

³⁹⁵ Theory of the Avant-Garde, 62.

Evasion is a mode of repetition. In *The Trial*, the character of the painter, Titorelli, is merely a portrait painter to the Court officials. The series of narrow staircases that K must climb suggests that the painter's room atop the highest reaches of a great tenement building is an irregular protrusion.³⁹⁶ K once again finds himself cramped in an irregular space: uneven walls, a tilting floor, and one grimy pane of glass fixed into the ceiling.³⁹⁷ The only promise of relief from asphyxiation and heat seems to be a door behind the artist's bed, which however leads directly to a hallway of the Court Offices. Titorelli explains,

There are Law-Court offices in almost every attic, why should this be an exception? My studio really belongs to the Law-Court offices, but the Court has put it at my disposal.³⁹⁸

As if cubism had become a narrative form, Kafka's stories employ spatial distortions and impossible structures. The world of Kafka often breaks open into unforeseen ventricles, not just with respect to space but also with respect to time, as with the "eternal return" of the whipping of the warders: K's warders and a whipper with a rod stand behind a usually neglected door (to the lumber-room) as if eternally ready to reenact the same pleas for mercy and fated punishment.³⁹⁹

Artworks that feature loops such as Rodney Graham's *Machine for reading Lenz* (1983-93)⁴⁰⁰ allow us to explore further the question of suffering as it pertains to repetition of the same and the possibility of novelty. *Machine for reading Lenz* displays a modified

³⁹⁶ *The Trial*, 152.

³⁹⁷ *The Trial*, 173-174.

³⁹⁸ *The Trial*, 183.

³⁹⁹ *The Trial*, 102.

⁴⁰⁰ Loops are a way in which Graham explores the theme of negative totality and the (im-)possibility of an outside. For example, in his short film *City Self/Country Self* (2000), "city self" kicks "country self" in the buttocks only for the encounter to be endlessly repeated (Graham plays both roles). Like the explorer of "In the Penal Colony", Graham's film *Vexation Island* (1997) shows Graham acting the role of a Robinson Caruso character who has washed ashore. Or, by filming himself while on LCD (*Photokinetoscope* 2001), Graham juxtaposes a radical inwardness with the external (and mechanical) perspective of the camera. Pernilla Holmes, "Ramblin Man" *ARTnews* 102.3 (2003): 104. Cf. [AGO: Art Gallery of Ontario](#), 4 Nov. 2005 <<http://www.ago.net/www/picture.two/graham.jpg>> .

book by Georg Büchner as a sculpture.⁴⁰¹ Graham's *Lenz* loops a portion of Büchner's novella. *Lenz* is an unfinished work whose hero, Lenz, is an obscure author who suffers from psychiatric illness. The character Lenz travels upon his thoughts: "He felt no weariness, only sometimes felt annoyed that he could not walk on his head."⁴⁰²

Graham noticed that the words "the forest" appeared at two points near the beginning of the story, placed in such a way that one could read to their second appearance and then loop back to the first and continue reading without a loss of coherence. Lenz tries to ride out of the town where he lives – having been effectively banished for his psychotic behavior – but in Graham's version of the book he keeps riding back into it...By reprinting the portion of text 38 times, Graham made the book into an imposing physical object. He bound the pages himself to make it like a sculpture.⁴⁰³

Within Graham's novel-sculpture, Lenz's embeddedness is corporeal. To ride out is to return. The doom of infinite repetition happens in terms of an attempted evasion. Lenz thereby recalls the avant-garde itself, an attempted evasion that becomes the means for inclusion.

The possibility of philosophical reflection lies between the doom of infinite repetition of the same (Lenz) and the dream of total emancipation (e.g., the explorer of "In the Penal Colony" who may simply cast off⁴⁰⁴). In contrast to a presumed "transcendence," transformed critical thought does not attempt an escape (which is to invite a naïve and calamitous repetition of eschatology).

Job is in the "distorted space" of the siege of El as the *gibbor*, a distortion of Job's body reminiscent of rendering nations askew. But Job has foregone the "escape" of cursing

⁴⁰¹ [ARTnews](#), 104.

⁴⁰² Georg Büchner, *The Complete Plays*, ed. Michael Patterson (London: Methuen, 1987) 249.

⁴⁰³ [ARTnews](#), 104.

⁴⁰⁴ Unlike K, the character of the explorer is that un-situated figure that comes completely from without (and may simply leave) the totality that binds the remaining characters: "He was neither a member of the penal colony nor a citizen of the

his god and dying, which would leave the matter of innocent suffering completely neglected and pre-categorized as punishment. Job's plight is that litigation is not free of divine intimidation and the possibility that, as the sovereign authority of the law, El might disrupt the proceedings by suspending law altogether.

Neither free from, nor cleverly adapting to, the given

Integration into the social whole is not uniform: the warders and guardians of administrative order, the parasites that depend upon a role of authority for their legitimacy, are qualitatively distinct from the detached observer, despite the fact that “detachment” is a refined mode of attachment. Kafka’s warders of law exist parasitically off the perpetual decay of the world in the name of the “right” (authorized, lawful) orientation. Those who are thoroughly claimed by law, having reconciled themselves to the “inevitable” order of things, willingly exhibit the vanishing of subjectivity of today’s tight interweaving of stimulus-response. Having adapted to the real through an exhibition of social power through its normal identifiers, one is a subject with power that need only repeat what is on hand in any case: a legitimization of the social order. Alternately (but not in the sense of manifesting an emancipation), those displaced by the social order are delegitimized and ghostly. Expulsion from the social order costs the expelled the orientation to which the integrated cling, but preserves the possibility of subjectivity. Experience, forfeited in the case of the warder in exchange for becoming a vehicle of authority, hibernates in the

state to which it belonged...he traveled only as an observer.” In the sense that he comes from nowhere, the explorer is akin to the self-possessed subject who occupies the non-position of the God’s-Eye View. The Trial, 206.

incomprehensibility (relative to law in its dominant instantiation) of what is undergone by the displaced. The un-representable is trauma.⁴⁰⁵

Where we find ourselves can only be referred to as it is undergone but never as a totalizing vision which consigns thinking to the alienation from experience that, as stemming from a deformed embodiment, is suffering all over again. Once we see that the neutral, third-person voice is part of the privileged atmosphere (an enactment of an inheritance that we can never be completely ‘on top’ of), there arises a particular problem. We do not know in whose voice we speak when we speak. “Who’s Voice?” is part of a problem that embroils speaking, which is normally pervaded by purpose. The philosopher lets things speak to her before she knows how to deal with them.

As subject to the integration/fragmentation of today, “we” are akin to these outsiders. Montage is possible when debris is legible as such (the strange ejected from homogeneity), and this legibility requires a kind of debris-subject. In a manner of speaking, we are entreated to respond to debris as debris. As an undergoing that turns us about, *Erfahrung* occurs if we can become lost in the details. The reading of *Job* concretizes a site where reading encounters its opposite, where experience and stereotypy in their concrete occurrence in the text gesture outward, showing our social and political circumstances to be of a certain complexion and also provisionally allowing us to envision the “we” who suffers in measure with this complexion. My cautionary words “provisionally” and “envision” (as

⁴⁰⁵ “The interruptive demands of traumatic symptoms, their abortion of the mediation of past contents, suggests that what constitutes trauma’s psychical disability is the destruction of the very capacity to mediate the past, to transmit it into what might have become the psychical present...in remaining unmediated by the available forms of mediation, traumatic insistence is the ruination of the representational relation.” Gregg Horowitz, Sustaining Loss, Art and Mourful Life (Stanford: Stanford UP, 2001) 124.

well as placing the “we” in quotation marks) are due to the following problem: Can there be a “we” that does not straightaway limit who is mournable?⁴⁰⁶

As opposed to the regressive wish to reinstate debris to a “proper place” in an identitarian whole,⁴⁰⁷ the “messianic light”⁴⁰⁸ can be intimated as the non-violent association among debris. Rather than require a principle of construction from the dialectician,⁴⁰⁹ the juxtaposition of cited fragments – by its very arbitrariness – is a monad of the social whole. The very arbitrariness of construction demonstrates the arbitrariness that prevails in the social whole.

As with the eschewing of the coldness of form by the modernist artwork, the transmissibility of stories depends upon “unfinished” moments that can take hold of the imagination of the listener. As Benjamin reminds us, the rhythm of weaving and spinning, through which stories had achieved their transmissibility, is a bygone form of life.⁴¹⁰ To weave a tale, form must not be eschewed altogether and yet there must be gaps where imagination takes hold of the listener.

Job’s arraignment⁴¹¹ of El is a manner of composition that allows the sensual elements of suffering to be ugly – to resist form. Like *Job* itself (and like a modernist artwork), Job’s arraignment must display divergences and contradictions among its material elements that resist their sacrifice to law. With respect to its lack of narrative resolution and

⁴⁰⁶ Butler suggests that “I cannot muster the “we” except by finding the way in which I am tied to “you.” Judith Butler, *Precarious Life, The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (New York: Verso, 2004) 49.

⁴⁰⁷ Cf. “...membra disiecta of the world of objects.” *Aesthetic Theory*, 169.

⁴⁰⁸ *Minima Moralia*, 247.

⁴⁰⁹ Here I take issue with Pensky’s complaint that the principle of construction in dialectical images is absent. Max Pensky, “Method and time: Benjamin’s dialectical images,” *The Cambridge Companion to Walter Benjamin*, ed. David S. Ferris (Cambridge, Cambridge UP, 2004) 177-198.

⁴¹⁰ *Illuminations*, 91.

⁴¹¹ A legal term that we encounter in *Job* as *y’d* in 9:19.

gaps of the text,⁴¹² *Job* resembles Odradek, who looks like it might be broken remains of a prior form and yet also in its own, utterly unique way “complete.” Like Odradek, the text of *Job* will never unravel into a single, unbroken thread but rather will show “old broken-off bits of thread, knotted and tangled together, of the most varied sorts and colors.”⁴¹³ In the next chapter, “Fear (*yārē’*) The Text,” I pursue a *mise en abyme* of *Job* and social structure.

⁴¹² Instead of offering a resolution, the text continues to distance Job’s suffering from a site where it might signify in its own right. Job’s charges remain unaddressed and Job’s responses to the divine speeches are wrought with ambiguity. By “gaps,” I refer for example to the incomplete third cycle of speeches and the fact that *Job* contains the greatest number of *hapax legomena* in the Hebrew Bible.

⁴¹³ The Complete Stories, 428.

CHAPTER V

FEAR THE TEXT

“Argument” from *Mise en Abyme*

“Fear the text” names the desire for meaning as a defense against amorphousness. In contrast to an argument that must demonstrate progress, a *mise en abyme* is a figure contained within a figure, neither of which can be discarded in favor of the other, irreversibly exchanged or sublated, but rather are bound in a nested recurrence. By a *mise en abyme* of *Job* and social totality, I indicate that 1) the discontinuities, gaps and ruptures in *Job* constitute potentialities of meaning and yet are found in dialectical tension with 2) a fear of amorphousness that generates a repression of experience in terms of the “truth” of the text.

