

Chapter 9

The Story of Job: Suffering and the Second-Personal

It feels as though I make my way
Through massive rock
Like a vein of ore
Alone, encased.

I am so deep inside it
I can't see the path or any distance:
Everything is close
And everything closing in on me
Has turned to stone.

Since I still don't know enough about pain,
This terrible darkness makes me small.
If it's you, though—

Press down hard on me, break in
That I may know the weight of your hand,
And you, the fullness of my cry.*¹

Introduction

In Part I of this book, I explained that my intention is to examine the problem of suffering through an exploration of biblical narratives, and I argued for the acceptability of that methodology. Now that, in Part II, I have also presented Aquinas's view of the nature of love, the obstacles to love, and the remedies for those obstacles, it is finally

* Rainer Maria Rilke, *The Book of Hours*, in *Rilke's Book of Hours*, trans. Anita Barrows and Joanna Macy (New York: Riverhead Books, 1996), 127.

time to turn to the stories. In this third part, I will illustrate the methodology I argued for and begin to use it for my announced purpose by examining biblical narratives, starting with the book of Job, the classical biblical book addressing the problem of suffering. In subsequent chapters, I will take up other biblical stories that, in my view, illustrate different elements of the problem of suffering. In the consideration of all these stories, I will presuppose the Thomistic account of love and union presented and defended in Part 2.

After the detailed examination of the stories, I will turn to the presentation of Aquinas's theodicy, which is the heart of the defense I am constructing. I will explain that theodicy, in which love plays an essential role, in the light of the stories considered in this part. (That is why the stories need to come before the presentation of Aquinas's theodicy and my use of that theodicy in the construction of a defense.) Aquinas's theodicy and my defense will constitute the fourth and last part of this book.

It will therefore *not* be my purpose in this chapter or any of the other chapters on the biblical stories to try to provide a theodicy or defense for the problem of suffering as the story raises it. Because I mean to use all the narratives I examine as the basis for reflection on the problem of suffering, it would defeat my purpose to formulate an attempted solution to the problem of suffering on the basis of one story alone. In this chapter, then, I want to use the methodology defended in the first part of this book to provide only a particular interpretation of the story of Job. Subsequently, after I have explored all the narratives I want to consider, I will use the interpretation of Job I offer here in the detailed presentation of Aquinas's theodicy. At that point, I will revisit the narrative and consider the hard questions it poses. In this chapter, however, I am leaving the questions of theodicy largely to one side, to be addressed later, in the light of all the narratives examined in this and the subsequent chapters.

In this chapter, then, and in the other chapters on the biblical stories, my purpose is limited. I will just focus on details of the story, and I will advocate for a particular interpretation of them. I say 'advocate,' rather than 'argue,' for the reasons that I set out in Part 1 of this book. Although it is not so difficult to rule out some interpretations of a story as false, it is much harder to make a case that one particular interpretation is the only right one. As I explained earlier, interpretations of texts can invite one to see the text in a certain light, but they cannot compel assent as philosophical arguments are meant to try to do.² In the chapters on the biblical narratives, I therefore do not take myself to be giving an argument that my interpretation is the only right one. Rather, my intention is to invite readers to see the text as I see it and to consider whether that view of the text makes sense to them, too. I am, of course, aware that the approach I am taking in doing so is not representative of current customs in academic biblical studies; but I have argued in Chapter 2 for the methodology I am employing on the biblical texts, and I will not repeat those arguments here.

On the other hand, it should also be said that I am hardly the first person to see the biblical stories as intricately crafted. To take just one contemporary example, Eric Auerbach's magisterial *Mimesis* made many people aware of the density characteristic

of some biblical texts and the ability of those texts to convey an enormous amount with very few words.³ Because my purpose in this chapter is not to contribute to professional biblical studies, but to give an interpretation of the biblical text useful for philosophical purposes, I have in general omitted discussion of the voluminous literature on the biblical stories under examination. Nonetheless, I have learned a great deal from other interpreters, including Auerbach, in both the contemporary and the historical periods. For the book of Job, these include not only historical biblical studies but also work by other contemporary and historical interpreters, most notably, the literary critic Robert Alter⁴ and the medieval thinkers Saadya Gaon and Aquinas; but there are many others who could be mentioned as well.⁵

In this chapter, I will proceed to examine the story of Job in a way that does not track the order of the biblical book itself, for reasons having to do with the dialectic needed for a clear exposition of the interpretation I want to set out, as will become clearer in the course of the chapter.

I will focus first on the latter part of the book of Job, which contains God's conversation with Job. In order to highlight what is novel about the approach I am taking and its results, I will contrast the interpretation of that conversation produced by the methodology I am using with a very different contemporary account of the same part of the narrative given by a more familiar approach representative of current attitudes toward the book of Job.

With the illumination given by this examination of the latter part of the book of Job, I will then return to the beginning of the book in order to show something about the book as a whole. With this aim in mind, I will look in painstaking detail at the opening episodes describing God's interactions with Satan. Contemporary interpreters tend to gloss over this part of the book, partly because they take it to be extraneous to the philosophically and theologically interesting part of the book, and no doubt also partly because to contemporary sensibilities there is something vulgar and embarrassing about the whole notion of Satan. The idea of a conversation between Satan and the Deity is enough to make many people wince. Nonetheless, in the final form of the book of Job, the story of Job's life is framed by the story about Satan and Satan's conversations with God about Job. As I hope to show, there is incomparable intelligence and artistry in the form of the book taken as a whole when that framing story is understood as an integral part of it. In my view, if we abstract just the narrative of Job's life, separating it from the framing story about Satan, there is enough in that narrative by itself to show us something important about the problem of suffering. But if we see the narrative of Job's life within the broader context that includes God's conversations with Satan, the whole story that results illuminates a certain view of the operations of divine providence that considerably enriches the implications of the smaller-scale narrative of Job's life embedded within the whole.

So first I will look at the dramatic episode when God intervenes to talk to Job, which is the culmination of the dialogues among Job and the comforters. And then I will backtrack to the beginning of the book, to excavate with care the intricacies of the part of the book that involves Satan. I will have virtually nothing to say about the dialogues

that make up the bulk of the book of Job, although I will presuppose some things drawn from the dialogues, such as Job's insistence on his own righteousness, as well as the nature of Job's sufferings. There are wonderful things in the dialogues, and they raise intriguing questions, the answers to which give insight into many things relevant to my purposes. For example, the speeches of Elihu contain many of the same sorts of claims about God as those that God makes on his own behalf in his conversation with Job; and consequently questions naturally arise about the relation of Elihu's claims to God's claims and to God's general condemnation of the speeches of the comforters.⁶ But this is only a chapter in a book on the problem of suffering, and not a book on the story of Job; and it is not possible to do everything in one chapter. So, although I have let the dialogues inform this chapter, with regret I have left explicit consideration of them largely to one side.

The conclusion of the book of Job, which describes Job's return to prosperity and familial well-being, is regularly taken as the other part of the frame within which the real story of Job is contained; and it is also often dismissed as primitive and uninteresting. In my view, however, the conclusion of the book of Job is as important as anything else in the book for understanding the problem of suffering.

Although Job is important for my purposes because he is someone whose suffering stems from the loss of things central to earthly human flourishing, it is clear that his suffering also stems from the loss of his heart's desires. Both his wealth and his piety had given him a special position in his society as someone beloved of God. The fact of his suffering and the loss of his wealth are enough to cast doubt on that position in the eyes of Job's community, and so he loses his social standing as well as his wealth in his suffering. He also loses his children. As Job's complaints to the comforters make clear, all these losses deprive Job of the desires of his heart.

At the end of the story, however, these losses are made up in a certain respect. God's public conversation with Job has given him an even greater position in his society than he had before. After God's conversation with Job, everyone around Job makes a donation of some sort to him, with the result that Job comes to have twice as much wealth as he had before, at least insofar as wealth in his society is measured by the possession of animals. He also has ten children, just as he did before his sufferings started. So, in a certain sense, at the end of the story Job has restored to him in great abundance the things whose loss deprived him of his heart's desire. I have had to make this claim in a qualified way, of course, because at the end of the story the ten children of Job's who died in the catastrophes of Job's affliction are still dead. Although he has ten more children, these children do not restore to him the children he had lost.

So the end of the book of Job is in fact interesting for the light it sheds on suffering taken as the loss of the heart's desires. But what I want to say about this part of the book of Job cannot be adequately explained until after the discussion of the other narratives in subsequent chapters. I am therefore calling attention to its importance here only so that its reintroduction later will not come as a complete surprise or seem like an unexpected afterthought. In this chapter, I am intentionally omitting explicit consideration of this

part of the book of Job, even though it will have a role to play in the final form of the defense I am constructing.

This chapter is thus limited in multiple ways. It leaves questions of theodicy or defense till later, and it looks at only some parts of the book of Job, postponing or leaving aside entirely consideration of other parts. My aim in this chapter is to examine just enough of the story of Job, as I read it, to illumine the relations between God and other persons in the story. Later in this book, I will return to those relations, to show their relevance for the problem of suffering.

Job's suffering

Because this chapter focuses on the narrative's concern with an explanation for Job's suffering, something should be said at the outset about the nature and intensity of that suffering.⁷ In this connection, it is important to me to emphasize again a point made earlier in this book—namely, that nothing in any conceivable and reasonable explanation of suffering could undermine the fact or the force of that suffering. If it could, the explanation would not be an explanation of *suffering*. To explain suffering is not to explain it away. To find something that explains suffering or weaves it into some greater good in the sufferer's life is not to diminish in the least the torment of the suffering. For my part, I am awed by the suffering that, in the narrative, Job endured, and I honor the human spirit, which can stand under so much pain.

To understand the nature and extent of Job's suffering in the story, we can begin by noting that it comes to Job in two waves. The suffering in the first wave is itself complicated, but still much easier to describe than the suffering in the second wave.

In the first wave of suffering, Job loses in one day all his animals and servants, by a combination of natural disasters and human depredations; and all his children are killed by a freak accident in a sudden storm. Because of the nature of wealth in his society, the loss of the animals and servants swiftly reduces Job from great wealth to poverty, with all the wretchedness that such a precipitous change produces. The death of all his children at once plunges him into heart-cracking grief.

In these disasters of the first wave, and in their combination and suddenness, there are two different kinds of suffering for Job. I am not sure how best to define them, but it is easy to illustrate them. On the one hand, there is suffering such as physical pain or the psychological pain of sudden reversals of fortune. This sort of suffering can be shattering to the person compelled to endure it; but it is still somehow external, on the outside of personality, as it were. Job's loss of his wealth is a suffering of this kind. By contrast, the pain stemming from the death of a child is an agony of an inward sort.⁸ Suffering of this inward sort is a rack on which the psyche is tormented without rest, struggling for breath. Each kind of suffering is dreadful, but the two kinds differ from each other at least in the phenomenological character of the anguish each produces. In the first wave, both kinds of suffering come to Job in the most intense way, not only because the

disaster affects *all* his substance and *every one* of his children, but also because both kinds of losses happen at once.

In addition, however, the fact that they happen at once *and* the fact that some of the disasters are spawned by storm or other natural means produces a further suffering of the inward sort for Job. That is because when disasters have such suddenness and such genesis, they rattle the psyche, so that a person has trouble trusting things in the way he did before. The frightening vulnerability of human goods to forces beyond human control can be devastating to a mind forced to recognize it through catastrophic disasters. The mental distress a person endures in such circumstances can be at least as bad as physical pain, if not worse, as those who have suffered from it can attest. Psychic pain of this sort can result in nervous breakdown, when the afflicted psyche gives way under its burden.

All these kinds of suffering come to Job in the first wave.

In describing the suffering of the second wave, the text says explicitly only that Job had sore boils all over his body, so that the suffering of the second wave might seem to be just the external suffering of physical pain. But boils are disfiguring and repulsive, and therefore demeaning too. And so the affliction of boils does not consist only in the physical pain the boils cause. There is also the additional psychic distress of finding one's own body a disgusting, hostile stranger, instead of one's home, to which and in which one belongs.

Job's suffering in this second wave, however, is hardly limited to boils, even when we take into account the added psychic dimension of this physical disorder.

In the first place, there is also the ordeal of the social shunning that Job's suffering brings him by the time of his affliction with boils. As Job explains to the comforters, Job has become despised in his society because of all the bad things that have happened to him. He is publicly disdained and ridiculed even by people who are themselves outcasts in that community. Such extensive social shaming is a misery for the outcast.

But even this is not the worst of Job's troubles.

There is also the evident alienation Job endures from those who should be most supportive of him, most caring for him. The narrative highlights Job's interactions with the comforters, whose worthless, jarring efforts at comfort add to Job's suffering. But the problem is not confined to his experiences with them; it includes his relations with his wife, too. The distance his intimate companions introduce between themselves and him at the very time when he most needs their help and support is a betrayal of Job's trust in them. The endurance of the betrayal of deep-seated trust is also very painful.

But this is still not the worst.

In my view, the worst is the psychic trauma stemming from the nature and source of the accumulation of disasters that have overwhelmed Job. Job's experiences and his reactions to them leave him in a state of unending nightmare, as it were. In the narrative, Job gives a moving description of what it is like for him in this condition. In his daytime anguish, he says, he longs constantly for night and the relief of the unconsciousness of sleep; but at night, in waking and sleeping horrors, he cannot wait for day. And so neither by day nor by night does he find any rest from the torment of his mind. His

suffering has plunged him into a state of mental disorder that Job himself describes as God's afflicting him with terror; this is a state closer to serious mental illness than it is to nervous breakdown. It is hard to explain the suffering of a seriously disturbed mind to those who have never experienced such a state; but the description given of it by the victims of the horrors of war, for example, has taught us to consider it with great respect. People who survive protracted bouts of this sort of suffering have endurance worth honoring, in my view. It is fearful.

This is the suffering of the second wave.

All of this, then, is what Job suffers, and it needs to be kept firmly in mind in the rest of this chapter. Explanations of Job's suffering are explanations for *this*, in all its consummate awfulness.

Second-person accounts and the book of Job

We can begin examination of the book of Job by noticing that it has a complicated form. As we now tend to read it, the heart of the book is a set of dialogues; but these dialogues are contained within a story about Job's relations to God. That story is in turn framed by a story about God's interactions with Satan, interactions that affect Job in crucial ways and cause him great suffering. The dialogues themselves consist in a heated debate between Job and the comforters about Job's suffering and God's role in it, so that the dialogues are a commentary on the story that contains them. But included within the set of dialogues is a conversation between God and Job. This conversation within the dialogues furthers the larger story within which the dialogues are contained because it consists in interaction between God and Job; the story of Job's relations to God, which is the subject in the dialogues, is ongoing in the conversation between God and Job. In addition, in his part of this conversation, God re-presents for Job God's relations with his creatures. God's speeches to Job, which are God's contribution to the conversation between God and Job and which are themselves a divine interaction with Job, consist in vivid descriptions of God's interactions with the non-human parts of his creation.

