

## The Failed Developmental Position of Concern in the Story of Job

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### Abstract

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The Book of Job has been limited by theodical perspectives. We propose that the story also speaks of the challenges of developing from a concrete position of “right and wrong” or “good and bad” to one that appreciates the complexities and nuances of our inner psychological worlds. Rather than being a paean to God’s omniscience and omnipotence, we propose that Job is a cautionary tale about the inability of the caregiver to embrace the ambivalence and otherness in the emerging being-ness of the child, consequentially delimiting the child’s emerging appreciation of difference and otherness. We anchor our ideas in four existential-relational, developmental positions: the contiguous, paranoid-schizoid, depressive (concern), and transcendent.

**Keywords:** paranoid-schizoid; Job; theodicy; depressive position; concern; existential-relational positions

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### Introduction

The Book of Job is a story broadly familiar across numerous cultures, including religionists and secular humanists of every variety. In this paper, we hope to add to the hermeneutic tradition with a specific focus on the wisdom the story holds about psychological functioning when we de-center ourselves from theodicy, which is the theological effort to vindicate the goodness of God in the face of apparent evil. Accordingly, we will explain how we think the story addresses the liability of stagnation in a certain developmental position of existential-interpersonal relating which we and others call the paranoid-schizoid. Elsewhere we have proposed that this position is fundamental to, although not singularly determinative of, engagement in “evil” actions (Webb & Rosenbaum, 2022). In this article we maintain that the story of Job exemplifies this.

Ahead of that, however, we want to note that Job is a fascinatingly complex story. It is not particularly easy to understand and deconstruct, since it is believed by some scholars to be a condensation or derivation of a variety of stories from different peoples and cultures and perhaps even authored by more than one person (e.g. Gilad, 2016). It is a story found in three of the world’s major religions: Christianity, Judaism, and Islam. Perhaps expectably there are interesting differences in how the story is contextualized in the service of its interpretation. As a prelude to our efforts to reflect on the story’s meaning, we want to echo what Philip Cushman asks when noting the traditional idea that “torah is acquired only in community:” How can “interpretations, sometimes confusing, contradictory, or incoherent, be considered correct interpretations?” (2010, p. 380). By way of answer, Cushman emphasizes being able to tolerate paradox, arguing that “textual engagement is generative and...[that]...readers coauthor the text” (2010, p. 380). In other words, interpretation, while not necessarily consistent, is useful when it stirs new thinking and generates new meanings.

In this paper we first offer an overview of the story. We then highlight what we see as in need of (re)interpretation. This involves the aspect of Job’s restoration that pertains to the nearly unthinkable loss of his many children. We argue that traditional interpretations of this aspect of the story fall short because of appeasement to

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certain cultural ideas of “God” which look to vindicate God’s beneficence. We propose that these perspectives limit the meaning we can make from this important story.

### The Storyline from the Judeo-Christian Tradition

We focus on the Judeo-Christian tradition of Job. The Muslim version of the story is compiled by the 10th century Islamic scholar, Ibn Kathir, who put together the story based on the Quran and traditional knowledge. However, in Kathir’s (2003) version of the story Job (Ayub), throughout his ordeal, remains steadfast in not questioning the will or purpose of God (Allah) (Stacey 2009). Hence, the Muslim story, even more than the Judeo-Christian version focuses on the righteous patience of Job. This is a substantial difference from the Judeo-Christian elaboration which fuels the thesis of this paper.

As told in both the Christian *Bible* and the Jewish *Ketuvim* God brags to Satan about the righteousness and undying loyalty of Job. God describes Job as “perfect and upright, one who feared God and turned away from evil” (*Revised Standard Version Bible*, 1952, Job 1:1).

Satan responds to God’s assertions by saying that Job is perfect only because God has favored Job with the unmoderated blessings of children and worldly riches. Satan says that if this were not so, Job would “curse you to your face” (1:12). And with this, a bet is on between Satan and God, with God responding to Satan: “All right then, everything he has is in your power. Only do not extend your hand against the man himself!” (1:12). Basically, God says, “Let’s see if you’re right or I’m right. Do whatever you want to him, but don’t kill him.”