*Sprachkritik*⁴¹⁴ finds the structure of social totality in the ruptures (*Briüche*) of texts.⁴¹⁵ Texts contain ineliminable, unintended reflections of the antinomies, contradictions and antagonisms of the structure of social totality.⁴¹⁶ My strategy, however, is not to argue from the universal (e.g., claims about texts in general) to *Job*. *Job* is before the law – within a nexus of antinomies associated with the tensions between universal (social totality) and particular (the singular *Job*). Whereas we might suppose that *Job* is so unique a text that no general claims can be drawn from it (and indeed *Job* is *sui generis*), *Job* is not unique in having been subject to the imposition of reconciliatory spiritualization. Yet my strategy is not to argue from particularities of *Job* to general claims about society – for there again, an ultimately false reconciliation of particular to universal is the problem under

⁴¹⁴ *The Origin of Negative Dialectic*, 67.

⁴¹⁵ Cf. *The Origin of Negative Dialectic*, 112, 154, 188.

consideration.⁴¹⁷ Rather, my reading attempts to highlight features of *Job* that are un-subsumable with respect to attempts to impart (an ultimately mythical) univocality to *Job*.

The purpose of this chapter is akin to Job's efforts to contend with attempts to exhaust the ways his suffering allegedly can be meaningful. The thesis of this chapter is that a desire to have suffering sum to a meaningful whole is immanent in the drive to heal the wounds of the text. Rather than argue that *Job* belongs within any particular determination, my strategy is to highlight the issue of meaning and intelligibility that tends to drive determinations. The method is to explore the thread of the narrative at its frayed ends – where we are thrown back into the medium of the text. I postulate that sites of rupture in the text (where translation is especially in question) are triggers for a symptom of supplying a resolution. I also postulate that the ordinary mode of establishing significances (which recognizes the text as just passive) hijacks meaning from the text.

Job is an exemplary text in that 1) *Job* can be read as emblematic of the recurrence of an inability to mourn the suffering of certain “unlawful” subjectivities, 2) indeterminacy in *Job* renders efforts at mythical reconciliation especially evident, and 3) the disorientation of the sufferer as a result of nested dislocations allows a rethinking of thinking.⁴¹⁸ By this third moment, I indicate that undergoing disorientation is both a condition for Job’s inauguration of a trial and a condition for reading *Job* today as an encounter with alterity. Consequently, *Job* entreats the reader to undergo disorientation despite a fear that evokes a

⁴¹⁶ The Origin of Negative Dialectic, 63, 79.

⁴¹⁷ While the rescue of induction might counteract a certain kind of dominance of the social whole, a kind of ‘reasonable unreason’ would nevertheless be in force as insisting upon the exchange of terms: a former term being “fulfilling” its utility in establishing the latter. This “reason” would do violence to Job’s untranslatable (in-exchangeable) moments, as well as neglect the task of describing the atmosphere wherein exchange has permeated “reason.”

⁴¹⁸ The objective social structure prevents reflection upon the actual causes of suffering by the trance-like immanence of a false, mystical unity. It is a feature of that which functions ideologically that it operates under the auspices of a particular repression. Spiritualization is its symptom. Because of the trance-like immanence of spiritualization, it is difficult to sustain reflection upon that which is most imperative to think. Susan Buck-Morss, The Origin of Negative Dialectic, Theodor W. Adorno, Walter Benjamin, and the Frankfurt Institute (New York: The Free Press, 1979) 152.

desire to ward off experience of the text in its amorphousness. As seen in the chapter “A Wayward Passage,” precisely how experience is endangered is a site of contestation, and thereby attempts to sustain experience in thinking also vary. But rather than anachronistically transpose *Job* into the contemporary, I will situate my efforts in terms of Medieval commentators of *Job*.

In the context of this chapter, *Sprachkritik* is not so much a general claim about texts as it is a way of referring to what is discoverable in *Job*: An reflection of a recurrent antagonism between fragmentary materiality and reconciliatory thinking – an antagonism that, as evidenced in the text (*Job*’s painful consolers) is at least as old as *Job*. In order to speak concretely as to this recurrent antagonism, I will briefly discuss the interpretations of *Job* offered by Saadiah, Maimonides, and Gersonides.⁴¹⁹ Subsequently, I will describe how these philosophers (including Spinoza) are part of another tradition that is occluded by the dominant, purportedly univocal “history” of philosophy. With the concerns and strategies of this other tradition in view, my critique of univocal “readings” of *Job* will have historical precedent.

Saadiah attempts to carry a defense of God’s justice while “siding” with Job that suffering is not equivalent to guilt. Saadiah’s view, that Job is undergoing a divine test, comes from the Mu‘tazilites (which he identifies with Elihu) and from rabbinic sources regarding suffering.⁴²⁰ On Saadiah’s reading of Job 19:25-27, Job gives voice to an assurance that his story will be passed on to future generations rather than an eschatological

⁴¹⁹ As for my choice of Saadiah, Maimonides, and Gersonides, the tendency among other Medieval Jewish commentators is to focus exclusively upon *p’shat* (the “plain meaning” or sense of words, phrases and verses of the text). Robert Eisen, The Book of Job in Medieval Jewish Philosophy (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2004) 4.

⁴²⁰ For how Saadiah is steeped in Mu’tazilite grammatical exegesis, Midrash and Tafsir, Cf. Lenn Goodman, The Book of Job by Saadiah ben Joseph al-Fayyūmī (New Haven: Yale UP, 1988) 33-34, 40-43, 94-95, 103-104, 136-137.

hope.⁴²¹ Saadiah's resolution in the position of Elihu is compromised by 42:7, in which the divinity accuses the friends of having not spoken the truth *about the divinity as did Job*, but is rectified by Saadiah's reading of the passage as how the friends have not spoken the truth *about Job*.⁴²² For Saadiah, Job's protests are based in misunderstanding, but that such misunderstanding is essential lest the trial cease to be a trial.⁴²³

Like Saadiah, Maimonides affirms Elihu's position as being correct but ascribes the Mu'tazilite position of divine trials to Bildad.⁴²⁴ Maimonides reads *Job* as instruction regarding the limits of knowledge concerning providence.⁴²⁵ While the multitude's acceptance of authority might lead to adherence to the Law (a position Maimonides ascribes to Eliphaz), human imagination often results in a privation of knowledge.⁴²⁶ Error occurs as the imaginative ascription of anthropomorphic attributes to the divinity – evident in Job's assumption that divine knowledge and governance should resemble that of human beings.⁴²⁷ Allegorically understood, Job's suffering has an educative value as to the equivocality of divine attributes.⁴²⁸

The equivocality of divine attributes (e.g., power in the divine speeches from the whirlwind) is also emphasized by Gersonides.⁴²⁹ For Gersonides, erroneous views of providence have negative societal consequences, which *Job* – properly read – can correct.⁴³⁰ Gersonides reads *Job* as pertaining to a thoroughly material providence (pertaining to health

⁴²¹ Robert Eisen, The Book of Job in Medieval Jewish Philosophy (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2004) 41.

⁴²² Saadiah's version of *Job* might have contained the difference of one letter that might have justified his rendering, but Saadiah gives no justification. Robert Eisen, The Book of Job in Medieval Jewish Philosophy (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2004) 32.

⁴²³ Lenn Goodman. The Book of Job by Saadiah ben Joseph al-Favyūmī (New Haven: Yale UP, 1988) 99-100.

⁴²⁴ The Book of Job in Medieval Jewish Philosophy, 71, 72.

⁴²⁵ The Book of Job in Medieval Jewish Philosophy, 65.

⁴²⁶ The Book of Job in Medieval Jewish Philosophy, 48, 53.

⁴²⁷ The Book of Job in Medieval Jewish Philosophy, 62-64.

⁴²⁸ The Book of Job in Medieval Jewish Philosophy, 56, 63.

⁴²⁹ The Book of Job in Medieval Jewish Philosophy, 168-169.

⁴³⁰ The Book of Job in Medieval Jewish Philosophy, 151.

and well-being).⁴³¹ On Gersonides' reading of 19:25-27, Job believes in immortality but is intellectually deficient with respect to the correct view of individual providence in this life.⁴³² Gersonides reads 42:7 as affirming that Job's "Aristotelian" view (that there is no individual providence) is superior to that of the friends (who represent the rabbis), who attempt to vindicate the divinity by espousing a false view that individual providence reaches everyone as punishment and reward.⁴³³ Job experiences providential suffering (the view espoused by Elihu, according to Gersonides) so that, on Eisen's reading, Job may be educated and attain the intellectual "perfection" required for individual providence.⁴³⁴

But intellectual "perfection" is not possible on Gersonides account, if we attend carefully to the fact that the "material intellect" for Gersonides is nothing other than temporal, particular, and indefinite motions (from sensation, through indeterminate-imaginative forms, to reason) from which time and respect (i.e., finitude) cannot be eliminated; consequently, individual acquired perfection or immortality is impossible.⁴³⁵ Therefore it is problematic to maintain that in Gersonides' reading of *Job*, Job attains the intellectual perfection required for individual providence; rather, it is possible that Gersonides more thoroughly maintained the view that the agent intellect, as a natural contrary to matter, in principle cannot know particulars as particular.⁴³⁶ As with other prejudices and superstitions of *endoxa* to which the philosophers of this other tradition addressed, the problem with a matter such as individual immortality is not that the philosophers of this other tradition concealed an explicit view; rather, contemporary

⁴³¹ [The Book of Job in Medieval Jewish Philosophy](#), 155.

⁴³² [The Book of Job in Medieval Jewish Philosophy](#), 149.

⁴³³ [The Book of Job in Medieval Jewish Philosophy](#), 145, 172.

⁴³⁴ [The Book of Job in Medieval Jewish Philosophy](#), 160-161, 167.

⁴³⁵ Idit Dobbs-Weinstein, "Gersonides: the Last Explicit Heir of Averroes," [Problems in Arabic Philosophy](#) (Piliscsaba, Hungary: The Avicenna Institute of Middle Eastern Studies, 2003) 84.

⁴³⁶ [Problems in Arabic Philosophy](#), 83.

research is often too well informed by the Christianizing appropriation (or neglect) of these authors to discern an explicit view – for example, where Gersonides anticipates the monism of Spinoza.⁴³⁷

The Judeo-Islamic (Averroist, materialist Aristotelian) tradition is “antinomian/heterodox”⁴³⁸ with respect to the Christo-Platonic canon (a purportedly univocal, unilinear “history of philosophy” that is ahistorically constructed on the basis of ecclesiastico-political prohibitions).⁴³⁹ The ecclesiastico-political occlusion/repression (disappearance/expulsion) or Christianizing appropriation of the Judeo-Islamic tradition necessitates its genealogical discovery, which makes possible a “concrete mode of a-dualist philosophizing.”⁴⁴⁰ In the materialist-Aristotelian tradition, *endoxa* (concrete, esteemed opinions that derive from language and the imagination) are the always-already given “knowledge” against which thinking (*dianoia*) occurs as *paradoxa* – as contrary to, yet concurrent with, *endoxa*.⁴⁴¹

Both Maimonides and Spinoza undertake a critique of language to curb the affective sway of *endoxa*, or always already-given (concrete/historical) religio-political conventions.⁴⁴² In the contexts in which either writes, *endoxa* is to be understood as ecclesiastico-political (e.g., “concerns for individual immortality”⁴⁴³) and the generation of a metaphysical imagination that favors an “unlimited extension of demonstration”⁴⁴⁴ in hopes

⁴³⁷ For Gersonides as a “proto-monist,” Cf. *Problems in Arabic Philosophy*, 69-86.