And so it is clear that, on the notion of second-person accounts I argued for in Chapter 4, there is an intricate set of nested second-person accounts in the book of Job. The description of God's personal relations with the non-human parts of his creation is contained within an account of God's conversation with Job, which is part of the dialogues commenting on God's relations with Job, which relations are themselves the subject of the story of God's relations with Job, which is in turn part of the framing story about God's exchanges with Satan. All of this taken together constitutes the book of Job.

And yet the book of Job is commonly treated as if it were little more than a philosophy treatise on the problem of suffering. The details and intricacies of the narrative and its second-person context are neglected as unimportant or dismissed as uninteresting additions to the philosophically important debate in the dialogues. Furthermore, the

debate in the dialogues is treated as an unsatisfactory philosophical discussion because it is taken to break off without a decisive conclusion regarding the problem of suffering. The one thing Job wants, as he says over and over, is for God to explain to him why he suffers; and, on the common reading of Job, that is the one thing Job never gets from God.

The Anchor Bible commentary on Job is a good example of this sort of interpretation of Job, and I can show what I want to say about the book of Job more easily by taking the Anchor Bible commentary as my foil.⁹ Contrary to the common interpretation exemplified by the Anchor Bible commentary, I think that Job does get what he wants in this story—namely, an explanation of why he suffers. Consequently, I also think that the book of Job is helpful for thinking about solutions to the problem of suffering—but only if the story is read with careful attention to its character as a series of second-person accounts.

The Anchor Bible interpretation of the book of Job

The Anchor Bible, which is typical in this respect of a common reading of the book of Job, supposes that the book gives us no help with the problem of suffering. The Anchor Bible commentator makes the point this way:

It has been generally assumed that the purpose of the book [of Job] is to give an answer to the issue with which it deals, the problem of divine justice or theodicy. This question is raised inevitably by any and every instance of seemingly unmerited or purposeless suffering, and especially the suffering of a righteous man. Job's case . . . poses the problem in the most striking possible way. A man of exemplary rectitude and piety is suddenly overwhelmed with disasters and loathsome disease. How can such a situation be reconciled with divine justice and benevolent providence? It must be admitted first and last that the Book of Job fails to give a clear and definitive answer to this question.¹⁰

The Anchor Bible quite rightly sees Job's reaction to his suffering as defiant. The commentator says: "Job bluntly calls into question divine justice and providence;"¹¹ his "bitter complaints and charges of injustice against God shock his pious friends who doggedly defend divine justice . . ." ¹² Job, on the other hand,

vehemently denies that he has sinned, at least not seriously enough to merit such misery as has been inflicted on him. Justice, he argues, often appears abortive in the world and for this God must be held responsible. Hence Job infers that God has no concern for justice or for human feelings . . . [Job] wishes to argue his case with God, but he cannot find God nor force him to grant a fair hearing.¹³

On the Anchor Bible reading of the story, Job recognizes God's power;¹⁴ but, in a series of protests against God, he calls into question God's goodness.

Here, at any rate, I think the Anchor Bible has it right. Job's passionate insistence on moral goodness in the governance of the world underlies his violent protests against

God and his demands that God be called to account. As the Anchor Bible commentator says, Job's friends are shocked at what they take to be his blasphemy. They repeatedly point out to Job the contrast between Job's limitedness, on the one hand, and God's power and knowledge, on the other.¹⁵ "God's greatness is beyond man's comprehension . . ." the comforters say, and so, in their view, Job ought to appeal to God for mercy and forgiveness in order to be restored to God's favor.¹⁶ But Job rejects the comforters' attitude with scorn. Job readily grants that God has power. As the Anchor Bible commentary maintains, what is at issue for Job is God's goodness. According to the Anchor Bible commentator: "[Job] charges God with vicious and unprovoked assaults . . . He cries out for vindication . . . God has afflicted him unjustly."¹⁷ On this score, I agree entirely with the Anchor Bible: Job will not submit to a God who is not good, no matter how powerful he is.¹⁸

Because Job makes such a vehement indictment of God, the Anchor Bible commentator maintains that God's answer to Job, which comes in God's speeches near the end of the book, is

something of a surprise and . . . a disappointment. The issue, as Job had posed it, is completely ignored. No explanation or excuse is offered for Job's suffering . . . Job had already expressed his awe and wonder at God's power . . . He had questioned not divine omnipotence but [divine] justice and mercy. The complete evasion of the issue as Job had posed it must be the poet's oblique way of admitting that there is no satisfactory answer available to man . . .¹⁹

And, the Anchor Bible commentator adds: "The fundamental question [about suffering], If not for sin, why then?, is completely ignored . . . It is quite understandable that readers . . . are left with a feeling of chagrin at the seemingly magnificent irrelevance of much of the content of the divine speeches."²⁰

What Job called into question with so much passion and rebellion was God's goodness. But, on the interpretation of the Anchor Bible, the only attribute of God's on display in God's conversation with Job is God's power.²¹

So the picture the Anchor Bible paints is this. God allows Job, an innocent person, to suffer terribly. In his suffering, Job acknowledges God's great power; but he complains bitterly about God's apparent lack of goodness. When God finally appears on the scene to answer Job's charge, however, all God talks to Job about is God's power. As the Anchor Bible reads the story, God simply fails to address Job's charge—and, if that is right, then this part of the story certainly is both surprising and disappointing, as the Anchor Bible commentator says.

A puzzle for the Anchor Bible interpretation

But I myself think that there is something even more puzzling about the story as the Anchor Bible interprets it, and it is something the Anchor Bible commentator fails to comment on. What does Job do in the face of the disappointingly high-handed description of God's power that he gets in God's conversation with him? On the view of

the Anchor Bible, Job "answers with humble acknowledgment of God's omnipotence and his own ignorance;"²² in the face of God's majestic declaration of his divine power, "Job repents and recants."²³ So, on the Anchor Bible interpretation, Job not only takes back his passionate protests, but he also submits to God with a good deal of humility.

But isn't this a surprising response to find on Job's part? It seems to me so surprising as to call into question the fundamental conclusions of the Anchor Bible interpretation. Is it really credible that, after all Job's fervent focus on goodness, after all his defiance of the power of God, he simply collapses into a heap of humility when the almighty ruler of the universe comes to talk to him and Job has impressed on him how really powerful God is? Are we to suppose that Job was something like a pompous windbag, willing to complain about the boss of the universe behind his back but utterly unable to stand up to him to his face? I do not see how one could read Job in this way. On this score, the Anchor Bible interpretation of the text seems to me very implausible.

Furthermore, the Anchor Bible interpretation cannot account for the intensity with which Job repudiates his earlier accusations against God. After God's first speech, Job says, "Behold, I am vile" (Job 40: 4);²⁴ and after God's second speech, Job says, "I recant and repent in dust and ashes" (Job 42: 6). If the divine speeches have as their only function reiterating the power of God, which Job has already acknowledged when he was indignant against God and insisting on an explanation of his suffering, why do God's speeches have this effect on Job? Why do they produce so powerful a repentance of his earlier attitude toward God? He could, after all, submit to God with suitable deference without going nearly so far.

The Anchor Bible interpretation thus gives us a serious incongruity in the character of Job. In the speeches to his friends, Job is heedless of everything except goodness, and he is willing to confront even the power of God to get it. But in his response to God's speeches, on the Anchor Bible interpretation Job in effect just cringes in front of power.

We can, of course, always chalk up an incongruity of this sort to the artistic incompetence of the author or editor of the narrative, though in this case it would be a fairly serious and dramatic incompetence. Even if the author or editor of the book wanted Job to be submissive to God at the end of the book, there are ways to write the story more plausibly than simply to have the rebel turn servile as soon as he hears God's assertion of his power. But impugning the competence of an author ought to be an interpretative strategy of last resort, to be employed when other attempts at explanation have failed. In this case, it would also be a particularly lame strategy, because of the magnificent artistry that is readily recognizable in the rest of the book.

An alternative interpretation of the divine speeches

The problem in the Anchor Bible interpretation arises, I think, because the Anchor Bible commentator is not attuned to the fact that, in the story, the two divine speeches are set in the context of a second-person experience, and they are also a second-person account, in their content.

Take, first of all, the content of God's speeches. The Anchor Bible summarizes the speeches this way:

Who is Job to speak out of ignorance? [God says, addressing Job]. What does he [Job] know of the founding of the earth, the subjugation of the violent sea, the dawn of day, the depths of the infernal regions, the expanse of the earth, the abodes of light and darkness, the treasure houses of the snow and ice, the ordering of the constellations and the rains . . . Can Job provide food for the lion and the raven? Does he know the birth season of the wild goats, the habits of the wild ass . . . Yahweh speaks to Job out of the storm and challenges him to show that he has divine powers.²⁵

Without doubt, the Anchor Bible commentator is right in thinking that these speeches of God's describe God's power; God's great power and knowledge are certainly a central theme in the speeches. But the commentator misses an equally important feature of the content of the speeches, and it is crucial for an adequate interpretation of Job's response to them.

Consider, for example, the beginning of God's first speech, which the Anchor Bible characterizes as describing the power of God in the founding of the earth. That description is correct as far as it goes, but it is seriously incomplete. Here, in the Anchor Bible translation, is what God says to Job:²⁶ "Where were you when I founded the earth? Tell me, if you know so much. Who drafted its dimensions? Surely you know? Who stretched the line over it? On what are its sockets sunk, who laid its cornerstone, while the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God rejoiced?" (Job 38: 4-7).²⁷

As the Anchor Bible correctly maintains, these lines represent God as having the immense power to create the earth. But they also show God's role in a community that participates in God's creating by watching what he does and rejoicing in it. Furthermore, this community is not just passive in watching. It responds to what it sees God doing, and the response is communal, too: the morning stars sing together. When God creates the earth, then, he does not create alone. He shares his creating with a community of his creatures who rejoice together at his creating and sing. And part of the point of God's sharing with this community his creative acts is to bring such joy to them. God's communicating to Job this communal sharing of joy and song that surrounded God's creating of the earth is also part of the content of God's speech to Job. In addition, it is important not to miss the parental imagery in this part of God's speech. The group that rejoices is the group designated as the sons of God.²⁸ From the beginning of creation, then, and from the outset of God's conversation with Job, God is portrayed as a parent.

So what we see in this opening part of the first divine speech to Job is not just the metaphysical attributes of power and knowledge necessary for God's creation of the earth. We also see God as a person, in personal and parental relationships with his creatures, sharing what he has created with them and making them glad by doing so.

The Anchor Bible characterizes the next part of this divine speech as a description of God's subjugation of the sea. What God says in the part of the speech about the sea

is this: "Who shut the sea within doors, when it came gushing from the womb, when I made the cloud its garment, dark mist its swaddling bands, when I put bounds upon it, set up bars and doors, saying, 'Thus far come, but no more. Here your wild waves halt?'" (Job 38: 8–11).

The imagery in these lines depicts God's dealings with the sea as maternal interactions between God and the sea. The sea is created by coming forth from a womb, and God deals with the sea as a mother deals with her child: he wraps it in swaddling bands; he clothes it with a garment. The description of God's relation to the sea is thus couched in the sort of language ordinarily used to portray a mother's care for her newborn baby.

Furthermore, the relations between God and the sea are characterized as personal relations.²⁹ The Anchor Bible takes these lines as a description of God's subjugating the sea; but it is noteworthy that in the story God controls the sea by *talking* to it. In fact, it is hard to see these lines as a description of a *subjugation*. God does not just bend the sea to his will. He does not simply wield his great power to decree what the nature and attributes of a sea must be. Presumably, God could do so with an act of will alone, without making any utterances. Or, if he wanted to determine what the sea did by means of an utterance, God could make an impersonal statement, addressed to no one in particular, of this sort: 'I decree that the sea will extend from here to there, but it will not extend any further.' Instead, what we get in God's speech is a description of a second-person interaction between God and the sea. The speech portrays a second-person experience (as it were) between God and the sea, in which God says 'thou' to the sea.³⁰ As God describes his interactions with the sea in this part of the divine speech, God addresses the sea directly, in second-person forms of speech. In fact, God talks to the sea as if the sea were a rambunctious and exuberant child of his, but nonetheless a child who can hear him, understand him, and respond to him. And so, in God's description of himself in this part of his speech to Job, God brings the sea into conformity to his will by talking to the sea and explaining to the sea what it can and cannot do.

The remainder of God's speech describing the inanimate parts of God's creation continues in the same way. God portrays inanimate created things as if they were children of his with whom he has a personal relationship and for whom he has a parental concern. Furthermore, as the speech continues, God not only describes himself as talking to inanimate creatures, as he does in the section on the sea; he also describes these inanimate creatures as responding by talking to him in response. "Did you ever command a morning?," he asks Job (Job 38: 12), and a little later he says:

Where is the way to light's dwelling, darkness, where [is] its abode, that you may guide it to its bourn, [and] show it the way to go home . . . Who cleft a channel for the downpour, [or] a path for the thundershower, to bring rain on no-man's land, [on] the wilderness with no man in it, to sate the desolate desert, [and] make the thirsty land sprout verdure . . . Can you send lightning scurrying, to say to you, 'Here we are'? (Job 38: 19–20, 25–7, 35)

Darkness and light have dwelling places, and God gets them to those places by personal interaction with them. He does not issue an impersonal decree stipulating

where darkness and light must be. Rather, he himself guides them there. Darkness and light get to their proper places in the world because God shows them the way. Even the morning is disposed as it is because God talks directly to it and gives a command to it. And when God sends the lightning where it should go, the lightning responds by talking to God.

The explicitly parental terminology is also recurrent throughout the first speech. "Does the rain have a father?," God asks Job. "Who sired the dew drops? From whose womb comes the ice[?] The hoarfrost of heaven, who bore it . . ." (Job 38: 28–9).

As these lines indicate, then, the first divine speech constitutes a second-person account. It is not a story, strictly speaking, but it is story-like. It conveys, in the vivid sort of way a story would, a picture, an impression, of God's entering into second-personal relations with all of his creatures and dealing with them parentally.

That impression is only strengthened in the next part of the first speech that moves from describing God's interactions with inanimate things to sketching his relations with non-human animals. In that next part, what God tells Job shows not only God's power over the animals and his knowledge of their nature and ways, as the Anchor Bible maintains, but it also makes clear God's great care for the animals and his second-personal connections to them. God makes a home for the wild donkeys and gives the hawks the knowledge necessary for flight. Even in the case of the ostrich, who is portrayed as an inept and foolish mother, deprived of wisdom by God,³¹ there is a loving note in the description of the beast. There is an implication that, if the ostrich's eggs and children survive, it is because God does the mother's job for the ostrich mother. She forgets, God says to Job, that the eggs she leaves in the sand are easily crushed and are vulnerable to animals that pass by. There is a tender note in the complaint that the ostrich mother *forgets*.³² Who but God told her, or told her and reminded her, of what she was forgetting, and who but God preserved the eggs that the ostrich mother so forgetfully left vulnerable (Job 39: 14–15)?