The devastation of Job’s life ensues. Job’s seven sons and three daughters are killed; he loses all his worldly riches; and he suffers a plague of bodily insults. Against the *erusaem* of who he is by God’s estimation, Job ultimately does not waver. But this resolute affirmation of his righteousness is not without debate, and Job’s internal deliberation of it is introduced via “friends, Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar. They challenge this collapsed identity of Job by noting that a man cannot be “purer” (4:17) than his maker and that Job must have done something sinful to warrant unfavorable treatment by God. In other words, these friends hold to the party line that since “God is good” he would not simply cause harm without good reason: Job did something to deserve it.

In this deliberation, however, as adamantly as these friends argue for the place of Job’s “otherness” (of his clay-footed humanity), so does Job maintain that he is innocent and undeserving of his misfortune. He says, “I don’t deserve any of this (9:15) but I trust that God has his reasons. Who am I to question God?” (9:12). Job strives to hold onto the complexity of being-ness. In a humbling and self-effacing declaration of fealty, he pleads to God to recognize his humanity and for God to engage him in something other than a condemning silence. Job petitions God for an exchange that would lead to a better understanding between them.

God refuses. Instead, what is important to God is his engagement with Satan. God remains only focused on how Job is either yea or nay the servant that God expects and thinks him to be. Accordingly, just as God remains stuck in his perspective so do traditional theologians who mirror God’s “either/or” lens that reduce the matter of Job to being either “good” or “bad.” Thus, Job cries out to no avail: “I am full of shame and satiated with my affliction (10:15). If I lift myself up, you hunt me as a fierce lion, and again you display your power against me (10:16).”

The importance of Job’s deliberation about his essence is evident in the story’s detailed exposition of the painful and extended debate-without-resolution between Job and his “friends” about his righteousness versus his sinfulness. The great portion of the *Book of Job* (Chapters 2-31 of 42) is consumed with this impassioned conversation that aptly captures the nature of the internal “round and round” of obsessive doubt about being the embodiment *or not* of good.

Interestingly, it is only towards the end of the book (Chapter 32) that the character, Elihu, enters the story (for five chapters) with the overarching purpose of chastising Job. Elihu, apparently speaking for God, justifies God’s position with remarkable comments that in essence affirm the monster in the dark by denying that the monster exists. Elihu attempts to foreclose thought that God is in anyway the faltering caregiver that warrants the rage and confusion of Job. In the story Elihu paves over Job’s angry confusion about God’s disengagement with his needs. In doing so, Elihu, denounces any effort to move to a more complex and nuanced reading of God’s conduct. Elihu, instead, reinforces the entrenchment by proclaiming that the problem is Job. After all, “God is Impartial and Omniscient” (34:16) and “God does not act wickedly, and the Almighty does not pervert justice” (34:12). Then, in a mind-bending disavowal of the de-personalized experience that Job has been experiencing, Elihu says of God, “For his eyes are on the ways of an *individual* (italics added), he observes all a person’s steps” (34:20-21).

In the last four chapters of the *Book of Job*, God finally reappears “out of the whirlwind” (38:1) and speaks for himself. God essentially says, “Who are you to question me who, after all, created everything, including giving birth to you?” In the face of this Job collapses his effort to emerge with a sense of “other-ness,” and says, “I despise myself, and I repent in dust and ashes!” (42:6). Job accepts a binary of there being only good or bad, and he submits himself, now beaten back by God, as abjectly bad. He realizes that he must accept the collapsed identity of the perfect and righteous servant or continue to suffer mightily.

The *Book* then concludes quickly. Within the expected lens of the “good-bad” position the story offers, we learn that Job, now again servile to God’s Truth, is given back what he lost during God’s dalliance with Satan. Included in this restoration, aside from an abundance of livestock, is seven sons and three daughters. In the face of Job proclaiming his now humble acceptance of his misery, God proceeds to restore to Job the *externals* of his life. Besides doubling his worldly wealth, God grants Job new children: seven sons and three daughters (in the Judeo-Christian version) and twenty-eight, 14 sons and 14 daughters (in the Islamic rendition). The story notes that the daughters were the most beautiful in “all the land” (42:15).

*However*, there is a deafening silence about the children of Job that were sacrificed during the contest with Satan. Neither sadness nor regret is noted in even a passing way. There is not even a whiff of a phenomenology of concern. The particular and special being-ness of these children is relegated to the irrelevant; they are replaceable and, from the perspective of the either/or God of Job, their replacement is to be considered sufficient, if not magnanimous.