⁴³⁸ Idit Dobbs-Weinstein, “Thinking Desire in Gersonides and Spinoza,” *Women and Gender in Jewish Philosophy*, Ed. Hava Tirosh-Samuelson (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana UP, 2004) 55.

⁴³⁹ *Women and Gender in Jewish Philosophy*, 52. Idit Dobbs-Weinstein, “Whose History? Spinoza’s Critique of Religion as an Other Modernity,” *Idealistic Studies* (Vol. 33: Issues 2/3, 2003) 219.

⁴⁴⁰ *Women and Gender in Jewish Philosophy*, 56.

⁴⁴¹ Idit Dobbs-Weinstein, “The Ambiguity of the Imagination and the Ambivalence of Language in Maimonides and Spinoza,” *Maimonides and his Heritage*, Ed. Idit Dobbs-Weinstein et. al. (Albany: SUNY Press, 2009) 98.

⁴⁴² *Women and Gender in Jewish Philosophy*, 65.

⁴⁴³ *Women and Gender in Jewish Philosophy*, 61.

⁴⁴⁴ *Maimonides and his Heritage*, 97.

for a method that can be “adequate” to all ideas.⁴⁴⁵ The Christo-Platonic tradition posits demonstration as if it can evade desire altogether (as if a “free” will might be real rather than a mythological ideal of the “subject”), despite the fact that a (neither free nor rational) “reason” consequently exhibits a (disavowed) desire to dominate bodies (a grounding of politics that presumes to have escaped nature).⁴⁴⁶ The critique of the affective force of theological-metaphysical conventions (its power to prohibit and exclude contrary experience and heterodox manifestations of desirous life) becomes explicit in Spinoza,⁴⁴⁷ although it is strongly foreshadowed in Gersonides as well, especially in terms of a critique of a source of knowledge (memory) that is purportedly “independent from” sensibility and imagination as part of the doctrine of the self-subsistent soul.⁴⁴⁸ Both Gersonides and Spinoza advocate continuity between sensibility and intelligibility, and concurrence between both passion and action, and necessity and freedom.⁴⁴⁹ Contrary to the Christo-Platonic positing of a “will” that purportedly can direct itself toward “remembered,” immaterial, disembodied objects (“the true,” “the good”), the distinctly human difference from animals is to be able to manipulate represented, intrinsic perceptions without regard for what can actually exist – a manipulation that occurs by convention rather than nature (e.g., the imaginative desire for certainty).⁴⁵⁰ Without the materiality of desirative life, there can be no knowing.⁴⁵¹

⁴⁴⁵ Maimonides and his Heritage, 99.

⁴⁴⁶ Women and Gender in Jewish Philosophy, 70-72. For “...the fiction of the separation between nature and freedom, i.e., on the overcoming of natural necessity/passions by means of reason for the sake of freedom” enables the “founding of the most repressive political regimes.” Idealistic Studies, 226.

⁴⁴⁷ Women and Gender in Jewish Philosophy, 69, 73.

⁴⁴⁸ Women and Gender in Jewish Philosophy, 61.

⁴⁴⁹ Women and Gender in Jewish Philosophy, 56.

⁴⁵⁰ Consequently, moral qualities are products of convention rather than nature, and are manifestations of desire as primarily for self-preservation. Women and Gender in Jewish Philosophy, 67-69.

⁴⁵¹ Human motions (both undergoing and affecting) entail desires that cannot come about but for sensation, memory (based in sensation), and imagination. Intellect (*nous*) and thinking (*dianoia*), are bodily desires and are not distinct from the imagination. Rather, the imagination, not the intellect, provides a (represented) particular that the intellect judges to be good for preservation and toward which the human animal moves. Women and Gender in Jewish Philosophy, 64-65.

In the materialist-Aristotelian tradition, questioning the affective force of concrete/historical, religio-political conventions must take precedence (e.g., Maimonides' insistence that the Torah speaks in terms of the imagination of the multitude, and that language is under the sway of the pleasure and power of the vulgar⁴⁵²), for the hope and fear⁴⁵³ that underpin *endoxa* can only be replaced by a more powerful affect⁴⁵⁴ associated with that which *endoxa* seeks to occlude: *aporiae* (adequate perplexities) that constitute experience and demand plural explanations.⁴⁵⁵ The demonstration of *aporia* is a discursive form that seeks to display its own inadequacy so that it might 1) be less susceptible to mimetic appropriation and adherence to authority,⁴⁵⁶ and 2) affirm, and be generative of, “the indefinite and diverse modes of experience and the continuous need for multiple discourses/inquiries.”⁴⁵⁷ The destruction of *endoxa* is similarly generative of “ways (*hodoi*) to truth” for Gersonides.⁴⁵⁸

In terms of a materialist, a-metaphysical and a-dualist Aristotelian tradition, “method” is always-already political in the sense that it is determined by the concrete material of the beliefs/affects in question and their representations (i.e., *methodos* is dialectical in the Aristotelian sense). Consequently, there can be no single, unifying methodology – for the alleged ‘power of reason over the affects’ is fictional and based upon a disdain for the passions (i.e., “original sin”), and the purportedly “free will” manifests

⁴⁵² Maimonides and his Heritage, 101. Compare Spinoza’s “systematic turn to the masses” in the *TP*. Idealistic Studies, 228.

⁴⁵³ Spinoza’s *TPP* “seeks to demonstrate that hope and fear are the archaic passions that found both religion and political association.” Idealistic Studies, 226.

⁴⁵⁴ Cf. “Spinoza’s a-dualism requires that affections/beliefs about existing things cannot be changed except through contrary affections/beliefs (and hence contrary representations) that, quite literally, destroy or overpower the previous representations and thereby undermine the ‘truth’ of the belief.” Idealistic Studies, 223-224.

⁴⁵⁵ Maimonides and his Heritage, 97. Idealistic Studies, 229.

⁴⁵⁶ Maimonides and his Heritage, 101.

⁴⁵⁷ Maimonides and his Heritage, 99-101.

⁴⁵⁸ Problems in Arabic Philosophy 76.

blindness to the affections of advantage to self-preservation that motivate it.⁴⁵⁹ Moreover, insofar as any *paradoxical* intervention must appear seditious and arouse powerful affects, its affectiveness/effectiveness rests upon the possibility that counsel to individual self-preservation might produce a “favorable affect so that the ‘truth’ will not be hated or repelled.”⁴⁶⁰

It appears a simple matter to the contemporary commentator to reject presuppositions as “mythical” – such as Saadiah’s defense of divine justice through ordeals whose meaning must remain obscure for the sufferer. However, the contemporary position of commentary stands along a path of disenchantment in which abstraction within which everything is leveled to a neutral bearer of meaning determined by the subject. Consequently, to challenge the exchange-value of suffering (e.g., as a divine test) by ridding commentary of its “mythical” commitments (e.g., God’s sovereignty) risks assisting exchange – since everything thoroughly disenchanted becomes fungible as mere object. The task is instead whether contemporary commentary might learn from Job’s lawsuit how to allow suffering to be a bearer of meaning despite its ordination within meaning (e.g., as part of sovereignty). But that task requires that meaning itself be thought as requiring the vanishing of the capacity of things to signify as different than the subject, who administers over mere tokens of types. Consequently, whereas I want to acknowledge as a problem that suffering is predominantly something other than itself as a matter of exchange (e.g., Maimonides’ educative value to divinely meted ordeals), an abstraction is already far too near us to typically be thought – that in the elaborate intertext of exegetic traditions there can be no adequate summation – interpretation is always already pericopic. And wherever

⁴⁵⁹ Idealistic Studies, 229, 223, 231.

⁴⁶⁰ Idealistic Studies, 230.

coherent themes through which one might want to establish a “tradition” is attempted, such “coherence” is defied by the repressed details such that it is only the interests of interpretation that betray themselves.

It is rather the repression of difference by a determining subject – a warding off of experience – that is my central concern. The performative, or radicalized, dimension of this concern is to be found – not in the apophasic dimension that is in service of licensing the given of suffering – but in the withstanding of the amorphousness of suffering as in the amorphousness of “tradition.” This “withstanding” is a suspending of the determining power of the subject to overwhelm difference – a thinking into rupture while resisting the administration of rupture that would again think rupture only in abstraction (i.e., as rupture “as such” in the regressive manner of an ontology separated from practice and licensing the application of an applied “de-construction”). It is rather always the singularity of difference that is of concern and thus always a returning to, and remembrance of, the details – which in *Job* is a return to the moments which resist univocality and are thereby in dialectical tension with the desire for univocality.

With an (albeit all-too brief) history of interpretation of *Job* in light of the Aristotelian-materialist tradition, contemporary perplexity as to the content of *Job* – especially regarding its Christianizing appropriation – can be brought into view with less risk of anachronism. For, where contemporary interpretation and translation has attempted to find a truth in the text, such “truth” can be brought within the scope of the desire for a univocal “reading” as opposed to a plurality of readings that is in any case inevitable for a text replete with inherent difficulties in translation such as *Job*. The burden that a defense of plurivocality must carry, a burden already painfully engaged by this other tradition, is that

plurivocality must appeal to self-preservation after it has already settled upon the fear and hope embedded in *endoxa*.

If I am willing to undergo the displacements of the text, I will suffer the disorientation of having my normal location (as active, interpreting subject against a purely passive object) dislocated. But it is just this dislocation that allows the practice of interpretation to be permeated by the trial of law (form, intelligibility) in *Job*. Like Job who must build a site for hearing to occur, I attempt to build a site to hear the text in its indeterminacy. My goal is not to build determinacy in the text, but to allow indeterminacy to stand as generative of possible meaning. “Criticism” here indicates an attempt to allow the non-systematic to suffuse the practice of criticism. Consequently, my reading of *Job* in this chapter emphasizes a rupturing of robe, skin and scroll as a counterweight to reconciliatory thinking or synthesis that aims at resolving perplexities in *Job* into univocality.

Tearing as textual impasse

Job potentially speaks to any age where to be true is to be “torn” in some sense rather than whole (to be wounded, dislocated, undergoing pain and incomprehension). Like disarticulated *Job* with respect to efforts to mend its perplexities, today’s social brokenness is covered over by myths of wholeness and reconciliation. Poignancy (as literally sharp and piercing) comes in the form of an idiomatic imagery that resists the requisite ordering into sequences and syntactical relationships in translation. The body suffers breach upon breach (16:14) and skin supersedes (7:5). As with skin or cloth, the text bears the marks of a painful history in which the wholeness of *Job*, like the wholeness of ancient peoples to whom *Job*

first spoke, has been fragmented and dispersed. *Job* is a concatenation of tearing across robe, skin and scroll.

Job holds in reserve a potentiality for further meanings in virtue of its perplexities (e.g., untranslatable moments as a result of *hapax legomena*), displacements (e.g., the contested “dislocation” of the chapters), as well as its lack of narrative resolution (all moments of Job’s wholeness – body, family, community, belief – are disarticulated and retain many frayed ends despite the theophanies and “folk-tale” “denouement”). In terms of its narrative, *Job* is a concatenation of the unknown: a text in which God is the cause of innocent suffering, and a terrified sufferer who cannot locate by any familiar bearings what he is undergoing. In terms of its material perplexities and dislocations, the text sustains the disarticulation of suffering immanently: the rending of the intelligible world (that initiates Job’s curse of his birth and ultimately litigation of El) is immanent in the rending of intelligibility in the text.