Furthermore, the animals are portrayed as responding to God's attention to them by interacting with God in second-personal ways. For example, the raven's young do not just cry when they are hungry; they cry to God (Job 38: 41). Young and helpless animals are described as having a personal relationship with God—and so are powerful, fully grown animals:

"Will the buffalo deign to serve you?" God asks Job. "Will he stay beside your crib? Can you hold him in the furrow with rope? Will he harrow the valley after you? Can you rely on his great strength, can you leave your labor to him? Can you trust him to return and gather the grain of your threshing floor?" (Job 39: 9–11)

The implication of these questions is that, even if a human being such as Job could not have the relationship with this fierce animal implied by the mention of all these activities characteristic of domesticated animals who live in close connection with human beings, God can and does.

The second of God's speeches to Job is different from the first in that it is focused narrowly on two great animals, behemoth and leviathan. Aquinas thought that the

behemoth is an elephant; some modern interpreters take it to be a hippopotamus; and the Anchor Bible takes it to be a mythological beast. There is a similar spread of opinion about leviathan. For my purposes here, it is enough to take behemoth and leviathan as great and impressive beasts of some sort, real or mythological, which are difficult or even impossible for human beings to tame. I will refer to them just as behemoth and leviathan, with no attempt to take sides in the controversies about what exactly they are supposed to be in the book of Job.

Some of God's second speech is devoted to describing the strength of these beasts and the even more impressive power God has over them, including the power to capture or even to kill them. But there are also passages such as this: "Will [Leviathan] make long pleas to you, cajole you with tender words? Will he make a covenant with you, will you take him as [an] eternal slave? [Will you] [p]lay with him as with a bird,³³ leash him for your girls?" (Job 41: 3-5).

For Job, the obvious answer to all these questions is 'no.' For God, on the other hand, the answer is clearly different. God has a second-personal relationship even with these great beasts, who not only talk to him with tender words but cajole him, plead with him, play with him, and make covenants with him.

It is a mistake, then, to characterize God's speeches to Job as demonstrating nothing but God's power over creation. The speeches certainly do show God's power; but, equally importantly, they show God in second-personal connection to all his creatures. He relates to everything he has made in this second-personal way; and, in such second-personal interaction, God deals as a parent with his creatures, from the sea and rain to the raven and the donkey and even the monstrous behemoth and leviathan. He brings them out of the womb, swaddles, feeds, and guides them, and even plays with them. Most importantly, he talks to them; and somehow, in some sense or other, they talk to him in return. These speeches thus show God as more than powerful. They show him as engaged in second-person experience, as it were, with his whole creation, and they portray him as having a parental care toward all his creatures, even the inanimate ones.

Explanations for suffering

The divine speeches do not consist in non-narrative claims about God's relations to creation. If they did, they would be a third-person account laying out general theological claims about God's relations to creatures. Instead, each constitutes a second-person account that lets us participate, to some limited extent, in the perception of God's relation to inanimate things, plants, and animals. The speeches begin with an allusion to the morning stars singing together and the sons of God rejoicing as they watch God's creation. To some minimal degree, the speeches invite us to see what they saw. The implication is that, if we see it, we also will be inclined to rejoice. What Job wanted was an explanation of God's relations with him, and he does get it, but in the form of a second-person account. He had demanded goodness. What he gets is something of

what caused the sons of God not just to find God good but to rejoice in him and in his relations to his creatures.

But what exactly is this? For the reasons I gave in earlier chapters, I do not think that this question can be answered, or at least not answered without remainder.³⁴ The question is a request that what is presented as a second-person account be translated into a third-person account, and I argued that this could not be done without losing what is most important about the second-person account. Nonetheless, I want to call attention to one thing that is suggested by the second-person account of the relations between creator and creatures constituted by the divine speeches.

The divine speeches suggest that God's relationship to all his creatures is personal, intimate, and parental. On one common moral intuition, a good parent will sometimes allow the children she loves to suffer—but only in case the suffering confers an outweighing benefit on the child who experiences the suffering,³⁵ and confers this benefit on him in some way that could not have been equally well achieved without the suffering. A good parent, that is, would not cause suffering to an innocent child of hers for the sole purpose of getting someone else to learn a lesson.³⁶ In the divine speeches, God is portrayed as giving the animals what they need just because they need it—food for the baby birds who cry to him, help in mothering for the foolish ostrich. Nothing in the speeches suggests that, when God considers what to do about the hunger of the baby birds, he thinks primarily about what might be a good thing for the cats in their neighborhood. God does not think about abandoning the baby birds in their need and weakness in order to benefit some other part of his creation; he does not consider whether letting them stay hungry would be justified by the good it produces elsewhere in the world. Rather, he considers what will be good for *them*, and so he feeds them when they cry to him.

In the divine speeches, then, there is not a claim but a suggestion, a picture, that leads us to think God operates on the principle I attributed to good parents. This principle applied to God is not equivalent to the justly ridiculed Leibnizian position that this is the best of all possible worlds in which everything that happens happens for the best. Rather, this is a principle just about one necessary condition for good parenting—namely, that, other things being equal, the outweighing benefit that justifies a parent in allowing some suffering to an innocent child of hers has to benefit the child primarily.³⁷

Nothing in God's speeches to Job specifically describes God's relations with human beings, of course, but there is certainly a ready inference—both for Job and for the audience of the book—from the way God deals with the rest of his creation to the way in which he deals with human persons. If God deals as a good parent with even the inanimate parts of his creation, if he seeks to produce good even for infant ravens, then a fortiori in his dealings with a human person God will operate in the same way,³⁸ allowing that person's suffering only in case he can turn it to some outweighing good not otherwise available to the sufferer.³⁹ If an innocent person suffers, then, it will be only because a good and loving God, engaged in second-person interactions with his creatures, can produce out of the suffering an outweighing good for that person that is otherwise unavailable for him. The inference to this explanation about suffering is

available to Job; but, in fact, Job does not need to draw it, since Job has accessible to him something epistemically and psychologically more powerful than inferential knowledge. This is cognition of the knowledge of persons sort, which is available to Job from the second-person account that God's speeches to Job are.

In addition to the second-person account of the speeches, however, Job has another, even stronger source of knowledge about God's reasons for allowing him to suffer. That is the second-person experience of God which Job has while God is talking to him. The Anchor Bible, which does not see or does not accord much weight to the second-personal interactions described in God's speeches, also does not recognize the importance of the context in which the divine speeches are set. While God has been talking to Job, what is the relation between Job and God supposed to be?

We do not have to speculate, because Job explains it in his last lines to God. "I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear,"⁴⁰ Job says to God, "but now my own eye has seen you" (Job 42: 5). While God has been talking to him, Job has been, somehow, seeing God. The communication between God and Job is thus, in some sense, face-to-face communication. I am *not* claiming here that Job's visual system, either functioning normally or in some non-normal way, is actually giving information about an embodied face. Rather, I mean that, in the course of the divine speeches, God has been somehow directly present to Job, where the presence at issue produces the kind of cognition that would require the literal sight of a human face if the cognition in question were of a human being. When Job says to God, "Now my own eye has seen *you*," he must be speaking metaphorically or analogously; the seeing in question clearly is meant to be a kind of seeing not mediated by the visual system. And yet, as the narrative portrays it, it is a kind of inner vision that is powerfully provocative of intimate acquaintance, as literal face-to-face interaction mediated by the visual system is. So, however exactly Job's seeing God is to be understood, in the narrative the second-person account of God's speeches to Job is set within the context of a second-person experience in which God is present to Job with significant personal presence.⁴¹

When Job raised his accusations against God's goodness, his charge was not a metaphysical complaint raised for philosophical reasons. It was a personal complaint. Before the start of the suffering described in the narrative, Job had a history of trust in God and obedience to God, as Job himself makes clear in his speeches to the comforters. Job's protest against God thus includes a charge of betrayal of trust. But for this charge, a face-to-face encounter can make all the difference. To answer a mistaken charge of betrayal, a person who loves you can try to explain, or she can just face you and let you see *her*. Barring the case of those who suffer from autism or similar disorders, a person who sees another can just *see* emotion in her;⁴² and, presumably, a human person could also somehow see love in God, if the second-person experience of God were relevantly like a second-person experience between human beings.⁴³ Therefore, if in the narrative Job can somehow see God, who loves his creatures as a parent loves her children, he will also see, or know in some other way, that he is encompassed by that love as well.

So in the sight of God that Job has in his second-person experience of God in the course of God's conversation with him, Job has another powerful response on God's part to Job's demand for an explanation of his suffering. The sight of the face of a God whose parental love is directed even toward rain and ravens is also an explanation of Job's suffering. It explains Job's suffering to Job not by giving him knowledge *that*, but by giving him Franciscan knowledge of persons with respect to God and God's relations to Job. This is a second-personal explanation. Like knowledge of persons, it is non-propositional and so not the sort of thing to be true or false; but it can be a veridical explanation nonetheless.⁴⁴

To say this, of course, is not yet to say that it is a *good* explanation. The question about whether it is a good and acceptable explanation, however, is one that I am postponing to the final section on theodicy and defense, after all the narratives have been considered.

One more puzzle

This way of understanding the divine speeches also makes sense of one other peculiar feature readily found in them.⁴⁵

As many commentators have remarked, the divine speeches challenge Job. From their opening lines, with the exhortation to Job to gird up his loins, through their many prodding questions (where were *you* when I laid the foundations of the earth? does the hawk soar through your understanding?) to their final demands (who then is able to stand before me?), the divine speeches are aggressive toward Job. Instead of gentleness and consolation, the speeches have a distinct tone of indignant grandeur. It is as if God were saying to Job not "there, there, dear heart!" but rather "how dare you?!" And so the affect notable in the divine speeches implies that God is taking Job to task for complaining about God's apparent lack of goodness and love with regard to Job.

But there is a puzzle here, because, when God talks to the comforters about Job's complaints and the comforters' condemnation of Job for those complaints, God takes Job's part entirely. God says to the comforters, "My anger is hot against you because you have not said of me the thing that is right, as my servant Job has" (Job 42: 7). How are we to make sense of the narrative when it seems to be attributing to God both the view that the comforters were wrong to object to what Job said about God and also the view that Job was wrong in what he said about God?

If we simply take at face value the appearance in the divine speeches that God is somehow insulted by Job's complaints, then we will have an irresolvable incongruity in the narrative. As I said above, however, concluding that there is such an incongruity in a text ought to be a matter of last resort, especially when the incongruity is large and obvious and the text otherwise shows the marks of artistry. So before relegating this puzzle to a hopeless inartistic incongruity, it would be good to ask whether there is any way of reconciling these two elements in the narrative. One way to do so is to consider whether, in our own experience or in other narratives we know, there are ordinary occasions of the same sort. That is, are there familiar occasions on which one person

Julia accuses another person Paula of not loving her and not caring about her; and Paula responds with indignation that she is offended at the accusation, although she defends Julia to outsiders as entirely warranted in complaining as Julia does?

To put the question in this way is to suggest its answer. It is not uncommon for conflicts among people who love each other to have this feature. The same mother who is indignant with her teenage daughter for accusations that her mother lacks love will defend her daughter to outsiders for those very accusations. "When I was her age, I felt that way about my own mother," the mother may say to others who are inclined to censure the daughter's behavior; "if she were docile and obedient, I'd worry about her." And yet the mother might very well feel she had done the right thing in responding to her daughter with offended expostulation. In such a case, the mother is indignant with what her daughter has said but approving of her daughter's saying it.

Clearly, this is one among many sorts of circumstances in which it is good to give voice to an accusation that is believed to be true by the accuser but that is in fact false. But there are other circumstances as well. Sometimes an indignant response to an accusation has its source just in a healthy sense of the injustice of the accusation. But it can also stem instead from insightful care for the accuser. In these nutrition-conscious days, we have learned to ask about the bio-availability of nutrients in the things we ingest. We have learned, for example, that we do not absorb calcium from Tums, although Tums is full of calcium; we excrete the calcium we ingest in Tums, because that calcium is not bio-available to us.⁴⁶ As those who counsel the troubled know, there can also be a problem with the bio-availability (as it were) of love. Sometimes a troubled soul desperate to be fed with the love of another is surrounded by that love without being able to take it in, or even to understand that it is there for her. In her disturbed state, such a person is unwilling to believe that she is loved by or important to the person who matters to her. And, because she is in this troubled condition, she will sift expressions of love and concern on the part of the person who matters to her through the sieve of her bruised heart. She will interpret the other person's actions toward her in ways which only confirm her conviction that she does not matter to the person who matters to her. In this condition, even if the love of the person who matters to her is really there for her, it is not bio-available to her.

Sometimes the best way to convey love to a person in such a disturbed condition is precisely through indignation. The troubled person knows—we all know—that giving comfort to a person who is grieved because she believes she is unloved is perfectly compatible with not loving her. Well-bred, polite comforting is often enough accompanied by an underlying impatient uncaring. But being moved to indignation by an accusation of being unloving is not. A person who becomes indignant in the face of such an accusation is a person to whom the complainer manifestly does matter. Because this is so, and we feel it, a heartsore person can sometimes find love bio-available in an indignant rebuke when he cannot get it in any easier, softer way.⁴⁷

And so it is possible to give a consistent interpretation of God's apparently inconsistent reactions to Job and to the comforters about Job. It is possible to interpret God as indignant with Job's accusations, either because God finds them so false or because God

wants Job to understand that they are false or both. And yet it can also be the case that God approves of Job's uttering these accusations because something about giving voice to the accusations is good even if the accusations are not true.

Finally, it is worth remembering in this connection that the indignant person in this story is the Deity and the creator of Job. To appreciate the difference that this fact makes, imagine that a local political science professor at some state university has been complaining about the US president's policies. And then imagine that the president himself suddenly appears at the professor's house to remonstrate with him. The visit will astonish all those who know of it in the professor's community, and it will significantly elevate his status among them. The honor done him, the care given to him, the weight accorded his complaints will be evident to everyone, including the professor himself. Indignant remonstrance on God's part in such circumstances has a connotation very different from that which such remonstrance would have if it were impersonally delivered, without the visit. So, in this case too, it is important to be attentive to the second-person context. The second-person experience between God and Job, which is the context for the divine speeches, alters greatly the import of what God says to Job.

This interpretation thus confirms the impression given by the second-person elements in the content of God's speeches to Job. By multiple means, then, in second-person accounts embedded in second-person experiences, God is conveying to Job God's love for him. At any rate, it is worth keeping in mind that there are very few characters in any of the biblical texts to whom God speaks so much in such extended second-person experience; and there are also very few to whom God himself gives such public vindication as he provides for Job when he rebukes the comforters.⁴⁸

Job's response to the divine speeches

The explanation of his suffering that Job gets in his face-to-face encounter with God is thus a second-person kind of explanation. What exactly his suffering effects in him is not part of the explanation the divine speeches provide. But that they provide an explanation, and the right kind of explanation for Job, is shown by Job's response. I began by asking how we could explain Job's subsiding into humility and acquiescence after all his defiance of God and his insistence on goodness, if God's speeches to Job contain nothing but an assertion of God's power. What a closer look at the speeches makes clear is that this question rests on a false view of the content of the divine speeches and an obliviousness to their context.

