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## Dialogue and Dialogism in the Book of Job\*

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**ABSTRACT:** Recent scholarship has applied elements of Mikhail Bakhtin's criticism and philosophy to the Book of Job. This paper attempts to identify specific elements of Dostoyevsky's poetics (as described by Bakhtin) in *Job*. First, certain *prima facie* similarities between Dostoyevsky and Job are presented. Secondly three elements in Bakhtin's poetics are explored in the Book of Job: (i) a non-hierarchical representation of characters (*ideas*); (ii) the nature of *voices* in Job, and the author's way of interrelating them; (iii) a non-narrative dimension of the book. Closing the article is a postscript discussing whether it is historically sensible to apply insights from Bakhtin to the Book of Job.

In the course of the argument it is claimed that the voice of *tradition* is the most conspicuous "other" to which characters in Job make their "sideward glance" (Bakhtin). Also, the essay contends that certain characters (viz. Job) represent several, internally incommensurable voices (*ideas*). The paper argues that narrator's voice in the book is unreliable, and that the frame tale of *Job* has a "double voiced quality" (Bakhtin) and should be read as parody. It is also argued that the author of the book devised certain overarching dialogical topics, to which every character in the book speaks (including narrator, *Hassatan* and Mrs. Job). Finally, the essay holds that ancient Hebrew sapiential thinking did inherit a certain dialogical quality, which renders it sensible to apply Bakhtin to *Job*.

It might seem obvious that the Book of Job is (or extensively contains) dialogue. Still, aspects of the book caused scholarship to resist such a classification. First, there are the widely accepted theories of heterogeneous provenance of the material. Speeches that originated in different processes would not "respond" to each other—or so one thought. All the more so since it would seem that speakers of the book are not really responding to each other: Job and his friends pursue different topics, God does not respond to Job's charges, etc. The characters generally speak *past* rather than *with* each

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other.<sup>1</sup> Secondly, Claus Westermann's form critical analysis dealt severe blows to the view of *Job* as dialogue. In his view, dialogue in this composition is encompassed by lament, which is embedded in court speech, which again finds its place in the overarching genre of drama.<sup>2</sup> Scholars may indeed ask themselves: is there at all a dialogue in this book?

Whenever this question is answered in the affirmative, the kind of dialogue found in *Job* is not covered by the form-critical concept. Instead, analyses of, say, rhetorical strategies or metaphorical development are brought to bear on the case. For instance, Norman Habel argued to see the Book of Job as a meaningful totality in which also the dialogical parts make sense. In order to maintain this view, Habel argued from double entendre, word play, irony, etc.<sup>3</sup> John E. Course argued that the speeches in *Job* respond to each other in subtle and therefore easily overlooked manners. He aimed to chart these by way of rhetorical criticism.<sup>4</sup> Klaudia Engljählinger identified recurring themes throughout the dialogue parts, also paying attention to pragmatic aspects.<sup>5</sup> Other ways of viewing dialogic exchange in the book were presented by Leo Perdue who found a metaphorical reasoning developing throughout the book, Willem Beuken who argued a similar case from key words and their semantic fields, or William Brown who found in *Job* a discourse on the formation of character.<sup>6</sup> Scholars have explored key

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1. Thus already S. Mowinckel, *Diktet om Ijob og hans tre venner* (Kristiania: Aschehoug, 1924), pp. 114, 117 etc., and later for instance M.H. Pope, *Job. Introduction, Translation, and Notes* (AB, 15; New York: Doubleday, 1973), p. lxxv; cf. C. Westermann, *Der Aufbau des Buches Hiob* (Beiträge zur historischen Theologie 23; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1956), p. 5. A "general consensus" on the issue is recorded (and perhaps overplayed) by J.E. Course, *Speech and Response: A Rhetorical Analysis of the Introductions to the Speeches of the Book of Job* (Chaps. 4-24) (CBQ Monograph Series, 25; Washington, DC: Catholic Biblical Association, 1994), pp. 3-5.

2. Westermann, *Aufbau*, esp. pp. 1-13, allowing the label "dialogue" only to a limited body of text, all strictly connected to the efforts of the friends to console Job (p. 10). A similar emphasis upon lament was found in Mowinckel, *Ijob*, see pp. 115-119. Since this book was published in Norwegian, it received little scholarly attention.

3. N.C. Habel, *The Book of Job* (OTL; Philadelphia, PA: Westminster, 1985), see for instance pp. 25-35, 49-53, etc.

4. Course, *Speech and Response*, *passim*.

5. K. Engljählinger, *Theologie im Streitgespräch: Studien zur Dynamik der Dialoge des Buches Ijob* (Stuttgarter Bibelstudien, 198; Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 2003), summing up for instance pp. 190-93.

6. L.G. Perdue, *Wisdom in Revolt: Metaphorical Theology in the Book of Job* (JSOT Sup, 112, Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991); W.A.M. Beuken, "Job's Imprecation as the Cradle of a New Religious Discourse: The Perplexing Impact of the Semantic Correspondences between Job 3, Job 4-5 and Job 6-7," in W.A.M. Beuken (ed.), *The Book of Job* (BETL, 114; Leuven: Peeters, 1994), pp. 41-78; W.P. Brown, (ed.),

passages (like chs. 1-2; 3; 19; 28; 31; 38-41; 42,1-6) for literary or thematic development, or searched the book for rhetorical devices that relate its parts to each other.<sup>7</sup> Some also read apparent inconsistencies of the book as parts of an ironic composition.<sup>8</sup>