By “experience of the text,” I refer to the moments when the text diverges from our concepts. Repression of experience of the text occurs as attempts overwrite (repress) the sensuality of the text out of fear for its amorphousness in favor of concepts that express an appetite for systematicity. Against the evacuation of the meaning of materiality (of bodies and texts) in favor of an intelligible ideal, this reading aspires to engage the textual body and undergo its unfamiliarity. By emphasizing below moments in which robe, skin and scroll are torn, I attempt a ‘story of rending’ that preserves, rather than attempts to overcome, the incomprehensibility that reading encounters.⁴⁶¹ Just as the sufferer’s effort to articulate what is undergone occurs under the duress of disorientation, so too my interpretive efforts. The

⁴⁶¹ Cf. clothes/rending: 1:20, 7:6, 9:31, 13:28, 16:15, 29:14, 30:11a, 30:18, 31:19

matter is of passages (a drive for synthesis and mending) and of rendering passages suspect by a return to the text.

In 2:3, Job's integrity is put in question by the conditions of the wager between YHWH and the Prosecutor.⁴⁶² Yet the wholeness of *Job* has already undergone a rending or dis-integration. Job reads as having been torn and mended so that we tend to see interlocking breaks and fractures – fragments that have fused together and inclusions within adjoining pieces. The surface of *Job* has varying degrees of transparency and opacity, so that here we might think we have an “un-tampered” *Job*, and there we sense we might have an “emended or dislocated” *Job*.⁴⁶³

When we discuss an original *Job*, a gulf quickly opens beneath us. The Masoretic Hebrew text is the text that was received and copied by the Masoretes.⁴⁶⁴ The Masoretes “pointed” (added vowels to) another received text (also *Job*) in which the letters are uninterrupted and contiguous (the *Ketib*, what is written). The Masoretes made decisions as to which characters should be grouped together in order to form words, splintered the letters into groupings to form the *Qerē*, what is read.⁴⁶⁵ There are at least some places where a different grouping of letters (that is, moving a letter over from its position to an adjacent word) preserves intelligibility but changes adjacent words into two different words. *Job* is nested within rival textual traditions (e.g., Ben Asher and Ben Naphtali) and Hebrew Bibles (e.g., Codex Leningradensis, Hebraica Stuttgartensia, etc.). Aptly enough, one place in

⁴⁶² The Prosecutor is the heavenly being *haššāṭān* who is among the *b'ne hā-’lōhīm*, “sons of” God). *Haššāṭān* is commonly mistaken for “Satan” of later theology. I follow Good here by rendering *haššāṭān* as “The Prosecutor,” but “The Adversary” is more common. In Turns of Tempest, page 22-23.

⁴⁶³ For example, *Job* 28 is considered by most scholars to be a later addition.

⁴⁶⁴ The Masoretes are Jewish scholars that fixed the tradition of copying the consonantal texts through the centuries of their preservation, adding vowel pointings to indicate pronunciation. Cf. In Turns of Tempest, 37-38. There is the contention that the Hebrew text is itself a translation from a lost original in Aramaic, but this view is largely abandoned now.

⁴⁶⁵ In Turns of Tempest, 38. A codex is the *Qerē* in the form of manuscript pages held together by stitching.

which the *Ketib* diverges from the *Qerē* is in the word rendered as “judgment” in 19:29.⁴⁶⁶ *Job* is displaced from an original “*Job*.⁴⁶⁷

Job is notoriously difficult to translate. *Job* is in a different dialect than the rest of the Hebrew Bible. It is linguistically unique, possessing rare vocabulary. The majority of *Job* is “poetry” rather than “prose.”⁴⁶⁸ Often, the reader is unable to determine the significance and sequence of a torrent of images. Where fissures occur, *Job* as text asserts itself as that which always holds in reserve more than will yield to translation. Containing the highest concentration of *hapax legomena* in the Hebrew Bible, *Job* is replete with gaps in intelligibility. The text of *Job* is hopelessly inward looking in its idiosyncrasy.

Job’s third cycle of speeches is incomplete.⁴⁶⁹ Suggestions for the reason for the incompleteness include 1) that the order of the speeches in *Job* shifted in its translation from scroll to codex. Job suddenly says the opposite of what he had just argued and so some dislocation is plausible.⁴⁷⁰ 2) The poet of *Job* is signaling that the friends have nothing more to say. 3) *Job* is an incomplete work; the author had not finished. “Completion” is a strange concept, however, for the speeches by pious Elihu (who is mentioned neither before nor after his appearance) are thought by most scholars to be a later interpolation and thereby demonstrate at least one other “author.”⁴⁷¹ And as *Job* requires an unending task of translation, *Job* is perpetually unfinished.

⁴⁶⁶ Cf. *In Turns of Tempest*, 102.

⁴⁶⁷ Biblical Hebrew as poetry iterates a point through at least two presentations. The formulation is called “seconding” (“A is so, and what’s more, B is so”) James L. Kugel, *The Idea of Biblical Poetry, Parallelism and its History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1981) 8. Cf. *In Turns of Tempest*, 30.

⁴⁶⁸ Cf. *In Turns of Tempest*, 14.

⁴⁶⁹ Cf. For a chart of opinions about the dislocation of third cycle, Samuel E. Balentine, *Job* (Macon, GA: Smith & Helwys, 2006) 382.

⁴⁷⁰ Whereas others prefer to see Elihu as a later, pious emendation to *Job*, Habel sees the appearance of Elihu as an ironic anticlimax and argues that we see *Job* as a whole. *The Book of Job*, 25-27, 32, 36.

Job tears his robe (1:20) at the moment that his world is upturned. The human body is the site of a stitching together⁴⁷¹ and of rending apart. When Job tears his robe (1:20), Job mimes the tearing of his life.

My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle;
They end when the thread runs out. (7:6)

Job's life is a thread nearing its end. Job is at the end of his thread.⁴⁷²

A human life wastes away like something rotten,
Like a garment eaten by moths. (13:28)

Job is the weave of a cloth coming undone. Rather than embedding itself dutifully alongside adjoining components, the thread of the narrative has many frayed ends. Against the weave of narrative history, history rends apart and deposits broken bodies and broken texts. Job is reduced to a riddled garment, just as the text of *Job* arrives riddled. Job is in the state of his robe and in the state of the text: disarticulated.

Were Job to attempt to purify himself, El would simply make Job filthy again such that even his own clothes would reject him (9:31). The recoiling of one's clothes from the skin is emphatic de-familiarization. In 30:18, Job's robe becomes the instrument by which he is tied up and throttled, immobilized and silenced.

With great strength he ties me up with my garment
And strangles me with the neck of my tunic.
He flings me in the mud
So I come to resemble dust and ashes. (30:18-19 Habel)

⁴⁷¹ "You clothed me with skin and flesh / And knitted me with bones and sinews" (10:11)

⁴⁷² The word *tiqwā* means both "hope" and "thread." The Book of Job, A Contest of Moral Imaginations, 134.

Job senses his immanent return to non-identity, a literal return to dust and ash.⁴⁷³ Like the disintegrating scroll of the Job Targum found above Wadi Qumran, the sufferer is reduced to fragments.

While the image in 30:18-19 is of clothing and of great power (perhaps that of an attorney), the relation between the images remains obscure.⁴⁷⁴ Translators of *Job* invariably encounter difficulties, and some translators (e.g., Good) are particularly honest as to the performative dimension of their endeavors.⁴⁷⁵ *Job* disallows passage altogether, if by “passage” is meant translation across gaps in intelligibility, and the syntactical relationship among images in 30:18-19 is an example.

With great power,
.....

He has flung me in the muck,
and I'm a cliché [*mšl*, a hapax], like dust and ashes (Good)

The image of clothing in 30:18-19 rends the possibility of passage (the deployment of our interpretive prejudgments), requiring that we encounter our interpretive prejudgments differently.

As the interior of the clay pot scrapes upon the scroll, patiently silencing the text, the potsherd scrapes upon the parchment of Job's skin. Job's suffering is marked with inscrutable passages, *impasses*, compounding the predicament of Job who struggles to mark his passing:

⁴⁷³ The Book of Job, 420. Cf. Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer, Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1995) 71-74.

⁴⁷⁴ “My wish is not to close down options of understanding but to break them open, not to decide definitively that one alternative is to be adopted but to allow the alternatives free rein as I ask how the text plays itself.” Edwin M. Good, *In Turns of Tempest, A Reading of Job with a translation*, (Stanford, CA: Stanford UP: 1990) 130, 178.

⁴⁷⁵ Paul de Man *Resistance to Theory, Theory and History of Literature, Vo. 33* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986) 84.

Oh, if only my case were recorded!
Oh, if only it were inscribed on a stela
With an iron stylus and lead,
Carved on a rock forever! (19:23-24)

As Good has noticed, the above plea is ironic, for we indeed have only a written Job, and never an “original” vocalized, unwritten *Job*.⁴⁷⁶ For all this scraping and inscribing, a critical inscription (*sēper*) is missing that would spell out Job’s alleged transgressions.

Oh, if only someone would conduct my hearing!
Here is my signature! Let Shaddai be my respondent!
Let my adversary at law draft a document [*sēper*, a writ]!
Then I would wear it on my shoulder,
I would bind it to me like a crown!
I would announce to him the count of my steps
And like a prince I would confront him! (31:35-37)

Were it available, Job would wear the false accusation and approach Shaddai knowing that only the innocent may do so and survive. But the reason for his suffering is indiscernible. We have only a *Job* that has been, as it were, recorded by rending, marked by impasse. Although not the usual way we think of marking or recording, rending demands a plurality of possible interpretations despite the fact that it also inspires a fear that motivates an attempt to foreclose significances.

The Un-subsumable in *Job*

The disintegration of *Job* is never fully erased by efforts to mend it; consequently those efforts render a portrait of the social whole that is committed to a false, subjective appearance of overcoming alienation.⁴⁷⁷ The way in which the matter of suffering is skewed gradually becomes noticeable only through repeated hands – as if interpretation belonged to

⁴⁷⁶ In *Turns of Tempest*, 257.

a marked deck of cards. This atmosphere gives rise to a kind of connoisseur who (despite being attuned to the non-systematic) attempts to push the non-systematic away in order to prevent undergoing. The text, like a wounded body, provokes a response akin to the suffering of actual bodies: that suffering should be meaningful but in terms supplied by domination. When imposed upon *Job*, the unique features of *Job* ensure that this imposition leaves noticeable traces. An alleged “redemption” (a determination or reconciliation) of indeterminacy in *Job* occasions the possibility that the countenance of myth may be discerned. Reading *Job* against synthetic efforts concretizes a site where experience encounters its opposite in stereotypy. Insofar as it aspires to be not just a possible interpretation but authoritative, theology is committed to a harmony and unity that, when deployed over textual ruptures, reflect antinomies within society.