If we see the speeches in the way I have argued for, a second-person account set in the context of a second-person experience, both of which show Job the love of God for him, then we can understand better why Job reacts to God's speeches as he does. Suppose you had been sure that the person who should love you the best had betrayed you, had abused your trust and used your vulnerability to her to cause you pain. Suppose that you had given vent to your anger and sense of betrayal in vehement speeches to her

friends; suppose you had made these views known to her, too. And then two things happen. First, you are forcefully reminded, with a vivid second-person account, of the deeply loving character of your supposed betrayer and all the good she has done in the past. And, secondly, you see that powerful goodness and love directed toward you in her face. How would you feel? You might very well feel stricken, abashed, ashamed, and repentant—just the sort of emotions we find in Job. Job says, “Now my own eye has seen you,” and he follows that line with this one: “So I recant and repent in dust and ashes” (Job 42: 6). Job wanted bare goodness, but his face-to-face experience with God goes past goodness to love.

Job does, then, have an explanation of his suffering; and, from his point of view in the narrative, it is sufficient to move him all the way from his preceding indignation against God through stricken repentance to reconciliation with God.

A broader lens

Having called into question the widely held view that in the narrative *Job* gets no explanation of his suffering, I now want also to consider the equally common belief that there is no explanation of Job’s suffering *for readers or hearers of the story*. Obviously, if my interpretation is right and there is in the story an explanation available to Job, there is also *some* explanation for readers or hearers of the book, even if it is in the form of a second-person account about the second-personal explanation given Job. With entirely appropriate diffidence, however, I want to suggest that there is also available for the story’s audience a further, supplemental explanation of Job’s suffering, one that in the narrative is not accessible to Job. This explanation has to be teased out of the nested second-person accounts of the whole book of Job, including the parts that in the narrative are hidden from Job. Like the description of the explanation that is available to Job, this explanation for the audience of the book emerges only from careful attention to the second-person character of the narrative.

To see *this* explanation, we need to look at puzzling elements in the story apart from those in God’s conversation with Job. Although at the end of this chapter I will say something briefly about some of these others, here I want to look in detail at only one of them—namely, the two episodes in the narrative having to do with Satan, which are part of the frame around the dialogues. (I will call these episodes ‘the framing story involving Satan,’ or just ‘the framing story,’ for short.) As I will show, careful reflection on the second-person experiences involving Satan and God in the framing story provides another philosophically and theologically sophisticated explanation for Job’s suffering. Furthermore, as will become apparent, seeing the complexities of the second-person account in the framing story sheds light on the whole book of Job and its understanding of the nature of God’s interactions with his creatures. In a sense, then, my interpretation of the narrative as a whole confirms the general medieval view that the book of Job is a story about God’s providence and God’s governance of creation.⁴⁹

The framing story involving Satan that opens the book of Job suggests to many readers that, in the narrative, Job’s suffering results from nothing more edifying or morally appropriate than a wager between God and Satan. Here, too, however, attentiveness to the second-person nature of the narrative and to the second-person experience between God and Satan described in it makes a significant difference to our understanding of the story. The second-person account involving God and Satan is centered on a pair of dialogues between God and *Satan*, each of which is focused on the second-person relations between God and *Job*. In these dialogues with Satan, God identifies Job as God-fearing, and Satan counters both with a prediction that in certain circumstances Job could be brought to hate God and with an exhortation urging God to bring about those circumstances. So the framing story is a complicated second-person account within which the nested second-person accounts comprising the story of Job’s relations with God are embedded.

The dialogues between God and Satan are contained in two different episodes in the narrative. These two episodes resemble each other enough that they seem formulaic, in the way in which folklore and fairy tales often are, where repetition with variations on the theme is common enough to be a staple of the genre.⁵⁰ Large parts of the two episodes involving God and Satan are almost verbatim copies of each other, with a limited number of small variations. But careful attention shows that these few variations advance the story in significant ways. Furthermore, even the elements in the second episode that are verbatim or nearly verbatim copies of those in the first episode in effect have radically different import because of the different context in which they are set.

In what follows, I will examine the two episodes seriatim, in order to bring out the kind of explanation for Job’s suffering implied in the framing story. At the conclusion of this examination, I will reflect on the reasons why the book contains two explanations for Job’s suffering instead of just one. Why isn’t Job simply given the explanation that, on my interpretation, is provided by the framing story of Satan? Alternatively, why embed the nested second-person accounts comprising the story of God’s interaction with Job within the story of God’s interactions with Satan? Why isn’t the reader or listener simply presented with the explanation given Job? The answers to these questions show something more about the complicated structure of the book and about the workings of providence as the story portrays it.

The first episode of the framing story: Satan’s coming among the sons of God

The first episode in the framing story of God’s dialogues with Satan starts by noting that on a certain occasion the sons of God came to present themselves before God and that Satan also came among them. The text suggests that the gathering at issue is some sort of as-it-were family gathering—God and the sons of God—and that there is something

odd about Satan's presence at it. On the one hand, Satan does come to the gathering, a fact that suggests he has a place in the as-it-were family. On the other hand, the text also makes it plain that there is something not right about simply including Satan as one more member of the group; his attendance has to be noted as a separate fact.

The ambiguous or troublesome nature of Satan's status in the group is emphasized by the way in which God greets him: where are you coming from? The question could indicate that there is something which God does not know—namely, Satan's previous location—and about which God desires information from Satan. But it could equally easily indicate God's desire to call something to Satan's attention—namely, that Satan is so far a stranger to this family group that his presence is a surprise and his previous location has been overlooked or left unremarked. Of these two possibilities, the latter is by far the more plausible. Certainly, if an adult child arriving for a celebration at his parents' house were greeted by his mother with the question "Where are you coming from?" he would know that he was being accorded outsider status and assigned responsibility for that status.

Sometimes such questions are put to adult children by a parent who is manipulative or lazily malicious. But questions of this sort need not arise from such unsavory motives. Sometimes a question of this kind is designed not to convey accusation and blame but rather to produce insight for the person being questioned; and the motive is not malice but care, or even love, for the person being questioned. There are famous examples of such questions in the ancient world, as, for example, when in the *Consolation of Philosophy* Lady Philosophy asks Boethius whether he knows he is a human being. But perhaps the most well-known examples of such questions uttered in a spirit of love and care are certain questions ascribed to God in the biblical texts. In Genesis, for example, when Adam hides himself after the Fall, God says to Adam, "Where are you?" (Gen. 3: 9). After Cain's sacrifice has been rejected, God asks him, "Why are you angry?" (Gen. 4: 6); and after Cain has murdered Abel, God returns to ask him, "Where is Abel, your brother?" (Gen. 4: 9). None of these questions is properly interpreted as a request for information God is lacking. All of them are intended to prompt introspective reflection in the person questioned, and the questions manifestly stem from care and love, not from contumely or any other kind of malice.

That God's question to Satan in the first episode of the framing story is designed to produce insight in Satan gets some confirmation from Satan's response to it, which is partly self-revelatory and partly evasive. He tells God that he has come "from roving in the earth and from walking back and forth in it." The ambiguity in Satan's status is brought out in this response. He is so close to God that he is able to join in a gathering of God's sons, and yet he nonetheless has to explain where he has come from; and when he explains it, the explanation names a process, not a location. Satan does not identify a place but rather describes the search for a place: he has been roving and walking back and forth. Satan comes to join the sons of God not from any settled spot but from a state of restlessness.

It is noteworthy, too, that Satan's restless roaming occurs on earth. The sons of God, who are described in God's speeches to Job as present with God at the creation of the

earth, could be expected to find a place somewhere nearer to God than the earth. To the extent to which Satan is a member of the group of the sons of God, this point applies to him also. Why, then, does Satan have to describe himself as coming from a restless roving in the earth, apparently at some remove from God? Insofar as God's question elicits from Satan a response that clearly would prompt in Satan some reflection about himself if he pondered it, it seems reasonable to take the question as intended to elicit such reflection from Satan. Consequently, it is also reasonable to take God's question as caring, at least in a Socratic sort of way.

As far as that goes, Satan's restlessness and his ambiguous status among God's sons evince not only some degree of alienation from God on Satan's part but also some absence of peace in Satan in that condition. The alienation and the lack of peace constitute problems for Satan and also for anyone who cares for Satan. And it seems right that God should be among those who care for Satan, as God's opening question to Satan suggests he is, on my reading of it. Insofar as Satan still fits somehow into the group of the sons of God, to that degree God will have and ought to have for Satan the sort of attitude he has toward the group of his sons—that is, he will have at least some care and love for Satan.⁵¹

The first episode of the framing story: God's question about Job

In this context, it is helpful to think about the reasons why in the narrative Satan is in the ambiguous, unsettled condition he is. What makes a person restless? To rest is to stay somewhere without moving on. Moving on voluntarily, as Satan does in his restless roving, is prompted by a desire to be somewhere else; and that desire indicates that the place from which one wants to move somehow fails to meet one's needs or desires.⁵²

The inability of a person to find a place that meets his needs and desires might stem from a fault in the world around him; all the places he has so far passed through might be seriously flawed, at least with regard to what the restless rover wants. But the inability might also stem from a flaw in the rover. A person who is not integrated in himself is someone who (in one way or another) wants and does not want the same thing. Catullus gives expression to this sort of psychic condition when he says about the woman who fascinates him, "odi et amo" (I hate, and I love).⁵³ He desired his beloved Lesbia and repudiated her at the same time. Consequently, whether he was with her or apart from her, he did not have what he wanted. A person in such a condition is certainly restless. And so restlessness can arise from an internally divided self, rather than from a flawed environment.

Since among the places open to Satan to go is God's presence, where (as the divine speeches describe) the sons of God find joy in shared attention with God, it is hard not to suppose that in Satan's case the flaw producing restlessness lies in him, rather than in the world around him. The turmoil in Satan shown in his subsequent exchanges with God only confirms this interpretation.

So the first episode suggests that Satan is an alienated and internally divided son of God, and it portrays God as exercising care for Satan through questioning intended to elicit insight on Satan's part about his condition.

Given this reading of the exchange between Satan and God in the dialogue of the first episode, one would expect that God's next part in that dialogue would be another question designed to push Satan further toward an understanding of Satan's internal state. At first glance, however, it seems as if that expectation is defeated. God does indeed ask Satan a second question; but, on the face of it, the question appears to be a change of subject, shifting attention from Satan to someone else entirely. God says to Satan, "Have you considered my servant Job, because there is no one like him in the earth, a perfect and righteous man, fearing God and turning away from evil?"

But this first-glance impression is deceiving. To see why, return to the previous example in which a mother asks her alienated son, newly arrived at a family gathering, where he has come from. Imagine that she then follows up that question by asking her son whether he has given any thought to his younger brother, who does everything right and always obeys her wishes. Only the unwary or oblivious would suppose that the second question is a change of subject. And so, although the introduction of Job might seem to be shifting the attention from Satan to Job, it would be naive to take it in that way.

How, then, should we understand God's question to Satan about Job?

One way of seeing the question as a continuation of God's earlier exchange with Satan is to understand it as exactly analogous to the mother's unpleasant question about the younger brother in the example I just gave. On this view, the question is simply a means of forcing on Satan a comparison that he is meant to feel is to his detriment. But, although this reading has the advantage that it understands the question to be still focused on Satan, however much it seems to be about Job, nonetheless it has disadvantages weighty enough to rule it out. Compelling a person to acknowledge someone else's superiority is contumelious, and malice is more evident in it than care. But, on the interpretation I am developing, God's first question stems from care for Satan. And so there would be a significant incongruity in the story if the motivations behind God's first and second questions were so opposed to each other.⁵⁴

And that would not be the only aesthetic flaw. Read as malicious, God's question to Satan about Job would ignore all the interesting content of Satan's preceding remark, that he has come from roving in the earth. It would simply be a heavy-handed attempt to start a new attack on Satan. The content of that attack would itself be clumsy, too, because it would consist just in pointing out to Satan that there is somebody—somebody metaphysically littler than Satan—who is very good and who therefore constitutes a measure by which Satan can mark his own imperfections. Furthermore, if God's question to Satan about Job had no more in it than this, then its effect would only be to alienate Satan from God even more and to include Job in Satan's ire. On that view of it, God's question would, in effect, be an invitation to Satan to visit his disaffection on Job. The younger brother so unpleasantly brought to the attention of his estranged

older brother by the spiteful question of the mother in my example can expect to feel his older brother's pain. And so not only is no care shown for Satan if God's question is interpreted in this way, but there is also no love lost on Job either. On the contrary, Job becomes just a pawn in the conflict between God and Satan.

I am aware, of course, that this is exactly how one very common reading understands the exchange between God and Satan. But, as I have been at pains to show, the rest of the story makes abundantly clear that God deals with Job in loving ways, and Job repents with vehemence after the divine speeches because he perceives the love God has for him. But if in the framing story God is simply using Job as a pawn to get at Satan, if God's question to Satan about Job were just an expression of malice toward Satan, then Job would be deceived about God when he sees God in the course of the divine speeches and finds God loving. Consequently, if we read God's question to Satan just as God's forcing an invidious comparison on Satan, the narrative as a whole would have a serious aesthetic incoherence. On this reading, the same narrative that makes God majestic as well as loving in the discourses with Job would have to be taken as making God petty and unloving in the conversation with Satan; and that would be a fairly dramatic aesthetic incoherence.⁵⁵

The first episode of the framing story: Reprise and reconsideration

Is there, then, another way to understand God's question to Satan about Job that ties it more tightly to the preceding exchange between God and Satan but that also constitutes a further manifestation of divine care for Satan? And is there a way in which this question of God's can be read as integrally connected with Satan's immediately preceding answer that he has come from roving the earth restlessly? That is, is there any way of understanding God's question to Satan about Job as the appropriate next step in the conversation between God and Satan begun by God's first question to Satan and Satan's answer?

One clue to the complications of the conversation Satan and God are having is given by Satan's answer to God's question about Job. Satan's answer begins this way: "Does Job fear God for nothing? Haven't you made a hedge all around him and around his house and all that is his?" (Job 1: 9–10). One thing to ask about these lines of Satan's is how Satan knows that there is a hedge about Job, and about his house and all that he has. How is such a hedge perceptible to Satan? It is notable that neither Job nor the comforters seem to be aware of any such hedge. Job believes that God has made him prosperous; but that is not the same as believing that God has made him prosperous by making a hedge about him that wards off predators and disasters. Presumably, then, Satan knows about that hedge, as Job does not, because Satan has run into it and found he could not get past it. But Satan's knowledge would come through this route only if Satan had been trying to do some harm to Job—or to Job's house or to something that belonged to Job. If this interpretation is right, as I think it is, then it gives some insight into the nature of Satan's actions as he roves through the earth. He is trying to do harm

to the inhabitants of the earth, and he is deliberately trying to thwart what God is doing with and for at least some of those inhabitants.

Furthermore, nothing in these lines of Satan's suggests that Satan supposes he is revealing himself to God by letting God see that Satan knows about God's hedge around Job. In fact, Satan is not in the least apologetic, or hesitant in any other way, about the implication that he has been trying to get past God's hedge. Presumably, Satan's attempts to harm a person God is determined to protect is old news to God, and Satan knows that God knows that Satan knows this. And so it is somewhat misleading to see Satan's coming among the sons of God as analogous to a wayward son's showing up unexpectedly at a family gathering. It is more nearly analogous to the sudden appearance at such a gathering of a son who has become a member of a group dedicated to overthrowing the things his parents love best.