### The Traditional Interpretations

One way that traditional interpreters deal with Job’s deep loss is to postulate that time is a human factor of concern and, therefore, irrelevant for understanding God’s intent or purpose. Accordingly, Job is not viewed as a tale whose coherence is limited to the story’s immediate text. *The Bible*, as the book of God, is seen as wholly inspired, and therefore any text at any point within it is viewed as interpretably related. For instance, Thomas Aquinas, in his 13th century extensive *Commentary on the Book of Job*, looks to later text for illumination. Likewise does St. Gregory the Great in the 1st century in his *Morals on the Book of Job*. Hence, while most scholars seem to agree that the notion of a redemptive afterlife was foreign to the author(s) of Job in the 6th century BCE (e.g., Almond 2016), Aquinas, in striking contrast to most apologists, does not gloss over the restoration of Job. He takes up the issue of the loss by saying that the loss of was not really a loss, because God knew the children would rejoin Job in the afterlife.

Other interpreters essentially punt on the issue of Job’s loss of family by restating God’s admonition “out of the whirlwind” (38:1). In different iterations they herald God’s omnipotence and omniscience and our human insufficiency. They implicitly or explicitly assert that any immediacy we feel for reconciling Job’s loss of his children (or understanding any tragedy that befalls us) is irrelevant, especially considering other text that indicates that God, indeed, is tuned finely to our condition. As Jesus says, “Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? And not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. Even the hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not, therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows” (Matthew, 10:30-31). In other words, we do not know God’s purpose and, thus, in faith must cast aside any intent to suppose it.

From a Jewish perspective, Elie Wiesel (2009 October 15, minute 47:03-48:14) poses whether the “Almighty Himself” might have made a terrible mistake in allowing the terrible treatment of Job. Referring implicitly but clearly to the Holocaust, Wiesel says that such wondering occurs every time a tragedy occurs. Referring to a Midrashic legend, Wiesel says: “Job turned to God, Master of the Universe [and said], ‘Is it possible that a storm passed before you, causing you to confuse Iyov (Job) with Oyev, the enemy?’” Wiesel goes on to say that of all the questions that Job poses, only this one God answers. “God’s voice roared in the tempest: ‘Pull yourself together, man, and listen. Many hairs have I created on the human head and every single hair has its root. I don’t confuse roots.’”

Hence, as God says to Job: “Will the one who contends with the Almighty correct him? Let the person who accuses God give him an answer!” (40:2). In other words, in essence, we must embrace the humbled position that Job ultimately accepts when he assuages God’s upset with him by saying, “I am completely unworthy--how could I reply to you?” (40:40). “I despise myself, and I repent in dust and ashes!” (42:6).

Implicitly echoing this position of Job, J.P. Nunez comments in the *Catholic Stand* that we should look at the story with the humble perspective of someone who watches a master chess player. “[I]n chess, we are not justified in thinking that a move is bad simply because we don’t see a reason for it. In fact, if an apparently bad move is made by

a world-class chess player, we actually have reason to think that it is a good move no matter how much it may baffle us” (Nunez, 2019, unnumbered).

A less explicitly self-assuaging but essentially similar view is taken by Jewish scholar, Avivah Zornberg (2011, November 24). She maintains that we, like Moses, must have clarity that we cannot see God’s face, but realize also that “sometimes things left in shadow are the most real” (2011 November 24, 1:25:31-35). With God in shadow, we stem any arrogant wish to claim we know or can grasp who God is, and we, accordingly, can remain in reverential awe at God’s otherness. This leaves us in a position where, in our efforts to find peace with our lived experience of there being evil, we cannot resort to strident homily but, instead, only whisper in an intimate way to ourself or to a fellow sufferer that we can’t justify the cruelty at hand but have our experiential sense that “in the depths God intends only good” (1:18:03-07).

Within the theodical tradition, then, there is no sustained effort to challenge the conception of the God of Job. One cannot have an imperfect God or a God who makes mistakes. At best, there is tentative wondering of whether God made a mistake, but ultimately there is the affirmation that the master chess player knows what he or she is doing and can separate out the believer from the non-believer.