Job draws out the manner in which a systematic temperament in the West renders suffering intelligible. Myth is called out by textual indeterminacy such that a theological desire (i.e., a desire to read *what?*) can become the matter for thought. The task of the systematic temperament, to resolve the perplexities presented by texts lawfully, is not for the faint at heart. If one has the constitution for it, one takes leaps of faith over the gaps and fissures presented by *Job*. To this kind of interpretive spirit, the corporeality of the text issues no claim of itself. According to the dominant spirit of the West, truth-claims issue from a subject who comes under the auspices of epistemological rules for the correct conduct of rationality. The text is but a passive inkblot. If the text *can* issue a claim, however, then the ordinary mode of establishing significance (which recognizes the text as just passive) hijacks meaning from the text.

⁴⁷⁷ The Origin of Negative Dialectic, 151, 152.

The interpretive challenges of texts are largely thought in terms of authorship, historical horizon, genre, etc. So many rifts divide *Job* from an ideal of a “text” that the traditional notions about texts (a self-identical whole with determinable authorship and historical horizon) are overturned. What do we do when *Job* resists being determined, and we are left with our conceptual apparatus, unsuccessfully deployed and idle? Having been thrown back upon our resources, the common thing to do is to try to re-deploy the same architecture of understanding with greater determination. *Job* is just as aptly suited to challenge axiomatic presuppositions about texts as Job’s suffering is aptly suited to challenge axiomatic presuppositions about suffering.

Because *Job* resists determinations, a compulsion to impose them becomes noticeable. Precisely because of its difficulty, *Job* allows us to view the ambit within which desires for reconciliation are suspended. The fact that the value of *Job* cannot be redeemed in terms of standard interests is the occasion to reflect upon those interests.

Our common scholarly practice solves any incoherence in one of two ways. We can remove it historically by showing that, because the parts of the incoherence originated at different times and places, we need not consider them at the same time; they therefore cease to be incoherent for us. Or we can solve it textually, by changing whatever in the text makes it incoherent, to restore a coherent “original.”⁴⁷⁸

Just as instances of suffering are to mark progress toward a transcendent (natural, historical, divine) resolution, so the gaps and fissures of *Job* are allegedly to be mended. The desire to supplement indeterminate passages with determinate meanings in *Job* demonstrates a

⁴⁷⁸ In *Turns of Tempest*, 183.

warding off of reading. Efforts to mend *Job* are an occasion for critically revisiting history as marked by myths of progress and identity.

We are within a tradition that desires a “presence of the signified” (the mythical immanence of the meaning of texts) brought about by allegedly “transcendent” (authorized) signifiers.

Even if there is never a pure signified, there are different relationships as to that which, from the signifier, is presented as the irreducible stratum of the signified. For example, the philosophical text, although it is in fact always written, includes, precisely as its philosophical specificity, the project of effacing itself in the face of the signified content which it transports and in general teaches.

Reading should be aware of this project, even if, in the last analysis, it intends to expose the project’s failure. The entire history of texts, and within it the history of literary forms of the West, should be studied from this perspective.⁴⁷⁹

Despite the fact that a writing of a “pure signified” is an impossible presence, the West is bound to a desire for this presence as evidenced by the proper name(s) that pose as unmediated. With Derrida, I understand “the project of effacing itself in the face of the signified content” as the ability of the signifier to pose as the irreducible stratum of the signified. Despite encountering the irretrievability of an original and the non-optionality of mediation, translation requires the illusion of accuracy.⁴⁸⁰ Precisely where this posture of immediacy is successful, the matter is *the most* mediated rather than the least. Consequently, Derrida advises that we study authoritative texts (e.g., Biblical, philosophical) as a history of the effort to conceal mediation.

In sum, *Job*’s plight (the disavowal of the projection of a divine, retributive calculus “in” the world) is consonant with the covering over of fragmentary social reality by

⁴⁷⁹ Jacques Derrida, “...That Dangerous Supplement...” *Acts of Literature*, ed. Derek Attridge (New York: Routledge, 1992) 104

narratives of mystical reconciliation. Like the amelioration of unique and un-subsumable elements of Job, the singularity suffering is covered over by a “redemption” in which sensuousness is sacrificed to an intelligible ideal. *Job*’s divergences resist their sacrifice to a “law” – whether law is the “integrity” of Job sought after a reconciling of its dislocations, an historical “origin” of Job, the institutionalized “art of mistranslation,” or the fundamentalists’ attempt to place in the text a foreshadowing of Christ. The inability to experience *Job* is the foreground of an inability to experience suffering as other than *a priori* affective vicissitudes.

The ordeal of the undecidable

In contrast to the presumption of God’s goodness that underwrites most conventional theology, innocent suffering in Job issues directly from a command of YHWH for the sake of the wager between YHWH and *haśśāṭān* (“the satan”).⁴⁸¹ The wager short-circuits any attempt to ascribe Job’s suffering to an assuredly good end (as in Liebniz), for a wager can occur only when no fewer than two competing futures are possible: either Job will bless or Job will curse God.⁴⁸² However, the meaning of the occurrence of the word that is typically translated as “bless” is itself indeterminate.

⁴⁸⁰ In *Turns of Tempest*, 15.

⁴⁸¹ In 1:12, YHWH dispatches the satan with permission to murder Job’s children and servants, and destroy his possessions: “Very well, all that he has is in your power; only do not stretch out your hand against him!” Not only Job’s livestock but also his children are killed as a result. Soon afterwards, YHWH dispatches the satan for a second time, resulting in the affliction of Job with sores from head to foot.

⁴⁸² The wager might still be regarded as having a purpose however, as a test of human virtue. For Crenshaw, Job stages the issue of the survivability of religion in terms of whether humanity can be virtuous independently of receiving God’s favors. “If only Job will retain his integrity when everything seems to render virtue worthless, then people need not worry about faith’s survival.” James L. Crenshaw, *A Whirlpool of Torment, Israelite Traditions of God as an Oppressive Presence* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984) 61. For Crenshaw, this test tempers our judgment of God’s actions because we see Job’s affliction as the required part of a “noble cause” and “worthy goal.” In emphasizing the wager made by god, I hope to place emphasis on Job’s initiative with respect to justice, which in any event outstrips whatever effects might have been “calculated” as part of a divine “plan.”

He took a potsherid to scratch himself as he sat in ashes.
And his wife said to him,
 You still hold fast to your integrity!
 Curse [brk] God and die! (2:9 Habel)

Some translators regard this occurrence of *brk* as a pious, scribal emendation for *'rr* (curse). Habel, for example, simply states that the Hebrew for the rendering of “curse” is *brk*, “bless” and renders 2:9 with the conjunction “curse God.”⁴⁸³ However, there are no cases where *'rr* occurs with *'elōhīm* as its object in the Hebrew Bible that would count as evidence of such an original pairing. Thus we cannot with any certainty determine that *brk* in 2:9 is a scribal emendation.⁴⁸⁴ Alternate translations leave *brk* as is and claim that the use of *brk* is euphemistic. However, establishing that a given word was used euphemistically for an ancient audience is a dubious prospect. Consequently, no definitive answer is forthcoming as to whether *brk* should be rendered as “curse” or “bless.”⁴⁸⁵ As noted by Linafelt, instances in Job are undecidable in meaning between curse and bless and are thereby instances of *différance*.⁴⁸⁶

As Derrida notes, reading is drawn into the drama of translation: the decisions that translation necessitates are decisions in excess of any criteria (i.e., a madness⁴⁸⁷). Law authorizes itself in a moment of decision that occurs over the abyss of the indecipherable.⁴⁸⁸ Translation finds itself beyond any calculable aptness of translation and obligated to

⁴⁸³ *The Book of Job*, 78 (note).

⁴⁸⁴ Attributing something in the text to *Tiqqûnê sôpérîm* (scribal emendations) often results in “an uncritical leveling of the diverse elements of a very complex tradition.” Roland E. Murphy, *The Tree of Life, An Exploration of Biblical Wisdom Literature*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, UK: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1996) 61-62.

⁴⁸⁵ In order to reveal “a fundamental ambivalence about the character of YHWH”, Tod Linafelt discusses instances of *brk* as being undecidable between curse or bless and thereby being a moment of *difference*. Tod Linafelt, “The Undecidability of בָרַךְ in the Prologue to Job and Beyond,” *Biblical Interpretation* 4 (1996): 156.

⁴⁸⁶ *Biblical Interpretation*, 156.

⁴⁸⁷ Jacques Derrida, “Force of Law: The Mystical Foundation of Authority,” *Deconstruction and the Possibility of Justice*, trans. Mary Quaintance, ed. Drucilla Cornell et al. (New York: Routledge, 1992) 25.

⁴⁸⁸ *Deconstruction and the Possibility of Justice*, 33.

decide.⁴⁸⁹ Reading returns to the moment of interpretive force in translation to judge its decision.

A decision that did not go through the ordeal of the undecidable would not be a free decision, it would only be the programmable application or unfolding of a calculable process. It might be legal; it would not be just...And once the ordeal of the undecidable is past (if that is possible), the decision has again followed a rule or given itself a rule...which in its turn is not absolutely guaranteed by anything; and, moreover, if were guaranteed, the decision would be reduced to calculation and we couldn't call it just. That is why the ordeal of the undecidable that I just said must be gone through by any decision worthy of the name is never past or passed, it is not a surmounted or sublated (*aufgehoben*) moment in the decision. The undecidable remains caught, lodged, at least as a ghost – but an essential ghost – in every decision, in every event of decision. Its ghostliness deconstructs from within any assurance of presence, any certitude or any supposed criteriology that would assure us of the justice of the decision, in truth of the very event of a decision.⁴⁹⁰

The ghost of the undecidable haunts *Job*: the possibility of having decided otherwise is never dispelled absolutely from the arguments for a decision in the annotations. In Derrida's terms, a reading that undergoes the indeterminacy of the text becomes saturated by the *epochē* that "founds" it.

Translation is a question of the supplement and so of indeterminacy.⁴⁹¹ Theodicy must obscure these moments of decision; reading returns to them. Like *Job* who must contend with the law of what his suffering allegedly must mean (punishment for wrongdoing), reading must contend with the law of attempts to speak for the text.

Given that the production of commodity-like features of social order is hidden from reflection by allegedly "indestructible" features of social life, the state of reading is

⁴⁸⁹ Two translation techniques predominate: 1) Formal correspondence is the translation of a form (e.g., participial expression) in Hebrew to an equivalent form. KJV, ASV, NIV, RSV are examples of translations that use this technique. 2) Dynamic equivalence is the translation of an ancient idiom into a modern idiom. NEB and Tanakh are examples of this technique. Neither technique alone or in concert with the other can duplicate *Job* or any other text.

⁴⁹⁰ Deconstruction and the Possibility of Justice, 24-25.

⁴⁹¹ Cf. Acts of Literature, 76.

rigidified. Ever in need of law-giving discourses (that provide an eschatological horizon, the allegedly “eternal” and “universal”), domination undermines reflection by mythologizing itself. Society appears as immutable “truth” (as fate, as historical absolute) in order to license submission to the given. Under these rigidified conditions, reading in the sense of encounter with a non-identical other potentially shares features with the general strike:

For there is something of the general strike, and thus of the revolutionary situation in every reading that finds something new and that remains unreadable in regard to established canons and norms of reading, that is to say the present state of reading or of what figures the State, with a capital S, in the state of reading.⁴⁹²

A reading that remains unreadable deflects attempts to impose the norms of the State. The “norms of the State” can be discernable in part through reading *Job* against the obfuscation of its inherent indeterminacy.