On this way of understanding what is happening in the first episode of the framing story, we should take God's initial question to Satan—"Where are you coming from?"—as a question not just intended to call Satan's restlessness to Satan's attention but also designed to bring out into the open the estrangement between God and Satan. Imagine that, in the turmoil of an election year, the son of a Democratic president who is up for re-election joined the campaign of the rival Republican candidate and worked hard to defeat his mother. If that son unexpectedly turned up at a family gathering and were asked by his President mother, "Where are you coming from?" we would understand clearly the complexity of the question. In answering, the son has to confront in his mother's presence his own alienation from his mother and his active efforts to undermine her. Reflection on the nuances of the dialogue between God and Satan suggests that Satan is in an analogous case. However candid it may appear, then, Satan's answer (*from roving in the earth and going back and forth in it*) has in fact got something evasive about it, as if her counter-culture son were to reply to the analogous question by explaining to his Democratic President mother that he had been steadily on the move for a while, covering and recovering a lot of territory—when he knows that she knows (and he knows that she knows that he knows that she knows) that he has been working against her.

This way of understanding God's first question and Satan's response to it illuminates the next part of the exchange between them, and it suggests one way of construing God's question to Satan about Job. On this interpretation, God's question about Job is not a change of subject from that of God's preceding question to Satan. Rather, it is as if the Democratic President were to respond to the evasive answer of her opponent-son by forcing out into the open a particularly sore spot in their relations—namely, the fact that her son has been trying to subvert (though entirely without success) the ultimate Democratic stronghold. It is as if the President mother were to say to her antagonist son, "Have you thought about my very strongest, most dedicated, most loyal supporters in Massachusetts?" If this question is asked when the President knows that her son knows that the President knows that the son has been laboring unsuccessfully to turn those very supporters against his mother, then the question makes perfect sense as a follow-up to the first question, "Where are you coming from?"

In fact, it is especially appropriate, given the evasive nature of the answer to that first question.

In just this way, God's question about Job overturns the evasion of Satan's earlier answer, brings the opposition between God and Satan out into the open where it can be examined, and also in effect puts Satan on notice that he is bound to lose in the course he has chosen. God's question about Job is, after all, not asked with any apparent anxiety.

This interpretation of God's second question to Satan, about Job, also helps to explain the unmistakable note of frustration that modulates the complaint in Satan's reply. When Satan says bitterly, "Does Job fear God for nothing?" it is as if the hostile son in my example were to respond to the President's indication of her diehard Democratic supporters in Massachusetts by expostulating, "Supporters?! *What* supporters! You *pay* them for their support!" Satan's response to God's question about Job remonstrates in the same sort of way. In response to God's asking whether Satan has considered God's specially devoted and God-fearing servant Job, Satan protests that God has made a hedge about Job and all that is his and has blessed the work of his hands and made him rich.

In this context, it is important to notice that there is something jaded or cynical in Satan's indignant response. Seeing that this is so sheds additional light on the character of God's question. God points to Job as the most righteous, the most pious, the most God-serving of men. Satan's rejoinder paints Job as hypocritical and self-seeking, as given to religion just for the sake of prosperity, as offering real allegiance only to wealth. The cynical tend to see everything through the projection of their own inability to integrate around goodness. The cynical person sees romantic love as only lust, political leadership as only power-seeking, disagreement as only personal enmity, compassion and benevolence as only manipulation. In short, the cynical person sees others through the lens of his own character; because his character is divided against itself, it tends to mix an evil, such as manipulation, with any good, such as compassion, that it sees. And so a cynical person, who sees others through his understanding of himself, has a seriously impaired vision.

In addition to the defect in vision it produces, cynicism has the additional drawback of impeding the very integration of character that the cynical person lacks and needs. All appeals, all examples, all loveliness that might call to him are disfigured and so undermined by the distorting lens of his cynical view. When God asks Satan to consider Job, he is therefore challenging Satan to come to terms with the fact that there is at least one thing in the world that is superlatively good. A cynical person who could be brought to admit that even one thing in the world was really good would have made a crucial concession, from which further internal integration could come.

And so we can understand God's question to Satan about Job as designed not only to bring Satan to honesty and insight about his relations with God but also to shepherd Satan toward some inner integration around the good. God's question about Job is therefore like God's initial question regarding Satan's whereabouts. It is born of care and expresses love.

A non-acerbic remark about patience

Before going further, I should acknowledge I am under no illusions that every reader will readily accept so complex an interpretation of these lines in the first episode of the framing story. For some people, this part of the book of Job has to be read as nothing more than a primitive bit of folklore, morally deplorable and devoid of artistic value. But I would say that, just as patience is needed for the intricacies of the left-brain pattern-processing characteristic of analytic philosophy, so a similar patience is needed for the kind of right-brained dissections of stories characteristic of those who are able interpreters of second-person experiences and second-person accounts.

Timothy Williamson says acerbically of those who are deaf to the detail of analytic philosophy: "Impatience with the long haul of technical reflection is a form of shallowness, often thinly disguised by histrionic advocacy of depth. Serious philosophy is always likely to bore those with short attention-spans."⁵⁶

In my view, an analogous point holds for those impatient with the painstaking scrutiny of stories. Serious insight into second-person experiences and second-person accounts is always likely to strike those short-sighted in interpersonal relations as eisegesis.⁵⁷ So, if a tendency to eisegesis is the Scylla here, a tendency to autism (as it were) is the Charybdis. There is more than one kind of impatience to worry about in philosophy.

On the narrative's own showing, the story of Job is set within the context of the framing story of Satan, which grounds and explains it. In my view, seeing the love on God's part toward Satan is, therefore, important for understanding not only the framing story of Satan but the entire book of Job as well. It is my hope that those readers patient enough to make their way through this scrutiny of the framing story involving Satan will find that it gives an interpretation of the whole book of Job that has something intuitively compelling about it.

With this much *apologia* for my approach, we can return to the details of the framing story.

The first episode of the framing story: an objection

Someone might wonder why, in the narrative as I am reading it, Satan would bother to come to the gathering of the sons of God at all. In the analogous case of the President's son, we might well wonder why a hostile son would turn up at a family gathering when he is alienated from his President-mother and has been working to undermine her values and cherished projects. In the case of the President's son, the answer will be some complex mix of mutually undermining motives: a determination on the son's part to show that he has every right to attend family gatherings if he wants to do so; a desire to make trouble for his mother and show up what he takes to be her flaws and failures; an offensive glee at the thought of the discomfiture his family will have when they see him; and a real if unacknowledged yearning for the good he had when he was

in harmony with his family. If we understand the son's motives as a mix of this sort and apply them in some analogous sense to Satan, then the nature of the complications of God's conversation with Satan—the need for such complications—becomes clear.

Here, however, our own impatience with people at enmity with us, together with a little folk theology smuggled in, might raise in someone a theological objection. If in the story Satan and God have the sort of relations I have been sketching, then why would God not just reject Satan? Why would God not, as it were, throw Satan out of the house, instead of letting him stay among the sons of God and asking him psychologically probing questions? What is the point of the complicated dance of conversation God initiates? After all, Satan is at enmity with God; and, on common theological doctrine about Satan, Satan's enmity is irrevocable. On this theological doctrine, for one reason or another, Satan's repentance and moral regeneration, his internal integration and return to harmony with God, are ruled out. Since this is so, why would God bother with him? Why would God talk to him? Why would God not just eject him and dismiss him?

But, even if it were true in the story (as distinct from theologically accepted) that moral regeneration were impossible for Satan, degeneration presumably is not. Surely, it is possible even for an irrevocably hostile Satan to become more internally divided and more alienated from God than he is. Therefore, even if the theological assumption in the objection were accepted in the narrative, there would still be some purpose in the care manifested by God's questions, which are designed to bring Satan to insight into himself and his actions. It is possible that God's care for Satan might keep Satan from getting worse, even if it were inefficacious to make Satan better.⁵⁸

In addition, however, why suppose that real love, divine love, stops when it meets an irrevocably hostile response? There is love in a mother's trying to minimize the distance between herself and a hostile grown-up child, even if she knows that she will meet with nothing but enmity in response; and to the extent that her love is good, so is its expression in her relations with her antagonistic child. It is a sad thing in the world when an adult child is alienated from her mother, but it would not make the world a better place if the response of her mother were to become hostile toward her.⁵⁹

So God's questions to Satan do not assert love, but they do express it by their delicate and ingenious probing of the internally divided part of Satan's mind. And there would be point and purpose in the loving care of God's dealing with Satan in that way even if it were true in the story that Satan's alienation from God is irrevocable and God knows it.⁶⁰

The first episode of the framing story: Satan's answer to God's question about Job

Satan's response to God's question about Job is cynical, and it is important to see that its cynicism constitutes an accusation against God as well as against Job. Satan implies that

God is not playing fair in providing prosperity for Job and in protecting that prosperity against depredation. On Satan's view, God is buying Job's love and worship by trading prosperity for devotion. Furthermore, Satan also implies that God is colluding with hypocrisy and self-seeking on Job's part. On Satan's view, if prosperity and love of God were not on the same side but were rather separated, then Job would show what it was he really wanted. Job would make it plain that the main motivation for his behavior all along was only a desire for prosperity. Put out your hand against him, Satan says to God, and touch what belongs to him; he will curse you to your face then. With prosperity removed, on Satan's view of the situation, Job will not continue to love God but will rather rebel against God. For God to protect Job's prosperity is thus for God to enable Job's hypocrisy and to bribe him for his love. So Satan's answer to God's question about Job impugns not only Job's love of God but also God's goodness.

It is worth noticing in this connection that, when Satan describes the effect Job's loss of prosperity can be expected to have, what Satan imagines is that Job will make a violent break in relations with God. That is, Satan's prediction is not that Job will lose his faith, or that Job will find his way into the worship of some other god, or even that Job will despair and try to throw his life away. What excites Satan's interest and what he throws at God as a likely outcome is that Job will hate God and curse him to his face. In the story, although Satan is somehow still tied to God by a personal bond, he is also hostile to God and working actively and openly against him. Satan's assertions about Job imply that, if God were not improperly keeping Job attached to himself through bribery, Job would be like Satan in this respect.

Furthermore, Job's rebellion against God is not just an outcome that Satan is predicting; it is one that Satan has already been working hard to achieve. Since Satan believes that the loss of prosperity will turn Job against God and since he has discovered the hedge around Job as a result of trying to wreck Job's prosperity, then, manifestly, Job's rebellion against God has been Satan's aim all along. As far as that goes, in his response to God's question about Job, Satan is still working to achieve that same end. That is why Satan urges God to undertake a course of action that he predicts will have as its outcome Job's cursing God to his face.⁶¹

The first episode of the framing story: Trust in goodness

There are two further things about Satan's answer to God's question about Job that are helpful to see. In differing ways, each of these things has to do with trust in goodness.

In the first place, although Satan's view of Job is manifestly cynical, there is nonetheless still something disconcertingly on the mark in his claims about Job.

On the one hand, it is true that God praises Job to Satan as the best among human beings, either all the human beings of his time and place or maybe all human beings *simpliciter*. And surely the person singled out by God for being praised to Satan in this way had better really be an unusually good person. On the interpretation I have been developing, care for Satan in his internally divided state underlies God's question to

Satan about Job's notable goodness, but only a truly good person has any chance of getting past Satan's cynicism. Perhaps more importantly, for God to praise a person to Satan is to expose that person to a powerful enemy. Only a person manifestly meriting God's praise could be suitable for being made the object of Satan's attentions in this way. And so Job's being worthy of God's praise is important for this part of the story. We can take it, then, that in the world of the narrative Job is in fact outstanding in goodness.

On the other hand, however, the story tells us not only that Job was more righteous than everybody else but also that he was richer than everybody else (at least in his part of the world, at that time). And Satan's answer to God calls attention to this fact in a way designed to undermine trust in Job's goodness.⁶² What should we think about religious devotion and compassion toward the poor evinced by a man who is enormously rich and living in great comfort? The piety and compassion of such a person are not bogus; a cynical attitude toward them is entirely out of order. But, as the later speeches of the comforters make clear, in the culture depicted in the narrative it is customary to suppose that affluence is the reward for piety and uprightness. In those circumstances, there has to be a certain inchoateness about the motivation for uprightness. When uprightness is joined to superabundant prosperity, the motivation for the uprightness is murky. At best, the source of the uprightness is uncertain; and, because it is untested, to that extent the commitment to righteousness is comparatively shallow. There is, therefore, something less than optimal about virtues developed and preserved in great affluence. So, until prosperity and goodness are pulled apart, it may not be a determinate matter whether Job loves the good for its own sake, or whether what he loves is mingled good and wealth.

This is not to say that Job's motivation is corrupt. If a woman's husband is never sick, it might be indeterminate whether her love for him is a love that would be strong in sickness as well as in health; but to say that it is an indeterminate matter is not to say that she does not really love him as things stand. Perhaps we could understand a psychic condition of this sort through an analogy with a person's physical condition. Physical condition is a matter of strength and of endurance, and these are not the same. No doubt, there is an analogous psychic distinction. A person with great but untested moral, spiritual, or psychological excellence has strength; but, without the exercise produced by testing, endurance is undeveloped or at least unclear. For this reason, it is uncertain what would happen if, for example, worldly ease and moral excellence were not conjoined. To the extent to which it is unclear, to that same extent the source of the moral excellence is also indeterminate.⁶³ Commenting on this very point, Thomas More says:

even when the wealthy are very good, their virtue in conforming their will to God's and in thanking God is still not like the virtue of those who do the same in tribulation. For as the philosophers of old said so well on that subject, virtue consists in things of hardness and difficulty. And . . . it is much less hard and less difficult, by a great deal, to be content and to conform our will to that of God and to give him thanks, too, when we are at ease than when we are in pain, or in wealth rather than woe . . . This the devil saw when he said to the Lord God, about Job,

that it was no wonder Job had a reverent fear of God, since God had done so much for him and was keeping him in prosperity . . .⁶⁴

If we think of Job's moral state in this way, concern about the source and power of his uprightness is compatible with the praise of him given by God and the narrator of the story. On the interpretation I have been developing, if Job had *not* been morally praiseworthy, God would not have risked him as he did when he praised him to Satan.⁶⁵ Just because Job is worthy of as much moral praise as God gives him, there is good reason for God (and also for us, the audience of the story) to think that Satan's prediction about Job will turn out to be false when Job has to choose for or against steadfastness in love of God.⁶⁶ On the other hand, the combination of untested moral excellence with great wealth does have something disquieting about it.

And so, as is often the case with those who are cynical, Satan's unwarranted attack on Job batters on something in Job that does warrant some attention, even if it in no way merits Satan's accusation. In this way, then, in the narrative what Satan says about Job calls into question trust in Job's goodness—on God's part, and on the part of the narrative's audience as well.

This is the first of the things implicit in Satan's claims about Job to which I want to call attention. The second emerges when we consider the way in which God grants Satan what he wants.