We, the authors, understand that there is an importance in these faiths of a submission to a higher power and, therefore, a limitation in our ability to know the motivations of that power. However, we also think that the self-delimiting perspective that forecloses more critical challenge, deconstruction, and interpretation of the story is unfortunate. One, for instance, might submit both to the idea of a higher power or master chess player *and* hold that this power makes mistakes or acts out of reasons that are also mysterious to them.

Indeed, we note Justin Barrett's (2011) list of the assumptions or "non-reflective beliefs" that characterize "natural religion" and mark his finding that believers "will consistently mis-remember, distort, omit, or invent elements of a religious story so as to skew ambiguous elements in that story toward a ‘theologically correct’ (i.e., in accordance with "natural religion") understanding.” In other words, it is worth considering that it is not so much the case that there are theologically correct interpretations but rather that we, as theists, have propensities to adjust facts and stories to fit into a box. A more critical analysis protects against this tendency.

### **A Psychological Interpretation of Job**

To lay the foundation for our psychological interpretation of the wisdom of Job we begin by describing existential-relational positions that we all as people negotiate during our life in the development of our being-ness. Our focus on and writings about these existential-relational positions (e.g. Webb & Rosenbaum, 2023, 2021; Rosenbaum & Webb, 2022) grows out of the clinical theoretical work of many others, especially D.W. Winnicott (1935, 1975/1955), Thomas Ogden (1986, 1989), and James Grotstein (2007). These existential-relational positions are sequenced and named: contiguous, paranoid-schizoid, depressive (caring), and transcendent.

Unlike the thinking that usually pertains to developmental stage theories, these “developmental” positions, while sequentially achieved are not emergently wholistic. There is a subjective teleology at play in their conception in that it is presumed that if our development proceeds as planned, we will progress through their sequence. However, the achievement of any next higher position does not render functioning that is characteristic of an “earlier” position thereafter irrelevant. In fact, in “normal” life, and, indeed, even in the course of a single day, we conceivably can function in any of the four positions for different periods of time.

This is not to say, however, that this clinical theory presumes no position about psychological health. The theory holds that we are healthiest when we move fluidly between the positions but function predominantly in the higher positions: the depressive and transcendent positions. The theory, especially as we have interpreted it, maintains that as we negotiate the positions, we, generally speaking, become more tuned to both the otherness of others and the otherness we have even to our own selves. We might say, in alignment with Sartre (1966), that as we progress, we become more aware that as beings we are not an essential “thing” and, thus, are most adaptively and agentially responsive to our life circumstance when we see ourselves and others always as a work in progress.

A novelist and fellow philosopher/psychologist summarize this best. In *Steppenwolf*/Herman Hesse(1927) notes our foolishness in thinking of ourselves as a “unity” rather than as “a chaos of forms, of states and stages, of inheritances and potentialities” (Hesse 1990, p. 59). With this in mind we can appreciate the wisdom of Michael Thompson’s comment that “[I]t is not the lack of true self, or good self, or a strong ego which characterizes the various forms of psychopathology, but rather the state of alienation that ensues when we imagine ourselves to be selves at all” (1985, p. 182). Or, harkening back to Sartre, that we are ultimately “no-thing” (1966).

We want to make one final note ahead of describing these existential-relational positions. We realize that we are not the first to “author” Job from a psychological point of view. Notable to us is psychoanalyst, Marion Milner, who essentially says (1987) that Job had no unconscious at the outset of the story and that the story is essentially about the awakening of his inner world. As the reader will see, we basically agree with Milner but expand the focus beyond the *intra*-psychic to an interpersonal and developmental point of view.

### The Existential-relational Positions

The first position, the *contiguous*, is aptly named to capture our status of differentiation from an-other. It is usually thought of as our state of being when we first enter the world and breathe healthily only because of the close attention of our caregivers. In this position we have no conscious awareness of being separate from others, even though we become increasingly familiar with certain others, such as our caregivers. There is, nonetheless, essentially no “me” and no “you.” Indeed, there is no conception of identity much less a sense of its differentiation or non-differentiation from an-other. What dominates is the seeking of need fulfillment and the crying protest of its frustration.