Reading preserves textual gaps such that plural “determinate” readings can develop. As rife with disarticulation (e.g., the “dislocation” of chapters) and lack of resolution (e.g., YHWH does not answer any of Job’s charges), *Job* returns to haunt those who, as in Kafka’s texts, are the warders of the “law” of the given. Kafka’s work, “a parabolic system to which the key has been stolen,” is as compelling as *Job* to the effort to understand and yet: “Each sentence says ‘interpret me’ and none will permit it.”⁴⁹³ Many perplexing features of *Job* are simply irresolvable, and as such are generative of possibilities that make the story memorable and worth retelling. As Benjamin reminds us, the possibility of stories wanes wherever explanations arrive ahead of time.⁴⁹⁴ In the spirit of resistance against the predominance of explanations (summarizations or pre-synthesized codifications of *Job*), I

⁴⁹² Deconstruction and the Possibility of Justice, 37.

⁴⁹³ Theodor Adorno, Prisms, trans. Samuel and Shierry Weber (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1982) 246.

resist the synthetic moment of dialectic (the mending of antitheses) by a destructive reading of a repression of indeterminacy in the text.

Both Job's trial and reading *Job* vie⁴⁹⁵ with axiomatic presuppositions as to the meaning of suffering. Because the moral axiom of retributive justice (the insistence that his suffering indicates guilt) has the initiative as to the meaning of suffering, Job attempts to build a place to hear his suffering differently. Job's trial is an attempt to bring into an intelligible relation the co-occurrence of innocence and suffering so that stories are still possible. Reading, as I am employing it here, is an experience, and as such depends upon a moment of non-identity between the reader's expectations and the text. As an undergoing of a non-identity between myth and text, reading recognizes the unredeemability of texts to be an asset, for it occasions a distance from the text as non-identical other, and opens a possible plurality of meaning – especially readings that question a disposition toward redeemability and exchange.

My textual strategy below is to return to those moments of decision when *Job* has pitched translation beyond any criteria and the translator must interpret criteria anew and perform their aptness. Mythical thinking is particularly evident where suffering in *Job* is “resolved” through an imputed eschatological horizon – a capitalization upon indeterminate moments in *Job* in order to confirm the “truth” of a replacement theology. This resolution, however, can never erase completely the indeterminacy that is constitutive of the work of translation.

⁴⁹⁴ Walter Benjamin, “The Storyteller,” *Illuminations, Essays and Reflections*, trans. Harry Zohn, ed. Hannah Arendt (New York: Schocken, 1968) 89.

⁴⁹⁵ Both a raising of the stakes (*envier*) and an invitation (*invitare*).

The indeterminacy of texts is the condition for the projection of theology upon texts.⁴⁹⁶ The passages over gaps and dislocations in *Job* (e.g., the bridging of the torrent of images with syntax and tense) are what projection (at best, convention) places there. In order to be authoritative, theology must claim to discover what it actively projects upon texts. Proponents of readings that prioritize theology can attempt to resolve indeterminacy through a disavowal of projection – i.e., a “literalness” of “reading.” As a defense against undergoing, “the subjective process is easily overlooked in the schematization, and the system is posited as the thing itself.”⁴⁹⁷ By concealing its own synthesis, the gaze of literalness in “reading” looks past and extinguishes the things that it claims to passively report.⁴⁹⁸ In such cases, the context of the mediation between theology and texts is delusional insofar as it is mediation itself that cannot be acknowledged.

Identity at the cost of experience

The damage to the possibility of experience is demonstrable in content in translation that stands in for (poses as and represses) the text. The prospect of arraigning the story of *Job* hinges on returning alleged “resolutions” to textual indeterminacy such that *Job* can appear against its full depths. Here we can remember Benjamin’s observation that, “it is half the art of storytelling to keep a story free from explanation as one reproduces it.”⁴⁹⁹

The lack of place evident in *Job*’s cry of pain, which must attempt to locate itself through an arraignment and public testimony. As I discuss in “A Homeless Cry of Pain and

⁴⁹⁶ The tension between belief and texts is felt within institutions and their administration. For example, the fields of Biblical textual criticism versus that of theology recently resulted in a parting of ways between the Society of Biblical Literature and the American Academy of Religion. The split is due in part to the SBL’s critical approach to texts that destabilizes the commitment of the AAR to theology.

⁴⁹⁷ Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment, Philosophical Fragments*, trans. Gunzelin Schmid Noerr, Ed. Edmund Jephcott (Stanford, CA: Stanford UP, 2002) 159.

⁴⁹⁸ *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 158.

⁴⁹⁹ *Illuminations*, 89.

El the Un-maker,” Job’s outcry wanders homelessly through a nested series of displacements. The absence of an intervening agent is a necessary condition for Job’s litigation to evolve in form from curse (*Job* 3) to oath of purity (*Job* 31). Job must meaningfully bind (arraign) his innocence and suffering together in a place (an arraignment or arrangement of materials) through recourse to his ability to cry out against displacement (a lack of a place wherein the co-occurrence of innocence and suffering are intelligible) by speaking publically. This narrative development is unthinkable but for a series of displacements of Job’s cry that require *the absence of an intervening agent*.

Job’s sharp cries for an arbiter (9:33), witness (16:19), and avenger (19:23) occur as wishes for an intercessor. On my reading, Job’s cries are rendered ineffectual by dislocation, which necessitates further action from Job. Agony registers in the distance between Job’s outcries and the absent place where Job’s testimony might have effect. Job rejects the possibility of vindication by a third party because it would come too late (19:26, “after they have flayed my skin”). Job’s cries for an intercessor reflect the need for anyone who might be willing to understand and assist, under the duress of pain. Job bemoans the absence of a hearer (*śōmēa’*).⁵⁰⁰ In light of the difficulties facing the litigant, Job must arraign the divinity in person and not at a later time, but immediately, for pain will not wait. The absence of help casts Job back upon his own resources, and Job finds a mechanism by which El must appear: for El to fail to appear after Job’s oath of purity implies Job’s exoneration.⁵⁰¹ In short, the absence of an intervening agent (who can arraign El, arbitrate the dispute and record Job’s case) is a necessary condition for Job’s pursuit of litigation. Job

⁵⁰⁰ The Book of Job, 452.

⁵⁰¹ The Book of Job, 431.

has no alternative but to initiate proceedings and set the terms for El's appearance by himself.⁵⁰²

Each outcry for an intercessor presents singular textual difficulties.⁵⁰³ Nevertheless, Job's outcries for an intercessor become moments for “reading” a foreshadowing of Christ into the text. The singularities of the text are sacrificed to a meaning of sacrifice (a *telos* purportedly “in” *Job*), and such a “reading” attempts to prevent a return to the textual details.

Instead of a resolution, the text continues to displace the intelligibility of Job’s suffering. Throughout the divine filibuster from the whirlwind, Job’s charges remain unaddressed. In Job’s final response to YHWH (42:6), where we might expect a resolution to Job’s lawsuit, a verb (*m*’s – itself ambiguous) lacks an object (thereby compounding the ambiguity of the passage): “Therefore I melt away [*m*’s] and withdraw over dust and ashes.”

⁵⁰⁴ Where the Masoretic text refuses us an object, the text is marked across various translations by the desire to supply one. Translations of 42:6 display a desire to impart contrition, an element of self-abnegation and self-abhorrence, to the text.⁵⁰⁵ But when left without the object, the meaning of the verse can depend upon the object that the reader

⁵⁰² Job’s oath of purity (*Job* 31) provokes the appearance of YHWH.

⁵⁰³ Translation of the hapax *lō’ yēš* in 9:33 as “if only there were” contends with another translation (“There is no [*lō’ yēš*] arbiter [*mōkīah*] between us”). “The negative contains and discards the thought that the arbiter might intervene on Job’s behalf, whereas the conditional allows the thought to stand.” In Turns of Tempest, 74 note. The “witness” of 16:19 (‘ēd) is in the sky (*šamāyim*) but is rendered as “heaven” although the ancient Israelites had no such concept – gods dwelt simply “above.” In Turns of Tempest, 94 note. In contrast to the Christian “Redeemer,” the *gō’ēl* of 19:25 “furthers the terrible opposition between Job and the god” In Turns of Tempest, 258. The *gō’ēl* either avenged wrongdoing or ransomed slaves.

⁵⁰⁴ “Job’s responses to his calamities and to the speeches from the tempest use terribly ambiguous language.” James L. Crenshaw, Urgent Advice and Probing Questions, Collected Writings on Old Testament Wisdom (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1995) 465.

⁵⁰⁵ For example, The NRSV supplies “myself” as the object, and translates the verb as “despise”: “Therefore I despise [*m*’s] myself / And repent in dust and ashes.” The object of the contested verb, however, is not Job (as in “I despise myself”). Some, like Scholnick, read the verb *m*’s as indicating Job’s “retraction” or “dismissal” of his lawsuit. The Book of Job, 576. Cf. Scholnick, “The Meaning of *Mispāt* in the Book of Job” JBL 101/4 (1982) 303. The object of “withdraw” (or “retract”), however, is “dust and ashes.” In Turns of Tempest, 25-26, 375-378. Compare “He flings me in the mud / So I come to resemble dust and ashes” (30:19 Habel).

supplies.⁵⁰⁶ And finally, “No reading of this final speech by Job removes the perplexing features.”⁵⁰⁷ The supplement of an object for the verb in 42:6 illustrates the predominance of a certain repression, a constraint upon reading.

It is not sufficient to simply point to the textual evidence in *Job*, which supports the view that 1) the only possible intercession has to come from Job’s initiative of a trial; 2) the place where Job’s words would have a direct audience with his attacker is beyond approach; 3) an avenger would in any case come too late; and 4) Job’s final speech is ambiguous. Nor is it sufficient to state that the attempt to legislate an identity across sensual differences is a kind of “weak eyesight” that wishes to perceive similarities everywhere.⁵⁰⁸ The desire to apprehend a foreshadowing of Christ, or to see a contrite Job at the end, wards off the text such that experience itself is forfeited. By allowing the non-systematic to suffuse the practice of criticism, criticism becomes utterly useless for the cathexis of fear and hope embedded in *endoxa*.

Arraignment: Materiality and Form

The beauty of *Job* is not that of an aesthetic harmony and wholeness. With respect to the traditional notion of aesthetic beauty, it might be better to speak of the “ugliness” of *Job*: Like the modernist artwork, divergences and gaps abound in *Job*. Poignancy, a literal shard or stylus, serrates the surfaces of robe, skin and scroll. A “modernist” interpretation

⁵⁰⁶ Cf. In Turns of Tempest, 25-26, 375-378. Also, James L. Crenshaw, Defending God, Biblical Responses to the Problem of Evil (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005) 189. Also, The Book of Job, 576.

⁵⁰⁷ James L. Crenshaw, Old Testament Wisdom, an Introduction (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press 1998) 99. “Job’s responses to his calamities and to the speeches from the tempest use terribly ambiguous language.” James L. Crenshaw, Urgent Advice and Probing Questions, Collected Writings on Old Testament Wisdom (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1995) 465.