The narrative makes clear that God's trust in Job's goodness is in direct proportion to God's distrust of Satan's malice. In the story, God clearly expects that Satan will put out his hand against Job as soon as God removes his protecting hand from Job. God knows that Satan knows that God knows removing the hedge about Job is equivalent to delivering Job over to Satan's attack. And so, although in the first episode God does remove his hedge from around Job, he does not do so entirely. Satan had complained that that hedge was around Job, his house, and all that belonged to him. In this first episode, God is prepared to lift his protection only from Job's house and possessions. He does not remove the hedge from around Job himself. God thus takes no chances with Satan; he makes sure that Satan *cannot* lay a hand on Job himself.

More importantly, however, although God permits Satan to exercise his malice against Job in one way, God refuses to accede to Satan's malice in another way. What Satan wants is for *God himself* to attack Job's house and possessions, but in the story God does not in fact do so. Rather, he goes only so far: he removes his protection and thus leaves Job in Satan's hands. God does not reach out his own hand against Job.

It is as if Satan and God were both clear on the significance of the distinction between doing and permitting harm. God will allow Satan to harm Job, but he will not do so directly himself. That something important for each of them hangs on the distinction is confirmed by Satan's returning to the point later, when he comes back for another try at Job in the second episode in the framing story. At that point, too, what Satan wants and what God refuses to give him is that God himself turn his hand against Job.

Now why in the story does it matter to Satan (and to God) whether or not Job is afflicted at *God's* hands? It is worth noticing in this connection that God

identifies Job in part by Job's relationship to God: Job is a servant of God's (as Satan clearly is not, at least not willingly) and God-fearing. Satan's own focus is also explicitly on Job's relationship to God. In each episode, what Satan predicts as the outcome of the action he is urging on God is that Job will curse God *to his face*. Finally, we should notice that Job's suffering and the test that it constitutes for Job remain the same whether that suffering is at Satan's hands or at God's. What is altered by having Job's suffering come at God's hands is only something in the relationship God has to Job. And so it seems as if what Satan seeks is precisely a disruption of that relationship between Job and God. What Satan anticipates and cares about is an alteration in Job's second-personal relation, his face-to-face relation, with God.

Satan's own story of alienation from God, marked by distrust on both sides, thus includes a struggle between Satan and God over an attempt on Satan's part to alienate Job and God from each other. Satan gains in that struggle if Job distrusts God and rebels against him. But Satan also gains something if God refuses to lift his hedge of protection from around Job. Job has a trust in God's goodness; but *God* also has a trust in *Job's* goodness, and this trust is challenged by Satan's charge against Job, as I explained above. If God were to insist on continuing to protect Job with a hedge around him, then we would quite rightly wonder whether God did not in fact share Satan's belief that Job's love of goodness and love of prosperity were inextricable. In that case, *God* would be distrusting *Job*. And then Satan would have succeeded, at least to that extent, in producing alienation between God and Job.

So Satan's accusation does not just call Job's goodness into question. By the charges that accusation raises, it creates a test for God as well as for Job. It puts to the test not only Job's trust in God's goodness but also God's trust in Job's goodness and Job's care for God.⁶⁷

The end of the first episode of the framing story: Job's steadfastness

God's response to Satan is to trust Job's goodness. God wills to take the risk of removing his hedge from around Job's house and possessions. The foreseeable (and foreseen) malice moves swiftly: all Job's house and all Job has are removed from him by means of natural disaster and human predation, each of which somehow has Satan's hand in it.

It is important to see here that the events which bring about Job's suffering give the lie to Satan's presentation of his own attitude in his complaint about Job. In that complaint, there is a suggestion of offended rectitude in Satan's protest that God is inappropriately protecting Job and rewarding Job's righteousness and piety with prosperity. Satan's charge that Job would desert God if God and prosperity were separated implies that Satan objects to God's coupling wealth and piety. But Satan's charge would have been adequately tested if Job had been deprived only of his wealth. Manifestly, Satan goes

much further. When God removes the hedge from around Job's house and possessions, Satan does not diminish or remove Job's *prosperity*; he strips Job of *everything*, and he kills all Job's children in addition.

Satan takes advantage, then, of the lifting of God's protection of Job to afflict Job as much as Satan is able to do, and much more than is necessary to try Job on Satan's charge. And so Satan tips his hand. His aim in afflicting Job is not to test the truth of his cynical charge that Job's only motivation for piety and uprightness is a desire for prosperity. What Satan cares about is Job's relationship with God. Satan's real aim is to use suffering as a means to drive Job into alienation from God.

And in *this* effort Satan fails. Although the disaster for Job is enormous, Job blesses God at the end of it; he does not curse God.

One obvious question to ask here is why God would let Satan go as far as he did.⁶⁸ Since the story makes clear that without God's withdrawal of his protection Satan can do nothing to Job, why does God withdraw as much of his protection as he does? Why not limit Satan's attack to the removal of Job's prosperity only and nothing more? This question should not be taken as equivalent to the question whether God is justified in allowing Job's suffering, which is the question of theodicy that I am postponing till after all the narratives have been considered. It is rather a question asking just for elucidation of God's motives in this story.

One way to answer this question is to consider what God's giving rein to Satan's malice brings about.⁶⁹ It is reasonable to suppose that the effects brought about by Satan's actions give us some insight into God's motivation for permitting those actions.

To begin with the obvious, then, Satan's attack effects changes in Job. There is Job's obvious and precipitous descent into grief and suffering. But, in addition, Job's suffering removes whatever indeterminateness there was previously in Job's motivations or dispositions as regards God and prosperity. In the aftermath of his suffering, Job takes his stand with God; and his love of God is only for God's own sake, not for the sake of wealth or its attendant community standing and other desirable effects. More importantly, Satan's attempt at introducing enmity between Job and God has not only failed, it has backfired. Job's manifold losses and his faithful response to God in the aftermath of those losses refine him by fire. In consequence of Satan's attack, because he is steadfast in his love of God under stress and in affliction, Job draws nearer to God instead of turning away from him.

In the narrative, these changes in Job are one important consequence of God's allowing Satan so much latitude in his depredations of Job, and I will return to reflect on it later in this chapter. But it is worth seeing that there is a further consequence which has to do with Satan himself. Job's steadfastness in suffering and his unambiguous adherence to God's goodness give Satan an example of moral excellence and love of God on which Satan's cynicism can no longer get any rational purchase. Consequently, Satan also gets what he himself needs and what the care evinced in God's questioning Satan was meant to give him. God's aim as regards Satan is thus also dramatically furthered as a result of Satan's attack on Job.

And so, one might have thought, the story should end at the point at which Job blesses God rather than cursing him, or maybe with Satan's response to Job's blessing God. God's permitting Satan's attack on Job has drawn Job closer to God; and it would have diminished the distance between God and Satan too if Satan would have let it do so. The story therefore seems over at this point.

But, of course, the story does not end here. It is only beginning here.

The second episode of the framing story: Satan's coming among the sons of God

The second episode in the framing story of Satan, and the next stage in the story of Job, is inaugurated by a repetition of the opening lines in the first episode: there is a gathering of the sons of God, and Satan also comes among them.⁷⁰ God asks Satan the same opening question as before and gets the same line as before by way of answer to it. As I explained at the outset, we could chalk these samenesses up to folkloric love of repetition; but the narrative does not support the theory that, like Homer, this biblical author or editor enjoys dilating his text with reiteration of details for no other reason than the pleasure that the reiteration gives him.⁷¹ On the contrary, everything suggests that the biblical author or editor is a kind of miniaturist, who loves to make small details carry great weight. Furthermore, it is this second episode that inaugurates the entire rest of the book, including the dialogues about Job's suffering and Job's reconciliation with God in the end. In the story, therefore, the second episode of the framing story is pivotal. So it is worth considering whether there is a way to understand it other than as a folkloric repetition.

One thing to notice in this connection is that, although the opening lines are the same in both the first and the second episodes of the framing story, they must be taken with a different relish in the second episode precisely because they are set in the second episode, with the first episode as background. *This time*, when Satan comes among the sons of God, Satan comes from devastating Job, as God knows that Satan knows that God knows.

So God's line to Satan, "Where are you coming from?," has a different subtext from the earlier question expressed in the same words; and it invites a different response from the response God's first version of the question was seeking. There is something new and significant at issue between God and Satan now. It is evident now not only that Satan was wrong about Job but also that Satan has been unsuccessful in his attempt to introduce into the relations between Job and God that alienation which characterizes his own connection to God. So Satan ought now to retract his accusation against Job and his charge against God; he ought to concede that Job's goodness and God's trust in that goodness have been vindicated. More importantly, Satan ought now to acknowledge to himself and to God that his cynical view of things is wrong. As the first episode of the framing story makes evident, there is a need for some resolution of Satan's own

alienation from God; and Satan's conceding that his cynical attitude has to founder on the case of Job would be a beginning of that resolution. To the extent to which Satan is willing to see and honor something that is really good, to that extent he and God will be on the same side.

Satan's answering God's question about his whereabouts with a retraction and concession would therefore be both warranted and beneficial for Satan. Given what has happened in response to Satan's attack on Job, given that Satan was entirely wrong about Job, the circumstances now demand an answer from Satan that is more, not less, yielding than before. But nothing of the sort is forthcoming from Satan. Instead, Satan simply gives God the same evasive answer as before, only with more intransigence than before in virtue of the context in which he says it. In the second episode, Satan gives his vague and insouciant answer in the face of the fact that he and God both know and care a great deal about where he has been and what he has been doing there.

The second episode of the framing story: God's question about Job

In the face of Satan's obdurate answer to God's question about Satan's whereabouts, God himself raises the subject of Job. God uses the same lines as in the first episode but with an addition to the earlier description of Job. In the first episode, God called Job to Satan's attention by praising him in the highest terms. Here in the second episode God repeats the praise but with an added assessment of what has just occurred. In addition to making explicit that Job has held steadfast in his love of God and love of goodness, God's assessment forces on Satan's attention an assignment of responsibility for Job's suffering.

The narrative makes plain enough that this has to be a complicated assignment. Human perpetrators are, of course, most immediately responsible for that part of Job's suffering not caused by the forces of nature. But Satan had urged God to reach out his hand against Job, and it is clear that Satan could not attack Job as long as God protected him. It seems, therefore, that God is the one ultimately responsible for Job's suffering. Furthermore, God went only so far as to leave Job in *Satan's* hands; Satan was the one who actually brought about Job's suffering. So, if we bracket the role played by human beings and the forces of nature, then we would expect that the assignment of responsibility for Job's suffering should go this way: Satan, not God, was directly and immediately responsible for that suffering, but God was ultimately responsible for it.

In what God says to Satan about Job in this second episode, however, God gives an assignment of responsibility that is the exact opposite of this. God says that Satan has incited God to move against Job. This explanation assigns *ultimate* responsibility for Job's suffering to Satan and *direct* responsibility to God. How are we to understand this? Why isn't God's line to Satan the claim we would have expected: God has permitted Satan to move against Job?

We can find the answer to these questions by seeing the problem with the explanation we would have expected, which assigns direct responsibility to Satan and ultimate

responsibility to God. That explanation assigns to Satan too much control over Job and to God too little care for Satan.

It gives Satan too much control over Job, because it assumes that, in consequence of his conversation with Satan, God simply removes his hedge from around Job's house and possessions and then waits to find out what Satan wants to do to Job. If God had operated in that way, God would indeed have only ultimate responsibility, because his removing his protection would leave Job entirely vulnerable to Satan; and all direct responsibility would be Satan's, because Satan would be the determiner of the evil that befalls Job. What God actually says to Satan in his question about Job, however, implies that God and not Satan is directly responsible. And that would be the case if God did not lift his hedge *simpliciter* but rather just selectively, so that Satan is able to afflict Job only in those very ways determined by God to be acceptable. In that case, the design of Job's suffering is in God's hands, although the design is carried out by Satan. In this sense, then, it is true both that Job suffers at Satan's hands rather than God's and that God is directly responsible for Job's suffering.

Once we see the distinction at issue here, it is clear that God ought to operate in the way his speech to Satan implies that he does. The narrative makes it evident that Satan is too malicious for God to leave Job's house and possessions vulnerable to whatever it might occur to Satan to do to Job. Although the evils that befall Job are terrible and entirely worth fearing, it is also obvious (from the history of the twentieth century, if nothing else) that Satanic evil can be much, much worse than it is in the story of Job's losses. And so, however dreadful those losses are, there is some real point in God's not letting Satan have free rein.

In addition, the explanation we might have expected, with direct responsibility ascribed to Satan and ultimate responsibility ascribed to God, assigns to God too little care for Satan. That is because it implies a certain indifference to Satan on God's part. The explanation we might have expected makes God seem like a parent who has been pestered once too often by a troublesome, hostile child and who has finally said: "Oh, just do whatever you want to do! I don't care what you do as long as you don't kill anybody." But a parent who takes this sort of attitude has despaired of his child to some extent; to one degree or another, he has given up on nurturing him or being in harmony with him. That is, in the matter at issue, he has given up on wanting the good for his child or wanting to be united with his child; and, to that extent, he has given up on loving his child. On my reading of Satan's interactions with God, however, God has not given up loving Satan. On the contrary, God is doing things designed to bring Satan as close to God as Satan is willing to go, or at least to try to keep Satan from migrating even further away. So when God says that Satan incited him to move against Job, God is not only pointing out to Satan that he, rather than Satan, was in full control of the evil that befell Job, but he is also pushing Satan to acknowledge that God acted as he did for Satan's sake.⁷²

There is some confirmation of this interpretation in the conclusion of God's question to Satan about Job, when God makes plain to Satan that the purpose of God's moving against Job did not have anything to do with what Job merited. It is worth noticing that

God calls this fact about Job to the attention of *Satan*, not Job or Job's comforters. In bringing this point home to Satan, God is preventing Satan from taking the point of Job's suffering to be the punishment of Job for any act on Job's part or any state of character in Job. Satan must not be allowed to see what God does as a matter of righting some injustice in the world.

It is clear that this point is of great importance to Job and Job's community. But why in the narrative is God concerned that *Satan* should know it? The answer, I think, is that a cynical person would prefer supposing that God acts for some impersonal good, such as the maintenance of justice in the universe, to the alternative of being forced into the acknowledgment that he himself is loved. That is because love that is given to an alienated person tempts, tugs, pushes that person to receive it. If that love were once received by Satan, then some peace and internal integration would also come for him; and if it did, the alienation between God and Satan would begin to break down, too. Because a cynical person has a stake in maintaining his cynicism, because he does not want to get sucked into believing in love and goodness, because he is afraid to find that what he thought was goodness is only a snare and a delusion, a cynical person also tends to ward off the love of others for him. In making sure Satan understands that Job did not merit his suffering, God is showing Satan implicitly, and delicately, that care for Satan is at issue here.

So God's giving Satan permission to afflict Job manifests not only trust in Job's goodness, but also love for Satan. It is in this sense that Satan is ultimately responsible for what happened to Job. And God's making sure that this point does not escape Satan is one more manifestation of God's care for him.