The contiguous position is one, however, of which we can experience a semblance at other points in our life. It prevails, for instance, when we fall in love or experience the oceanic oneness that can accompany a moment of spiritual rapture. Of the former no one offers a better description of our state within this position than Shakespeare when he chimes in Sonnet 39: “O how thy worth with manner may I sing,/When thou art all the better part of me?/What can mine own praise to mine own self bring,/And what is’t but mine own, when I praise thee?” The phrase “oceanic feeling” is one attributed to French dramatist, Romain Rolland. In a letter he wrote to Sigmund Freud in 1927 he said that the feeling is an experience “without perceptible limits” and a feeling of “the eternal” that is independent of any organized religion but fundamental to all of them (Parsons 1999, p. 173).

The second position, the *paranoid-schizoid*, is said to emerge when the inevitable imperfect attunement to our needs by our primary caregivers reaches sufficient repetition that the discontinuity fosters in us a dawning awareness of difference and a fledgling perception of otherness. There are various psychological gyrations that accompany this frustration-born awareness. In the reactive anger that we display to not getting timely enough or mistaken attention to our needs for food, warmth, and caress, we are presumed to wrestle in various ways with feeling (although not consciously at first) ourselves or our caregivers to be deficient, either by excess or insufficiency. However, the complexity of this attribution is essentially binary and the notation of otherness very limited. Hence, we move into a dance between experiencing ourselves and the caregivers in a simplistic way: (1) We have a beginning sense of being a “me,” but the otherness of caregivers and all others is not distinct; they are only beings who are “not me.” (2) Paralleling this, we are said to experience ourselves and “not-me others” as either “good” or “bad.” The complexity that characterizes the ground between these polarities is not yet developed.

With the above in mind, we can make sense of the position’s name. The existential-relational space is “paranoid,” because no otherness in the world is experienced as substantial enough to warrant justification for living independent of our needs and desires. Hence, within the status of “me” and “not-me” is the paranoid feeling that you are either “with me or against me.” There is nothing in between in this instrumental view of otherness. “Me” is the end all and be all, and as such there is a basic “schizoid” level of functioning.

As with the contiguous position, but even more frequently, such paranoid-schizoid functioning is elementally present at times in all of us throughout our life span. While we might vary in how prone we are to live within this position’s existential frame, we all are susceptible to it. It is our lens, for instance, when we gossip, reveling in the “us-ness” that we feel when with a friend we degrade an-other because they are “not (like) us.” Furthermore, it is the frame for our interpersonal functioning when we are rabidly tribal (Webb & Rosenbaum, 2021) and in our passionate politics, sexism, or racism and we, therein, devolve into make sweeping characterizations about how *all* Republicans/Democrats, men/women, blacks/whites/latinos are some dastard thing. Elsewhere (Webb & Rosenbaum, 2023) we suggest that those who are ardent subscribers to conspiracy theories are bound in a paranoid-schizoid position. In a step further along this path, we maintain that it is the position into which we try to train our soldiers so that they can kill. The enemy is depersonalized of any worthy otherness. It is “us” against them, and they are simply “not us” others who are unworthy of continuance because they are dangerous nips, krauts, rag heads, redskins...(fill in the blank).

The third position, the “depressive” or stage of concern (Winnicott 1963), is said to be in play in our childhood when our caregivers tolerate our anger at their excess or insufficiency in meeting our needs. As our caregivers in loving continuance ride the tempest of our outrage, we come to realize that those who are “not-me” are

other, separate “me’s.” Our me-centered world broadens. Our caregiver’s survival of our aggression dawns an awareness in us that neither they nor we are all good, all bad, or all-powerful. Neither they nor we are gods, but we are all beings with clay feet; we all falter. And with this awareness our caregivers begin to be others who have a life that includes but is not limited to our “me-ness.” We go from experiencing the world as populated by me and those who are not-me to one where there is both me and “you.” And both me and you begin to be experienced by us as beings who have a complexity of feelings and thoughts that cannot be subsumed fairly by a polar and simplistic designation of good or bad, by a binary which fails to acknowledge the grays or in-betweens.

This position garners its name, “depressive” or “stage of concern,” because as others gain in our experience a substantial quality of difference from us, we begin to reckon with the effects of our actions; we begin to be concerned with others’ states of being-ness. We feel regret and sadness (“depressed”) as we realize the hurtfulness that we might have caused others whom we have treated in a simplistic way as “not-me’s.” From the depressive position we resonate self-knowingly to what William Butler Yeats captures in his poem, *Vacillation*: “Things said or done long years ago . . . /Weigh me down, and not a day/But something is recalled,/My conscience or my vanity appalled” (1962, p. 135).