⁵⁰⁸ Theodor Adorno, Minima Moralia, Reflections from Damaged Life, trans. E.F.N Jephcott (New York: Verso, 2002) 74.

(that is able to withstand the fear of the unfamiliar) undergoes (in the sense of a dependent response to the text) and is overtaken by the ugly details that bind us:

And as birds seek refuge in the leafy recesses of a tree, feelings escape into the shaded wrinkles, the awkward movements and inconspicuous blemishes of the body we love, where they can lie low in safety. And no passer-by would guess that it is just here, in what is defective and censurable, that the fleeting darts of adoration nestle.⁵⁰⁹

The passer-by, the one of the crowd, does not suspect that the defective and censurable are places where love of a singular, irreplaceable body has refuge.

Job is an encounter with the necessary divergence of a text from translation – that which exceeds intentionality – and pitches reading into the materiality of the text.

When the intentional gives out, the material is in effect. The artwork, though through and through νέσει [conventions], something human, is the plenipotentiary of φύσει [phusei, “natures”], of what is not merely for the subject, of what, in Kantian terms, would be the thing itself.⁵¹⁰

The material of *Job* is “in effect” where it resists efforts to be for us. The other (not-“I”) is always material.⁵¹¹ Although itself something made, and thereby human, *Job* speaks *as if* nature were issuing a claim where it resists our efforts to capture and sort its meaning: remnants of language, deposited like silt upon river banks, excised on surfaces that have decayed, broken like shards of ancient pottery, and frayed like threads of a lost fabric extending beyond our hands.

⁵⁰⁹ Walter Benjamin, “One-Way Street” Reflections, Essays Aphorisms, Autobiographical Writings, trans. Edmund Jephcott, ed. Peter Demetz (New York: Schocken, 2007) 68.

⁵¹⁰ Theodor Adorno, Aesthetic Theory, Theory and History of Literature, Vol 88, trans. Robert Hullot-Kentor, ed. Gretel Adorno and Rolf Tiedemann (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998) 63.

⁵¹¹ Theodor Adorno, Negative Dialectics, trans. E.B. Ashton (New York: Seabury Press, 1973) 193.

Job bears a temporally dislocated or transposed resemblance to the fractured modernist artwork. Like a modernist painting, detail in *Job* appears purposeful and meaningful (often as striking imagery) while resisting interpretation in terms of categorical assessments. Because robe, skin and scroll are sites of tearing, *Job* uncannily mimes the modernist artwork's resistance to form. In that totalizing forces are arbitrary with respect to singularities, singularities are violated in being-rendered subsumable. As Adorno detects, the modernist artwork mimes arbitrariness by its construction and provides a moment for the "ugly" (that which resists form). By emphasizing the "ugly" in *Job* – ruptures – I attempt to show that attempts at reconciliation are arbitrary with respect to singularities ("ruptures" being merely "ugly" from a desire to subsume them). By leaving the moments of tearing in *Job* undone, I aspire not to falsify the materiality of the text in its resistances to "weaving," codification and summarization.⁵¹² My emphasis upon rending in *Job* is a corrective, rather than an attempt at a definitiveness that would assert a kind of mending across rifts. Robe, skin and scroll are material moments by which I attempt an unraveling of false totality, so that this chapter might approximate a mimesis of a social structure free of domination.⁵¹³

The drama of *Job* consists in the distancing of innocence and suffering from a site of their intelligible relation. A deferral is evident both in the lack of narrative resolution and also immanently in the gaps of the text. Pain is immanent in part by its distance from intelligibility. An outcry wanders homeless through a nested series of displacements; this placelessness is part of the wounding of *Job*/Job. Rather than play to the insistence that everything be properly placed, I allow the practice of criticism to become saturated with the lack of place evident in Job's cry of pain, which must attempt to locate itself through an

⁵¹² "Proper thinking about art is a form of suffering, of undergoing the force of alienated thought." Gregg Horowitz, Sustaining Loss, Art and Mourning Life (Stanford: Stanford UP, 2001) 112.

arraignment ('rk, to arrange⁵¹⁴). A form that does not falsify the matter of suffering must be as a distressed weave that unravels the many threads from their subordination to pattern, thus preserving elements in their differences.

What cunning Penelope inflicts upon her artifacts, she inflicts upon herself. Ever since Homer's verses this episode is not the addition or rudiment for which it is easily mistaken, but a constitutive category of art: Through this story, art takes into itself the impossibility of the identity of the one and the many as an element of its unity.⁵¹⁵

By taking "into itself" the dialectic of one and many, the artwork attempts a unity that preserves elements as elements rather than liquidate them into the whole of a composition. Like the undergoing of suffering (itself a product of subsumption), aesthetic form undergoes (is transformed in response to) materiality in its recalcitrance to formation. Although a kind of "cunning," the artwork inflicts upon itself the burden of achieving a non-violent synthesis of its elements.

...aesthetic form is the objective organization within each artwork of what appears as bindingly eloquent. It is the nonviolent synthesis of the diffuse that nevertheless preserves it as what it is in its divergences and contradictions, and for this reason form is actually an unfolding of truth.⁵¹⁶

A work binds elements together in terms of their material moments and resists the identification and fungibility of elements performed by logical inference.

Job, like a modernist work, is the bearer of an "untranslatable" truth (i.e., it resists being exhaustively discursively rendered); its truth is in a negative relationship to the world and is sacrificed once it is rendered intelligible in terms of the world. If it were possible to

⁵¹³ The Origin of Negative Dialectic, 91, 131.

⁵¹⁴ As in 13:18, 23:4, 33:5. The Book of Job, 453.

thoroughly translate the content of a work into rational assertions, then it would be possible to discard the work. “Its [the literary work’s] essential quality is not statement or the imparting of information.”⁵¹⁷ Rather than depend upon rational assertions or linear narrative, the transmissibility of a work depends upon the absence of explanation by which it claims a place in the listener’s memory.⁵¹⁸ A concern for the fidelity of translation and a work’s portability corresponds to the isolated (and exchangeable) individual and social contract.

As the fracturing of a modernist artwork calls attention to its medium, so *Job* in its fractured form calls attention to its medium. Fragments of scroll evoke their own fascination with the fragility and the beauty of their marks. In the form of scrolls, *Job* survived history by being copied by hand. *Job* is an attempt of a civilization to remember itself. The possibility that we might have just “the words” of *Job* apart from a given scroll or codex calls for closer attention to the dimension of language as allegedly just detachable sign and neutral bearer of information. Some scrolls survived pogroms because they were concealed underneath the clothes of fleeing Jews: wrapped around bodies, the words ran.

The fragments of singularly occurring words and word-forms in *Job* inspires the spirit of the collector: diligent readers painstakingly search in the debris of history for approximations to other Ancient SW Asian texts so that fragments of *Job* may be rendered intelligible.⁵¹⁹ Like the break in history that “assisted” the collector Benjamin,⁵²⁰ history

⁵¹⁵ *Aesthetic Theory*, 186-187.

⁵¹⁶ *Aesthetic Theory*, 143.

⁵¹⁷ *Illuminations*, 69.

⁵¹⁸ *Illuminations*, 91.

⁵¹⁹ The painstaking search for the most obscure bits of information in order to construct an explanation of the riddles presented by the text is what Wolfers calls the institutionalized art of mistranslation. Wolfers’ work is nevertheless highly idiosyncratic. David Wolfers, *Deep Things Out of Darkness: The Book of Job; Essays and a New English Translation* (Kampen: Kok Pharos Publishing, 1995). 25-45

⁵²⁰ “The figure of the collector, as old-fashioned as that of the *flâneur*, could assume such eminently modern features in Benjamin because history itself – that is, the break in tradition which took place at the beginning of this century – had

unraveled the cord (30:11a)⁵²¹ of the text: its intelligibility is as a cloth that has been pared down to a single thread, the linguistic context of its *hapax legomena* having frayed away. The imposing of determinations of historical origin, authorship and genre (categories that *Job* resists⁵²²) must contend with *Job* as fragmentary. *Job* is the remains of an insistence upon order in the same sense that caves are a refuge from empire. The cataclysmic whirlwind of history renders *Job* the remains of impositions. The un-subsumable moments of text, as not appropriated into exchange, sift through today's net-like interpretive grid, joining the ash and debris that betray⁵²³ the imposition (the imprinting) of the ordered, administrative whole upon actual bodies.

Passage across textual gaps

A compulsion at work is evident in the effort to bridge textual gaps: At the level of narrative, the impasse between innocence and suffering is allegedly bridged by the axiomatic presupposition of retributive justice. At the level of text, the impasse is the lack of an object for a verb in a critical verse (42:6) that is to be “bridged” by a supplement. At the level of interpretation, *mōkīah*, *'ēd*, and *gō'ēl* are anachronistically taken by some interpreters to be foreshadowing Christ. However, just as Job’s robe is irretrievably torn, so is the text over which these efforts to mend suffering occur.⁵²⁴

already relieved him of this task of destruction and he only needed to bend down, as it were, to select his precious fragments from the pile of debris.” Illuminations, 45.

⁵²¹ Good translates this as El having loosed his bowstring as part of an assault against the sufferer. In Turns of Tempest, 305.

⁵²² As evidenced by the Qumran Targum (fragments of *Job* in Aramaic), the fundamental order of the chapters is in question. There is also reason to suspect that the speeches of Elihu have been inserted at a later time as a pious response to *Job*. Because success normally depends upon textual unity, the classification of *Job* as dramatic, epic, or didactic, etc., is suspended. Whether poetry or prose, one or many authors, dislocated or emended, the most one can say is that *Job* confronts us with plural forms of address.

⁵²³ “betray” in the special sense of *telling*.

⁵²⁴ In particular, the verses regarding the “avenger” (19:25-26) are especially problematic. “In 35 years of trying to perceive sense in these verses, I have found it only in the first line [19:25a].” In Turns of Tempest, 100 note. With the exception of Good, this difficulty rarely prevents translators from placing sense in the verses.

The insistence upon theodicy in translation attempts to consign the plurality of meaning of the text to a single “remembrance”: “even the past is no longer safe from the present, whose remembrance of it consigns it a second time to oblivion.”⁵²⁵ To the extent that *Job* is “remembered” via the reassignment of its non-identical elements to the formalized schema of the objective social structure, *Job* is forgotten by way of an illusion of immediacy.

Efforts to “weave” across torn moments in *Job* resemble the densely woven, administered whole of the social environment:

One can speak of the claustrophobia of humanity in the administered world, of a feeling of being incarcerated in a thoroughly societalized, closely woven, netlike environment. The denser the weave, the more one wants to escape it, whereas it is precisely its close weave that prevents any escape. The revolt against it is violent and irrational.⁵²⁶

Adorno voices a word of caution against “rebellious” attempts to escape the dense weave of a rigidified social environment. As opposed to an irrational revolt against this dense weave, reading *Job* as torn is generative of a plurality of readings.

With the attempt to legislate a mythological identity across sensuous differences in *Job*, we see the effect of a kind of stereotyped thinking upon texts. At its worst, that stereotyped thinking collapses the would-be “individual” into a non-individuation, such “thinking” represents the “preconditioned reflexes of the subjectless exponents of a particular standpoint.”⁵²⁷ Within the prejudiced “individual,” disorientation within damaged

⁵²⁵ Minima Moralia 47.