The second episode of the framing story: Satan's answer to God's question about Job

With this much insight into God's question to Satan about Job in this second episode of the framing story, we can turn to Satan's response to the question. Satan's response has a certain desperate tone to it. In the first episode of the framing story, Satan's answer to God's question about Job consisted of an accusation explicitly against Job, and implicitly against God; and it had the patina of an interest in morality, even if it was an interest motivated by a cynical attitude. There was some moral indignation in Satan's answer to God on that occasion. Satan's subsequent actions showed the false note in that indignation, because Satan destroyed not just Job's prosperity but everything Job had, including his children. Nonetheless, in the first episode there was at least a veneer of moral concern in Satan's response to God's question about Job. In this second episode, Satan has abandoned any attempt at self-justifying moral appearances. What Satan wants this time is just for God to hit Job so hard, and so unjustly, that Job will be driven past endurance into open conflict with God. Satan's response to his first failure with Job is not to recognize and admire goodness. Rather, it is to insist, urgently, on

Job's being struck again, worse than before, till suffering goads him into rebellion and hostility to God. It is surely not accidental that here, as before, Satan also pushes for Job's being afflicted at God's hands.

What is amazing is God's response. Although God does not accede to Satan's urging that Job's sufferings be at God's hands, God does nonetheless deliver Job into Satan's hands, with the sole proviso that Satan should not end Job's life. Why would God respond to Satan in this way? Why would God not rather scorn and repudiate Satan's overheated attempts to impel God himself to attack Job? There can be no question now of any moral concern about commingled prosperity and devotion to God. Job has come through Satan's previous attack with admirable steadfastness. And what Satan says about Job in this second speech can hardly be construed as any kind of accusation against Job. If God afflicted Job severely for no fault of Job's, Job would hardly be blameworthy if he responded with indignation. In fact, in the narrative, though the comforters think Job ought only to praise God and defer to him, Job *does* respond with passionate indignation, and God sides with *Job* rather than the comforters when he adjudicates between their differing attitudes. When God joins the dispute between Job and the comforters, as I pointed out above, what God tells the comforters is that they have not said of him the thing that is right, as his servant Job has.

Why, then, does God comply with Satan this time?

The second episode of the framing story: The effect of Job's suffering

In this case, as in the case of the analogous question raised in connection with the first episode of the framing story, one way to find the answer to the question is to consider what changes Satan's second attack effects.

When God complies with Satan, Satan moves swiftly to afflict Job with boils, with all the concomitant complicated suffering discussed at the outset of this chapter, including Job's pariah status in his community, his rejection by his closest companions, and the waking and sleeping nightmares that destroy Job's ability to find peace or rest. After Satan leaves the gathering of God's sons to attack Job the second time, Satan disappears from the narrative; and the narrative shape-shifts into a story about Job. Whatever other good Satan's attack may bring about, the narrative gives no sign that Satan's attack on Job or God's care for Satan produced any change for the better in Satan, either by furthering Satan's internal integration or by reducing his alienation from God. So, as far as the narrative is concerned, effective changes for the better in Satan are not among the changes produced by God's permission to Satan to afflict Job. But what about Job? What changes does Satan's attack ultimately effect in Job?

When the whole story starts, at the beginning of the first episode of the framing story, Job is a herder whose exemplary righteousness, piety, and prosperity mark him out from everyone else in his world. But, however noteworthy he was within that world, it is doubtful that he would have merited being remembered for long

by it. Even superlatively righteous, rich, pious people are not, in the end, so very remarkable as they might seem to those within their own social milieu. Although, in their own immediate community, they are known as the good, devout, wealthy people they are, they are also rapidly and rightly forgotten. Who now remembers Paula of Bethlehem, Joanna of Naples, Glueckel of Hamlyn, or Abigail Williams?⁷³ Hardly anyone but the antiquarians who study the periods in which they lived—that is the answer. These people were noteworthy in the time in which they lived; but they were nonetheless not people of such distinction that they merited very much notice after their deaths.

By the end of the first episode of the framing story, because of the suffering he endured in consequence of the first episode, Job has become a more impressive and admirable person than the pious and wealthy herder he was in the beginning. He has become the sort of person whose story a culture strives to hand on, to help shape the ideals of the next generations. By the end of the first episode, Job is less like Paula of Bethlehem and more like a hero of a whole culture—like Olympias of Constantinople, in the Patristic period, or like Sojourner Truth and Harriet Tubman, in more recent times.⁷⁴ These were highly admirable people, who retained faith and remained steadfast under great suffering. Their communities wanted to preserve their memories from generation to generation; their societies honored them and hoped that succeeding generations would be formed by stories about them. Because of the way the suffering consequent on the first episode has shaped him, by the end of that episode Job has become the kind of person worthy of being a cultural hero of this sort. Under highly adverse circumstances, Job maintained uncorrupted moral uprightness and personal commitment to God, and there was power behind his goodness. Job found in himself the toughness to endure in conditions that would have crushed a lesser person. And so he became the sort of person who could inspire subsequent generations committed to the ideals the story of his life exemplifies.

But what about Job's state after the suffering stemming from Satan's second attack on him? There is a world of difference between Job at the end of the first episode's suffering and Job at the end of the second. Through the suffering of the first episode, Job became the sort of person worthy of being lionized by a whole culture; under affliction, he manifested in an exemplary way the values of his culture. Through the terrible suffering of the second episode, Job became a much greater person.

Olympias of Constantinople and Sojourner Truth were heroic women meriting the admiration accorded them in their culture, which kept their memories alive a long time. But, by way of contrast, consider Socrates. The story of Socrates is known to one degree or another by everyone educated in the West, and there is a reason for this fact. The greatness of Socrates transcends times and cultures. In consequence of his noble, steadfast pursuit of truth and goodness, in circumstances that led to his death at the hands of his own people, Socrates was a person worthy of admiration by everyone everywhere. For this reason, his life is a kind of cross-cultural icon. Or maybe even this way of praising Socrates is pale. Icons are static and mute, but Socrates's life has a kind of fire about it, a gloriousness, which inspires people, even

(or especially) those with sharp minds and great hearts, through many centuries and cultural changes.

Something similar can be said about Job in consequence of the suffering inflicted on him by Satan's second attack. Through that suffering, Job attained a greatness of character like that of Socrates. Because of Satan's second attack and Job's endurance under it, in the story Job becomes the sort of person whose life captures the imagination of anyone who learns of it. Job stood up to the ruler of the universe, and in response God came to talk to him in one of the longest conversations between God and human beings in any of the biblical stories. Job's words and actions, described in the narrative in painstaking detail, now constitute a story that has contributed to molding all of Western civilization after it.⁷⁵

Job would never have had this greatness if his suffering after the first episode between God and Satan had been the end of the story.

Job's endurance of the suffering that came to him after the first episode of the framing story built steadfastness and rooted commitment to God into him. That growth in steadfastness and commitment gives God in the narrative reason to think that Job could be stretched even further, into something luminously great. As it turns out in the story, God's high expectations of Job are not disappointed. Job's suffering in consequence of Satan's second attack on him does not eventuate in Job's cursing God to his face, as Satan had hoped it would. In the dialogues with the comforters after Satan's second attack, Job is vehemently indignant against God; but anger and indignation are one way to continue holding on to a relationship of love. A wife whose husband is furious at her is still very much in relationship with him. The distance indicated by cursing a person to his face requires something colder and harder than anger.

In fact, in a paradoxical way, Job's passionate accusations against God move Job closer to God. In his indictment of God, Job takes his stand fiercely on the side of goodness. Satan's first attack on Job has the unintended result of separating the love of prosperity from the love of goodness in Job. But Satan's second attack separates in Job two things that might be thought to be inextricably connected: the love of the office of the Deity, and the love of the goodness that is truly the essence of God. The comforters are shocked that Job refuses simply to take as good anything done by God. But Job is shocked by them and their willingness to abandon any objective standard of goodness in the interest of being on the side of the ruler of the universe. That is why Job issues his odd-sounding warning to the comforters. If you accept God's person, Job says in condemnation of their position, God will surely be angry at you.

In denouncing the comforters' willingness to kowtow to God, Job takes his stand with the goodness of God, rather than with the office of God as ruler of the universe. Without losing his personal commitment to the person of God, Job refuses to accept what God does just because it is God who does it. If, *per impossibile*, divine power and divine goodness were to be opposed, then in the way in which he reacts to his suffering Job is in effect choosing to be on the side of goodness rather than on the side of power, even if the side of power should be God's side.⁷⁶ In this choice, Job is as fervently on God's side as it is possible to be. Goodness separated from power still has something

divine about it and is still worth committing oneself to; power separated from goodness is, one might say, just satanic.

Job's rebuke to the comforters implies that Job thinks God himself would approve of the attitude Job adopts, siding with goodness against power even in God's case, and the narrative implies that God takes Job to be honoring God by taking this stand. That this reading is right on both counts is made evident later in the story when God himself condemns the comforters' view.

And so by being angry at God and by insisting on goodness over power, even in God's case, Job in fact draws closer to God. At any rate, there is no other character in the biblical stories who is in a position to say what Job says at the end of the divine speeches: I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear, but now my own eye sees you. The devastating process that brings Job to that closeness with God makes him into an exemplar of the greatness possible for the human spirit in extreme and crushing circumstances.⁷⁷ The things Job suffers in consequence of the first episode between God and Satan move Job from being an outstandingly moral and pious prosperous herdsman to being a kind of cultural hero. The suffering consequent on the second episode moves him from there to a stature that manifests the greatness of the human spirit. There is something glorious about him in that condition.

It is important to see that, even if this conclusion is correct, by itself it does not give us a theodicy or a defense. At the outset of this chapter, I attempted to sketch in all their complicated variety the devastating losses and psychological trauma, shame included, that Job endures. The question of whether the changes in Job, as I have explained them here, constitute a morally sufficient reason for God to allow all this suffering is still an open question, and a hard one; and I am postponing it to the later chapter on theodicy. I am aware that for many people the very question is an offense. To them, it seems obvious that no effect on Job could justify what God allows Job to suffer. But this view is based on a scale of values for a human life that needs examination, and that examination also has to be deferred to the later chapter on theodicy. As I explained at the outset of this chapter, I am deferring considerations of theodicy and defense until all the narratives under consideration have been examined.

But this much can be said even at this point. The effects on Job, as I have described them, help explain why there are two episodes involving Satan, rather than just one. God could, after all, simply have lifted all his protection of Job (with or without the proviso that Satan had to spare Job's life) in response to Satan's first accusation against Job. But, by requiring two stages to the lifting of his protection, God brings it about that Job is tested and strengthened before undergoing the worst of the assault. It is as if Job needed to be tempered by the first attack in order to prepare him to sustain the second, much worse one. This is the way we would expect God to deal with Job if God's ultimate aim were to use Job's suffering to make him into a person who is exemplary of human glory.

And so the framing story of Satan does hold the key to the explanation of Job's suffering, as sophisticated repudiators of the story sometimes derisively claim that it does; but the explanation is not the primitive and morally offensive one they deride.

The explanation has to do with the effect of Job's suffering and the way in which it makes his life glorious. When we consider the framing story of Satan carefully, then, a third-person explanation of Job's suffering does emerge.

The nested stories: The fractal nature of the book of Job

On the narrative's own showing, the story of Job has to be understood as a small part of a much larger saga. As God explains in his conversation with Job, not only has God created the world, but he also governs everything in it, even the inanimate things. And, as the framing story of God and Satan implies, human history itself is subsumed within an overarching cosmic chronicle. So it is clear that in the narrative Job's interactions with God are a minuscule part of the things to which God's attention is turned. The book of Job is thus like an illustration in an art book that consists in a detail, greatly enlarged, taken from a much bigger painting that is outlined in a small box at the bottom of the page. The episode with Satan at the beginning of the narrative sketches in a few lines the general shape of a very big picture, and the divine speeches to Job provide small sketches of some other parts of that same big picture. The story of Job, which occupies the bulk of the book of Job, zooms in to enlarge a detail extracted from that whole enormous picture, which is drawn here only in part and in miniature.

In the whole picture within which the story of Job is a detail, God deals with Satan in a way which aims at Satan's good and which is designed to keep the distance between God and Satan as small as Satan will let it be.⁷⁸ Each episode involving God and Satan has the effect of making manifest to Satan, for Satan's sake, that Job is just as devoted to God and goodness as God tells Satan Job is when God singles Job out for praise. With regard to the story centered on relations between God and Satan, then, Satan is the primary beneficiary⁷⁹ of the lesson that can be learned from Job's reactions to his suffering, at least to the extent that the events involving Job make the lesson available for Satan if he is willing to accept it.⁸⁰

But tucked within the overarching story of Satan's relations with God is the story that is focused on Job. With regard to *that* story, considered not as a detail in Satan's story (which it is) but as its own whole story—namely, the story of Job's life (which it also is)—*Job* is the primary beneficiary of the events involving his suffering. That is because the same acts on God's part designed to teach Satan that Satan's cynical view of the world is wrong make Job first a cultural ideal and then an exemplar of human greatness. So although, on the face of it, Job is simply an incidental part in the story of Satan's relations with God, nonetheless, in the story which is the narrative of Job's life God is concerned to deal with Job in a way that seeks Job's good primarily and aims to draw Job closer to God if Job stands steadfast. In fact, in the embedded story focused on Job God does not simply stand by to see whether or not Job will be steadfast. Rather, God intervenes to help Job by making himself present to Job and by talking to Job at impressive length. The protagonist of the embedded story of Job and the primary object of God's concern in that story is thus Job, not Satan.

In addition, contained inside the story of Job, in the content of the divine speeches to Job, there is the quasi-story of God's relations with the animals and the inanimate parts of God's creation. In each part of that quasi-story, the focus of the story is on the animal or thing in question. God finds food for the baby birds because they are hungry. God does not treat them just as incidentals in some other, bigger story. Nonetheless, the story of God's as-it-were personal relations with the beasts and the sea and all the rest of God's creatures is set within the story of God's personal relations with Job, which is itself set within the story of God's personal relations with Satan.

And so the book of Job consists in nested stories of God's personal relations with other persons and things. The nested stories resemble each other in several respects. The most important of these, in my view, is that within each of the nested stories the creature whose story it is is an end in himself, even if in some other story he is also a means to an end for some other creature. But there are other resemblances as well, pertinent for my purposes. For example, as the episodes involving Satan make clear, Satan's psychological state is troubled; he is restless and alienated from God, and his intense desire to alienate Job from God shows envy and hatred of Job because of Job's personal relationship with God. These are painful states; Satan suffers in them. Unlike Job's suffering, Satan's suffering is not externally caused, but internally generated by Satan's own psychic state. Nonetheless, in Satan's interactions with God, Satan has a second-person experience of God, which would reveal something to Satan about God's attitude of love toward him if he were willing to receive it. In this respect, Satan's story resembles Job's: Satan's face-to-face encounter with God makes possible for Satan some explanation and resolution of Satan's suffering. Like the explanation given Job, the explanation of his suffering available to Satan is not in the nature of a third-person account. Rather, Satan's second-person experience of God makes available for Satan a second-person explanation of his own condition, just as Job's experience of God does for him.⁸¹

And so the various stories contained within the book of Job are not only nested, but there are patterns of resemblance among them as well.