The fourth position, the “transcendent,” is the extension of our walk into an embrace of otherness. In this extension we come to appreciate both the otherness of others and the otherness we always have even to our own selves. It is an affirmation of our no-thing-ness. Our stretch into this wonder at the otherness that always prevails in being-ness, however, hinges on us not accommodating to our awareness of both our own and our caregivers’ imperfections and, therefore, limitations in the command of Truth. We do not seek its substitution by glomming ourselves onto some philosophy or guru that claims its embodiment or access. In the transcendent position, in other words, we go beyond what Anthony Storr says is our “want or need for some all-embracing belief system which purports to provide an answer to life’s mysteries” and we come to understand fully, even if in dismay, that “[o]ne man’s faith is another man’s delusion” (Storr 1996, p. 198). Truth with a capital “T” becomes something which transcends proprietary claims. It is something that must always be pursued even it is always just out of grasping containment. As Jacques Lacan says, “The truth...is that which runs after truth” (1978, p. 188). We might say that we embrace what we in another article call an epistemology of wondering (Webb & Rosenbaum, 2023), an existential position that almost paradoxically fosters our agency in the world, because no one else but ourselves can run after Truth for us.

This is a position that is not at odds with religious belief, even if at first glance it would appear to be so, as evidenced by the mystic tradition that prevails in nearly every religion. For example, in contrast to C.S. Lewis who in his deconstruction of the “Law of Nature” ends up saying: “But, of course, being a Christian *does* mean thinking that where Christianity differs from other religions, Christianity is right and they are wrong” (2001, p. 35, italics added), Christian mystic, Meister Eckhart, in line with his wish to free himself from living with what we might call a paranoid-schizoid preoccupation with “place” and distinction” (Eckhart 1981, p. 202), prays God that “we may be free of God” (DW: 1936-, Vol. 2., pp. 493-494). And from the Islamic tradition, Ibn ‘Arabi speaks of the error of *taayid* or “binding,” seeing in the Quranic story of the angels’ boast of praising Allah with particular divine names a limited and errant perspective since “none can perform a complete praise of the real or affirm adequately its transcendence” (Webb & Sells, 1995, p. 205). In less esoteric language, the above is captured by psychoanalyst, Donald Winnicott’s, comment: ““Oh God! May I be alive when I die” (C. Winnicott 1989, p. 4) and, implicitly speaking, not bound by a constrained identity or intransigent belief.

### **A Psychological, Non-theodical Perspective**

We propose that if we unbind ourselves of a theodical perspective, we, whether theists or non-theists, can open ourselves to a different wisdom that the *Book of Job* offers. To do this it behooves us ultimately to find our meaning as beings, to set our ontological feet (so to speak), not in faithful obedience but in our fearless (transcendental) ability to question and to wonder. With the existential-relational positions above in mind, we maintain that the story is about the terrible (evil) consequences that can befall us all if we are unable to negotiate with our loved ones and with our caregivers a transition from the paranoid-schizoid to the depressive position.

We propose that the story is about Job’s struggle to do this in the face of God’s intransigent resistance to it. In this regard we see Job’s God as the loved, caregiver who cannot abide his child’s, Job’s, fledgling efforts to reposition and accommodate himself to the change in their relationship that would come if he, Job, embraces the otherness of himself and otherness of others. It is in such embrace where the sense of selfhood grows beyond a simplistic view of being either good or bad into the space within these polarities where the greater complexity of

being-ness lives. The story, we think, essentially depicts the failed negotiation between a caregiver and his “child” to find alteration in their relationship to honor this development. The story from this vantage point becomes a kind of cautionary tale of the dire, even evil, consequences that can ensue when we stagnate in our growth and remain stuck in the paranoid-schizoid position. It becomes a story of: Don’t do as I do but learn from what I’ve done.