⁵²⁶ Theodor Adorno, “Education after Auschwitz,” Critical Models, Interventions and Catchwords, trans. Henry W. Pickford (New York: Columbia UP, 1998) 193.

⁵²⁷ Dialectic of Enlightenment, 166

society is mitigated by rigid adherence to intrinsic supra-individual laws.⁵²⁸ As a means of pseudo-orientation and mastery, allegedly intrinsic truths (in reality neither intrinsic nor true) are irrational because they are the means by which the individual abandons the reality principle.⁵²⁹ As a response to the threat of difference, a weakened ego imparts to difference a confirmation of categories of understanding. The drastic oversimplification of these categories (e.g., good or evil) is the principle of their appeal, since they reduce the complicated to the elementary.⁵³⁰ Rigid adherence to universal, moralistic law is an index of the extent to which the superego has come to reflect displaced instinctual urges.⁵³¹ Once “reading” is devoted to a regressive desire for repetition of the same (which requires but an efficient semblance of subjectivity), who can be said to be reading, let alone reading *Job*? Whereas reading *Job* puts us in a position to reflect upon the motives to resolve indeterminacy in the text, reading itself has no place insofar as the creation of a single, paranoid psyche has become a vital component of society.⁵³²

The screen through which reading is deformed is the mutual authorization of the order of intelligibility and political order:

...the order of intelligibility depends in its turn on the established order that it serves to interpret. This readability will then be as little neutral as it is non-violent.⁵³³

⁵²⁸ Theodor Adorno, “Prejudice in Interview Material,” The Authoritarian Personality, Studies in Prejudice (New York: W.W. Norton, 1969) 618-619.

⁵²⁹ The Authoritarian Personality, 627.

⁵³⁰ The Authoritarian Personality, 619. See also, “constant reiteration and scarcity of ideas are indispensable ingredients of the entire technique.” Theodor Adorno, “Freudian Theory and the Pattern of Fascist Propaganda,” The Culture Industry, Selected Essays on Mass Culture, ed. J.M. Bernstein (New York: Routledge, 1991) 171.

⁵³¹ The Authoritarian Personality, 627-8.

⁵³² To discover “in the world” a disavowed projection is paranoia. “Paranoia no longer pursues its goal on the basis of the individual case history of the persecutor; having become a vital component of society, it must locate that goal within the delusive context of wars and economic cycles before the psychologically predisposed ‘national comrades’ can support themselves on it, both inwardly and outwardly, as patients.” Dialectic of Enlightenment, 171.

⁵³³ Deconstruction and the Possibility of Justice, 36.

Just as false universality inhibits passage of difference (i.e., not already of the order of right), theodicy arrives ahead of instances of suffering as the law (legitimacy and intelligibility) of suffering. A root of theodicy is to be found in the desire to impart a magical invocation to the repetition of the same.⁵³⁴

As never founded upon an authority beyond a self-authorization, the susceptibility of a symbolic order to deconstruction is ensured. The merely performative center⁵³⁵ of a symbolic order must be repressed through a compulsive repetition of its “legitimating” discourse. I am attempting to think-into a symbolic order that is read into *Job* in order to describe its typical features and conditions for its recurrence, while simultaneously avoiding the suggestion that this order is somehow a permanent condition.

A history of domination can be sketched as a hand-waving in the direction of allegedly immutable facts legitimated by types of eschatological horizon (theological awakening and metaphysical transcendence).⁵³⁶ Just as these types of eschatological horizon tend to ward off memory in a particular way, law legitimates the violence that founds it retrospectively: “its future anterior already justifies it.”⁵³⁷

In these situations said to found law (*droit*) or state, the grammatical category of the future anterior all too well resembles a modification of the present to describe the violence in progress. It consists, precisely, in feigning the presence or simple modalization of presence. Those who say “our time,” while thinking “our present” in light of a future anterior present do not know very well, by definition, what they are saying. It is precisely in this ignorance

⁵³⁴ By “repetition of the same” I am alluding to Freud’s death instinct. Sigmund Freud, Beyond the Pleasure Principle, trans. James Strachey (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1961) 30. Importantly, Freud prefacing his discussion of an *arche* of the death instinct by declaring it as a “myth,” by which I understand that the formulation of a death “instinct” is not to codify or to authorize repetition as an historical invariant.

⁵³⁵ Derrida’s words for this center is a “performative tautology:” “one performatively produces the conventions that guarantee the validity of the performative” Jacques Derrida, “Force of Law: The Mystical Foundation of Authority,” Deconstruction and the Possibility of Justice, trans. Mary Quaintance, ed. Drucilla Cornell et al. (New York: Routledge, 1992) 33.

⁵³⁶ The Origin of Negative Dialectic, 47.

⁵³⁷ Deconstruction and the Possibility of Justice, 35.

that the eventness of the event consists, what we naively call its presence.⁵³⁸

Law relies upon the invocation of an authority that looks backward only in light of itself. The pretense of superior reason, universal law or the *eschaton* is achieved by a repudiation of passion (the means of concealing its own motives from itself); consequently, such “truth” is false.

The peculiarity of a *mise en abyme* is that the juxtaposed images coincide, always together, and that the closer one inspects, the more this coincidental repetition is in view as that which permeates its “inner workings” infinitely rather than granting a terminus in which inspection can come to a rest. It is for this reason maddening. Reading *Job* in a coincidental way with Benjamin, Derrida, Heidegger, Adorno, Kafka, and others, is similarly maddening, for the problem of origin – a terminus or ground from which reading might occur – is never given, as if the problem were to simply choose a philosophical orientation and apply it. In part, this problem emerges as a sign that reading has successfully embarked, for to apply any of the aforementioned figures would be a distortion and an error. But that is only to say that a problem of history is given a chance to reappear more forcefully. Each orientation (if I might temporarily call each literary figure an orientation) can appear disconnected from my experience (and thereby disconnected from a history) insofar as I am incapable of experience; alternately, if I am capable of experience, then each stands a chance to speak to me variously as to what I am attempting to live through, opening a possibility that I might discern my circumstances more keenly – or, more precisely, that I might discern a *difficulty* with discerning my circumstances (i.e., that it is experience itself that is somehow blocked).

⁵³⁸ Deconstruction and the Possibility of Justice, 35.

It is undergoing itself that refuses, like a *mise en abyme*, to be given limits or *telos*. Indeed, even the appearance of the “inner” of a *mise en abyme* is a ruse. Nevertheless, a tentative threading of discourses occurs throughout this dissertation. I have *arraigned* Job with other texts (so that conversation about undergoing might be stimulated by their juxtaposition for a plurivocality of *Job*). In doing so, my efforts are preceded by another, Aristotelian-materialist tradition (to contest a powerful affect associated with reconciliatory thinking while resisting a foreclosure of reading in preference for an alternate, authoritative univocality).

A problem with “passage” itself is under consideration, and words as providing passage between *Job* and contemporary social conditions, and contemporary social conditions and *Job*, begin to tear and become inadequate. Here as elsewhere, I place *Job* in proximity to a certain reading of the social whole, and let this proximity engender readings of *Job* for today. To apply one to the other would tend to suggest one reading as authoritative. The moment of philosophical reflection is the rending of the ability to make sense of what is undergone, that “making sense” is in some way responsible. Once we acknowledge that the political and social ordering of human beings are the sites of suffering, we are committed to not speak of suffering in a general or abstract way, lest we perform with words what is done with the imposition of abstract and brute political form.⁵³⁹ Walls rend space and may themselves be rent, and (as in Kafka through a repudiation of expression⁵⁴⁰) passages become twisted and fractured as they approximate this rending.

⁵³⁹ For example, the rending of the land by Israel’s Security “fence” (even its name is in dispute) marks a site of confrontation as to what “the Land” is to mean and to whom. It disrupts those Israeli and Palestinian practices that used to occur, and might resume, across integrated communities. The two-dimensionality (wall-affinity) of painting can also be thematically engaged, declaring openly the conventional limitations of painting. The communities at the fringes of the security fence are torn.

⁵⁴⁰ Prisms, 246.

As Adorno attests, Kafka's work stands along the path of disenchantment, but at a specific point when the demythologized *deus absconditus* of the enlightenment recreates the archaic terror of the radically unknown. Kafka's work attempts to reopen a trial against dialectical theology's convergence with the mythic powers of demonology.

The Trial novel is itself the trial of the trial...In Kafka's statement to whoever it may concern, he describes a court which sits in judgment over men in order to convict law itself. Concerning the latter's mythic character he left no doubt. At one point in the Trial, the goddesses of justice, war and the hunt are treated as one.⁵⁴¹

Job's lawsuit is also a means by which law itself is convicted – that law being the allegedly “divinely” mandated system of retributive justice, an “infallibly just” ordering of creation against which any attempted novelty is rendered *a priori* meaningless finally by the exercise of brute force. In Kafka's “mirror-writing” of late capitalism, integration, as the thoroughly compulsory repetition of a totally submissive consciousness, is bound within the disintegration of a perpetually shabby world that permits no affective cathexis.⁵⁴² Joining Kafka's world of the perpetually undead, Job is “blessed” with a long, long life in the presence of doubles of his murdered children. As with Job, “The heroes of the *Trial* and the *Castle* become guilty not through their guilt – they have none – but because they try to get justice on their side.”⁵⁴³

Job's *arraignment* displaces law; the juxtaposition of *Job* with other texts is a displacement of law also insofar as philosophy is subject to a demand to not waste the time that a sojourn requires. Law shares its condition of possibility with history, or literature.⁵⁴⁴

⁵⁴¹ Prisms, 270-271.

⁵⁴² Prisms, 252, 257, 264.

⁵⁴³ Prisms, 270.

⁵⁴⁴ Acts of Literature, 187.

To the extent that each (law, history, literature) can impinge upon me as modes of address, each can be ways experience can open differences across these presumptively discrete domains. Because so much of *Job* is a recording, a marking as/by rending (and hence requiring remembrance rather than memorializing), an underpinning of textual juxtapositions with a single, authoritative History – between the violent piety of Job’s friends with the authoritarian personality, or between El’s dysfunctional, heavenly administration and the contemporary, hyper-administered world – would merely repeat a problem under consideration: that an incapacity to experience is demonstrable in the desire for origin. My goal with the textual juxtapositions that I employ is to mime the contemporary spirit of montage as the gathering of things ejected by the insistence that everything be properly placed.

Today, the possibility of thriving, if not surviving, is certainly damaged (e.g., current economic crises and wars). For many, literature is a refuge in which one might locate oneself despite the uncertainty brought upon by upheavals and displacements. For a certain deformed embodiment, this effort at location occurs as part of a belonging (or worse, vanishing) into belief as opposed to reading, where “reading” has mere utility as a confirmation of belief, however much it has departed from the reality principle. In spite of his suffering, Job didn’t cleverly adapt to, and avail himself, of whatever power was on hand for use (which would have required his disappearance within acceptable piety), but rather initiated a trial under conditions of a deprivation of available means. Job’s trial preserves the possibility of the transformation of the conditions in which the intelligibility of suffering is presumed to be given. Thus my task is to enhance this transformative possibility for today’s sufferer, even if this effort melts away.

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