Here it is worth considering why the book of Job has this unusual feature. Why is it that the book tells the story of Job within the context of nested stories resembling each other? Why does the book present God's relations with Job as a detail in the larger picture of God's relations with Satan and God's relations with the rest of creation, too?

In my view, the book of Job is to second-person accounts what a fractal is to mathematics. A fractal is a set of points with this peculiar feature: when it is graphed, the shape of each part of the whole resembles the shape of the whole; and the shape of each of the parts of any one part also resembles that of the whole, indefinitely. That is, if a detail of the whole graph is enlarged, its graph looks like the graph of the whole; and if a detail of that enlarged detail is itself enlarged, its graph also resembles the graph of the part within which it is a detail, as well as that of the whole graph, within which the part is a detail. A graphed fractal is thus a picture within a picture within a picture, and so on, each picture of which is similar to the picture of the whole, only reduced in scale. For some fractals, such as the Mandelbrot set, when any detail of the whole graph of the fractal is enlarged, its graph closely resembles the graph of the whole but is

not identical to it. Such fractals have infinite complexity. Insofar as the details of God's dealings with Job and also their outcome is very similar but not identical to the details and outcome of God's dealings with Satan or with the non-human animals and the other parts of creation, the book of Job seems to me the second-person analogue of a Mandelbrot set.

Extrapolations and suggestions

Understood as a kind of complex fractal, the book of Job is an illustration of the way in which God's relations with creatures is to be understood. God is able to use those creatures whom he treats as ends in themselves within their own stories *also* as means to ends for others of his creatures, who are ends in themselves within *their* stories.⁸² This interpretation thus suggests a way of looking at all the other suffering, apart from Job's, mentioned or implied in the book of Job.

Consider, for example, Job's children. Some people suppose that in the narrative the death of Job's children is only instrumental to Job's story. If there is indeed a benefit for Job that comes to him in consequence of all his suffering, as I have argued there is, then it can seem as if, in a morally repulsive way, the suffering and death of Job's children are being used by God only as a means to an end involving Job. Their suffering apparently has Job, rather than the children themselves, as its primary beneficiary. But if we understand the book of Job as a kind of fractal, then it is clear that the fractal pattern can continue in indefinite extension. Just as Job is a means to an end in the story of Satan and yet is also the primary beneficiary of his suffering within his own story, so his children are a means to an end in Job's story; and yet—if we were to follow out the fractal pattern—we can suppose that there will be stories, contained within the story of Job, in which each of Job's children is the primary beneficiary of his or her suffering. The same point applies, of course, to the suffering of all the other characters in Job's story, including, for example, Job's wife, whose suffering is expressed in her despairing exhortation to Job to curse God and die.⁸³

Furthermore, if the story of any one of those sufferers were told, it would contain mention of still other people—those grieved or harmed by the suffering and death of one of Job's children, for example—whose suffering would in turn have to be explained fully within the stories in which each of those people is the principal character. Within *those* stories each of the characters incidental in the stories of Job's children would be the chief beneficiary of whatever suffering occurs to them.

Although stories can be extended indefinitely in this fractal way, they obviously cannot be told in an indefinitely extended way in one narrative. And so the book of Job gives us Job's story. But, by explicitly giving us that story as an enlarged detail of a much larger story, it helps us understand the fractal nature of God's care for all of creation and the many stories we are *not* being given.

Not only does the book of Job give us this understanding of the basic principle of God's providence, but it also helps us understand how divine providence could possibly

be exercised in this Mandelbrot way. Sometimes people reflecting on divine providence suppose that the good at which God aims is some form of prosperity or some version of desire satisfaction for every person. In the grip of this idea, mockers deride the whole idea of divine providence by asking how God could exercise care, for example, over a battle in which each of the opposed armies is trusting that it has God on its side.

But the story of Job suggests a very different goal for divine providence, and one that can be exercised at once even with respect to opposed warring parties. Both Job and Satan are the objects of God's providential care, and each is shepherded by that care toward the goal best for that person, even though Satan is Job's enemy. Providential care for each of the opposed parties is possible because the ultimate aim of God's providential care in the narrative is closeness to God and the greatness consequent on that closeness. But, as every part of the book of Job suggests, one important means by which God shepherds a person to that goal is God's second-personal interactions with that person. And, of course, nothing about God's second-personal interactions with one person keeps him from similar interactions with another. So the book of Job not only shows us something about the fractal nature of providence, but it also helps us see how such fractally exercised providence is possible.⁸⁴

The doubling of explanation

In the narrative, as I have tried to show, there are two explanations for the suffering of Job, one set within the context of the other. In the narrative, one explanation is given to Job himself. That is a second-person explanation, which the audience of the narrative has at one remove, because the narrative gives the audience only a description of the explanation's being given to Job. The other explanation has to be teased out of the second-person account of the relations between God and Satan, but it is a third-person explanation; and it is available to the narrative's audience, but not to Job himself. With impressive ingenuity, then, the narrative not only explains Job's suffering to us within the context of two different but interwoven stories, that of Satan and that of Job, but it also invites us to see that we see what Job does not.

Why does the narrative contain two explanations of Job's suffering that differ in this way?

This question can be parsed into two subsidiary questions. (1) Why does Job not get the third-person explanation contained in the framing story of Satan? (2) Why is that third-person explanation given to the audience? That is, if the second-person explanation Job does get is sufficient for him, why should it not be sufficient for the narrative's audience as well?

It is not so hard to see why the explanation appropriate for Job is of the second-person sort. Such an explanation is short on what we might think of as engineering or medical details showing the precise nature of the connection between the suffering and the benefit that redeems it, but in certain sorts of cases a second-person explanation of suffering is a more potent explanation.

Consider, for example, a child with aggressive leukemia who is suffering the pains of a bone marrow transplant and who wants to know from his mother why she does not help him and stop his suffering when she so clearly could, just by taking him out of the hospital. His mother could respond to him by explaining about the benefits of the transplant—that is, by giving him a third-person, quasi-engineering medical account describing the reconstruction of healthy bone marrow. She might say to her son, "Well, see, you have a cancer that affects the blood, and the major blood products are produced by stem cells in the bone marrow. So what we are doing is removing some of your stem cells; the lab hunts through these till it finds some that aren't diseased, and then it clones them, for eventual reinfusion. Then we inject you with a series of cytotoxic drugs that destroy the diseased stem cells in your bone marrow. Those drugs work because they target fast-growing cells. The cancer cells in your bone marrow are fast-growing; but so are your hair cells and the cells in the mucus membranes that line your mouth, your esophagus, and your gut. The cytotoxic drugs kill those, too. That's why you have sores in your mouth; that's why you're throwing up, and why you're constipated." And so on and on.

This might be the right explanation for the son in the hospital, but then again it might not be. There are circumstances in which third-person explanations of this sort are inefficacious for comfort. The child undergoing a painful medical procedure may be at least as frightened and hurt by what he takes to be his mother's abandonment of him, her apparent indifference to his pain and need, as by anything that is happening to his bones and mucus membranes. In that case, the best response to his need for an explanation—perhaps the only response that makes love bio-available to him—is for the mother to give her son a second-person experience of her as loving of him. This may be the best means in the circumstances to show him that she would only let him suffer in order to bring about some outweighing good for him that she could not get for him in any easier way. In cases in which an apparent betrayal of trust is an important part of the suffering, second-person explanations have a special power to console. There is a particularly potent comfort for Job in the second-person explanation he gets in the narrative. Certainly, it is more intense for him than a third-person account could possibly be.

Furthermore, in the extended face-to-face experience Job has of God in God's conversation with him, not only does Job experience some sort of closeness with God, but also God honors Job in a signal way. The prolonged conversation with God and experience of God set Job apart from the others in his culture—as far as that goes, from all other human beings in any biblical narratives. At any rate, no other divine speeches recorded in biblical narratives are as extensive as those in God's conversation with Job. Insofar as honor from God is both comforting and restorative to a person who has been shamed by his friends and community as rejected by God, then in this respect also the second-person explanation given Job is appropriate for Job. So there is an antidote to psychic pain and to shame that stems from the second-personal character of God's explanation of Job's suffering, and this is also an important good for Job.

But why does not God precede Job's suffering with an explanation of the third-personal sort? Why not explain to Job before he suffers what is going to happen to him and why?

In my view, the answer to this question should be apparent. Neither one of Job's two experiences of suffering would have had the effect it does in the narrative if Job had had that suffering explained to him in advance. Consider just the first experience of suffering, in the course of which prosperity and moral goodness cease to be on the same side. An explanation of this suffering given to Job in advance would have made it clear to him that, although at least for a time, for Job, goodness and prosperity are not on the same side, nonetheless in fact goodness is ultimately allied with *cosmic* power. Job would then have had every reason to suppose that, if he only did not curse God, prosperity would at some point be returned to him (as it in fact is in the narrative). But in that case the entire episode of suffering would have lost much of its point.⁸⁵

Similarly, calling Job's attention in advance to the way in which at the end of the story his suffering will have made him glorious by drawing him closer to God and deepening his commitment to God's goodness risks undermining those very things in him by showing him how prudentially beneficial it is for him to take his stand with goodness. Such an explanation given to Job would have opened Job's eyes to a coupling between commitment to God, on the one hand, and cosmic (rather than worldly) prosperity, on the other.

And so Job's flourishing through his suffering, in relationship to God, is incompatible with Job's having the explanation for his suffering given in advance in a third-person explanation.

But what about the audience of the narrative? Why is Job's second-person explanation not sufficient also for the audience? Why does the narrative give the audience the third-person explanation that it denies Job?

It is helpful to see in this connection that the second-person explanation given to Job is not of the sort that people interested in theodicies often want, just because it is not a third-person account. A second-person experience in which one person conveys love to another can constitute a good response to a mistaken charge of betrayal for the mistaken accuser who has that experience. But it will be hard for a description of that experience to convince a third party, for the very reasons I gave when I explained why second-person accounts differ from third-person accounts. *How* Job knows what he knows—that his suffering is at the hands of a good and loving God—is hard to explain to someone who was not part of the same second-person experience. The best that can be done, as I argued earlier, is to turn that experience into a second-person account, of the sort we have in the story of the second-person experiences between God and Job.

Furthermore, there is a great variability in the reactions of people to a second-person account. When it comes to persuading its audience to share its perspective, a story is much more likely to be successful with those people who have themselves had some experience of the sort being described in the story. (That is why people reveal themselves when they explain what novels they find moving.) Second-person accounts involving God will be received differently by those who have their own religious experiences to draw on from the way in which they are received by those who do not, just as the second-person account contained in the divine speeches will strike Job differently from the way in which it will strike someone who receives it at one remove from the

second-person experience in which it is embedded. (That is also why the problem of suffering presents itself differently to different people, depending on their own history of religious experience.)

So an explanation of Job's suffering that is in the form of a second-person account will be disappointing to some readers or hearers of the story, however satisfying it might be to Job, who has the second-person experience represented in the second-person account. *What* Job knows, that God loves him and did not betray his trust, may not be what someone looking for a third-person account wants. It may be enough for a sick child, who has a shared history of loving relations with his mother, to know that she allows him to suffer only because she loves him. But an outsider who does not know the mother, who has no relation to her, may well want to know exactly what the connection between the suffering and the child's well-being is, before he is willing to grant that the mother is justified in allowing the child to suffer.

And so, even if there is a point in the story for giving only one sort of explanation to Job, both sorts of explanation have a place in the narrative.

Conclusion

Whether the picture of providence portrayed in the book of Job is religiously or morally acceptable is a matter I am postponing for the last part of this book, as I have explained before. In this chapter, in this examination of the narrative, what I have been at pains to show is the picture we get of God's reasons for allowing Job's suffering, when we are attuned to the second-person character of the narrative, in all its complexity.

Focusing on the second-person account of the divine speeches and the second-person experience of God that Job has while God is speaking to him shows us that there is for Job a second-personal explanation of his suffering; and, through the second-person account of the narrative, it lets us share to some extent in the explanation Job gets by this means. Focusing on the second-person account of the framing story of Satan and reflecting on the second-person experiences between God and Satan which that account relates enables us to understand Job's suffering in another way, because we can tease a third-person account out of that framing story. It is not the primitive, morally repugnant folkloric story which the framing story is often enough thought to be—namely, that Job is a pawn heartlessly used in a wager between God and Satan. On the contrary, the nested stories of Satan and of Job show us God's providence operating in a fractal way, to deal with each of God's creatures as an end in himself, even while interweaving all the individual stories into one larger narrative. It is sometimes supposed that divine providence could not possibly operate in this way because it is not possible for there to be the sort of collocation of benefits necessary for each individual creature to be treated as an end in itself. But the story of Job shows that this attitude toward divine providence takes too limited a view of the nature of benefits and goods for human beings. There are also the goods of second-personal relations, and especially the potent goods of closeness

between God and created persons. It is not impossible for God to provide goods of this sort to all his creatures.

Furthermore, the book of Job shows us God giving goods of this sort to created persons not by means of middle knowledge that lets him be the sole determiner of all the outcomes of his interactions with other persons.⁸⁶ On the contrary, in the case of Satan, Satan's own resolute hostility thwarts God's attempts to draw Satan closer to himself. Even here, however, divine providence is successful, in two respects. God uses Satan's malice toward Job to make Job magnificent in goodness, and by that means he thwarts Satan's efforts to turn Job into a rebel against God. And God succeeds in providing loving care for Satan, which would draw Satan closer to God if Satan were to accept it. In the narrative, then, divine providence succeeds in its aims not by determining what creatures do, but by being smarter than those creatures opposed to him. Maybe God does not play dice with the universe; but perhaps, like a consummate chess master, through the application of great intelligence, he is able to get to ends he wants through myriad possible disjunctive roads to it.

With this, my exploration of a narrative involving a sufferer who is a righteous, unwilling victim of the depredations of others and the forces of nature is complete. In the next chapter, I will turn to the story of Samson, which is the narrative of a person who suffers greatly, but as a perpetrator of great wrongs.

Chapter 10

The Story of Samson: Self-Destroying Evil

Batter my heart, three-personed God; for, you
As yet but knock, breathe, shine, and seek to mend;
That I may rise, and stand, o'erthrow me, and bend
Your force, to break, blow, burn, and make me new.
I, like an usurped town, to another due,
Labour to admit you, but oh, to no end.
Reason your viceroy in me, me should defend,
But is captived, and proves weak or untrue.
Yet dearly I love you, and would be loved fain,
But am betrothed unto your enemy.
Divorce me, untie, or break that knot again,
Take me to you, imprison me, for I
Except you enthrall me, never shall be free,
Nor ever chaste, except you ravish me.*

Introduction

In her book on the problem of suffering, Marilyn McCord Adams defines horrendous evils as "evils the participation in which (that is, the doing or suffering of which) constitutes prima facie reason to doubt whether the participant's life could (given their inclusion in it) be a great good" to the participant.¹ Although her definition specifically mentions the doing of evils as well as the suffering of them, her paradigm lists of horrendous evils typically include only examples of great suffering on the part of

* John Donne, "Holy Sonnet XIV," in *John Donne. Complete English Poems*, ed. C. A. Patrides and Robin Hamilton (London: J. M. Dent, Everyman Library, 1994).