For example, consider the way the story begins. Recall God bragging to Satan about the righteousness of Job and his undying loyalty to him (God). In the intransigence of this characterization of Job, we maintain that God positions himself or herself in a paranoid-schizoid frame: Job’s identity is collapsed into a singular essence of wholesomeness and the singularity of this points to a worldview that deems others as either good or bad with nothing acknowledged as existing grayly in between. Job to the God of this story is a being with no being-ness that is other to what God sees as loyal to his own glorification. If Job is good, so too is God. If Job is bad, then, also, so too is God. Job is, in other words, a narcissistic extension of God rather than a full person. Furthermore, it is to this collapsed and delimited essence of being that Job ultimately must inscribe himself.

Satan’s response to God highlights how Job has been rewarded. It underscores this position. To Satan what motivates Job’s faithful conduct is not a matter of Job freely choosing to devote himself to God but rather a matter of Job worshipping faithfully because of what he has received through humble servitude (accurately or not). Of course, God, the narcissist, cannot tolerate this idea. To say that Job’s love is contingent upon external factors and not inner ones is to threaten God’s own sense of goodness. So, the bet between God and the Devil follows, and we then have the revelation that God is operating within a paranoid schizoid position where Job exists to God not as a being with his own otherness but simply as a follower who serves the purpose of glorifying his leader (or caregiver).

Amazingly, as Job’s life is being razed, his children murdered, his body destroyed, his friends, far from being sympathetic, look to blame him for his own actions. Rather than to consider plainly that God is having a temper tantrum, they look for the way that Job must have offended God. It’s akin to a rape victim being asked what they were wearing; the assumption being that they must have done something to create the violence since violence itself cannot be generated without some manifest provocation.

And yet, it is in the lack of ability to consider the Other in their subjectivity and so in turn live one step removed from the Other that violence becomes an imaginable course. In turning the blame onto Job, his friends highlight the paranoid-schizoid dilemma that Job is experiencing: **tahW** if the world is not composed of just good and bad? What if I, Job, am both righteous but also sinful? What if such complexity of being-ness is the nature we must embrace? What if the world is not black and white but gray?

This picks up steam with the introduction of Elihu who, claiming access to God’s perspective, refuses to hold such complexity but instead seeks to force Job to accept that he is the bad one. In the parlance of this paper, Elihu refuses to acknowledge that Job is the baby in the paranoid-schizoid matrix with his or her caregiver, and that the two, Job and God, face the challenge together of trying to create a relationship which acknowledges and then accommodates the disjunction between them. In the paranoid-schizoid dilemma it is necessary for God to be the good one. In an ironic way, God in needing to be seen as all good and above reproach demonstrates his own badness and thus the limitations of the paranoid-schizoid position.

### Concluding Thoughts

The restoration of Job is of the **ternals** of his life. In conformance with a paranoid-schizoid existential-relational position there is no recognition of the internal, psychological complexity of being-ness. As Quaker Brian Doak (2015, unnumbered) writes: “In Job, the natural world is certainly designed by God, and unseen agents drive events, but it is not clear that anyone in Job believes that humans have a mind/soul/spirit apart from their bodies.”

And yet, in a full reading of the story it is evident that the story, almost paradoxically, shows elaborated and detailed concern about the interiority of Job as he struggles to engage God and understand his condition. How do we understand this? How do we understand the preponderant exposition of the inner feelings and thoughts of Job as he struggles to find the reason for his suffering and then the total disregard of the complex array of the feelings he might be presumed to have experienced at the loss of his children? The story’s detailed elaboration of Job’s obsessive and impassioned consideration of whether he is righteous and good contrasts dramatically with how Job’s loss of his children is treated simply as another external to be restored.

We propose in this article that the replacement-oriented treatment of what Job’s lost in life is confounding by its brevity, blithe impersonal quality, and yet implicit characterization as something abundant and glorious. And we propose that a non-theological interpretation of this is that the story is about the liability of entrenchment in a

paranoid-schizoid position of existential-interpersonal relating. In this article we invite the reader not just to note this with us but to join us in thinking that in such an otherwise detailed story this lack of address demands not a parallel myopia but a more open-eyed and full-throated interpretation. The words of Elie Wiesel (2009, October 15, minute 1:23-1:45) serve as closing inspiration: “It is enough to open the *Book* [of Job] to immediately be confronted with new, yet eternal questions, revelations, and mysteries that cannot but puzzle and fascinate anyone eager to discover what remains hidden in deceptively simple words and reverberations.”

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