The question of relating different parts of the Book of Job was traditionally conceived of as a question of its genre. As is evident from decades of research, however, the book employs several genres and there is no agreement on selecting one of them as the overarching one. After the towering contributions of Westermann and Richter,<sup>9</sup> only a few major contributions are counted.<sup>10</sup> Scholars have rather opted to see the Book of Job as “one of a kind.”<sup>11</sup> Carol Newsom in her seminal book included a section on the question of genre.<sup>12</sup> Basically she says that (a) the procedure to fix a work to a genre definition is somewhat problematic, (b) to the extent that genres could be recognised in Job, this book has many of them, and (c) the deepest characteristic of *Job* is its “dialogue between genres.” This last point would again, I surmise, point to the individuality of the book. Mike Cheney in his Lund dissertation argued to identify an ancient Near Eastern genre

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*Character and Scripture: Moral Formation, Community, and Biblical Interpretation* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2002).

7. See for instance W.L. Michel, “Confidence and Despair: Job 19,25-27 in the Light of Northwest Semitic Studies,” in Beuken, *The Book of Job*, pp. 157-182; J. van Oorschot, “Hiob 28: Die verborgene Weisheit und die Furcht Gottes als Überwindung einer generalisierten חכמה,” in Beuken, *The Book of Job*, pp. 183-201; E.J. van Wolde, “Job 42,1-6: The Reversal of Job,” in Beuken, *The Book of Job*, 223-250; and cf. also H.-M. Wahl, *Der gerechte Schöpfer: Eine Redaktions- und theologiegeschichtliche Untersuchung der Elihureden – Hiob 32-37* (BZAW, 207; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1993).

8. See recently D. Geeraerts, “Caught in a Web of Irony: Job and His Embarrassed God,” in E. van Wolde (ed.), *Job 28: Cognition in Context (Biblical Interpretation Series, 64)*; Leiden: Brill, 2003), pp. 37-55, referring to earlier works of Hoffman, Whedbee and Robertson. One might in some respects count E.M. Good, *In Turns of Tempest: A Reading of Job* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1990) in this group.

9. Westermann, *Aufbau*; H. Richter, *Studien zu Hiob: Der Aufbau des Hiobbuches, dargestellt an den Gattungen des Rechtslebens (Theologische Arbeiten, 11)*; Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1959).

10. In addition to Cheney and Newsom, see J.W. Whedbee, “The Comedy of Job,” *Semeia* 7 (1977), 1-39; K.J. Dell, *The Book of Job as Sceptical Literature* (BZAW 197; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1991).

11. Thus for instance Westermann, *Aufbau*, esp. pp. 1-13; Pope, *The Book of Job*, pp. xxx-xxxii; Habel, *The Book of Job*, pp. 42-46; Murphy, R. E., *Wisdom Literature: Job, Proverbs, Ruth, Canticles, Ecclesiastes, and Esther* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1981), p. 16.

12. C.A. Newsom, *The Book of Job: A Contest of Moral Imaginations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. 11-17.

“frame tale,” and to see Job as one specimen of this genre.<sup>13</sup> I would think that Cheney presented a better case than Newsom (p. 266 n. 33) and others seem ready to admit. If one conceives of his “frame tale” as a literary pattern that could be employed in various literary contexts, Cheney’s argument does seem to me to identify one plausible impetus for compiling a work like the Book of Job. However, identifying this kind of literary pattern would not close the question of relevant reading expectations for the Book of Job. So for our purpose we would in any case need further explorations.

The question of literary mode seems more important than that of genre. This is where we turn to the word “dialogism” in the title of this essay. The term is related to the Soviet literary critic and philosopher Mikhail Bakhtin.<sup>14</sup> Initially using a term translated “polyphony”, he indicated a non-hierarchical presence of voices in a text, each defining itself in relation to other voices. “Dialogism” is now used as shorthand for this literary strategy and for the philosophy it is thought to reflect.<sup>15</sup> It also designates scholarly studies inspired by Bakhtin’s theories and philosophy.<sup>16</sup>

Bakhtin has been applied also in biblical studies.<sup>17</sup> As regards the Book of Job, Carol Newsom takes the lead with a series of important publications

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13. M. Cheney, *Dust, Wind and Agony: Character, Speech and Genre in Job* (CBOTS 36, Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1994).

14. For English versions of Bakhtin’s writings I consulted M. Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics* (*Theory and History of Literature*, 8; Minneapolis, Minn.: University of Minnesota Press, 1984); *idem*, *Rabelais and His World* (Cambridge, Mass.: Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 1968); *idem*, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays* (*University of Texas Press Slavic Series*, 1; Austin, Tex.: University of Texas Press, 1981); *idem*, *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays* (*University of Texas Press Slavic Series*, 8; Austin, Tex.: University of Texas Press, 1986); *idem*, “From the Prehistory of Novelistic Discourse,” in D. Lodge (ed.), *Modern Criticism and Theory: A Reader* (London / New York: Longman, 1988), pp. 125-156.

15. One presentation of this “philosophy” is given in G.S. Morson and C. Emerson, *Mikhail Bakhtin: Creation of a Prosaics* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1990), pp. 49-62 *et passim*. Bakhtin himself used the word “dialogism” in this way in his *Discourse in the Novel*, cf. Bakhtin, *Dialogic Imagination*, pp. 259-422, 275 *et passim*.

16. As the reader will know, my title echoes de P. Man, “Dialogue and Dialogism,” in G.S. Morson et al. (ed.), *Rethinking Bakhtin: Extensions and Challenges* (*Series in Russian Literature and Theory*; Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1989) pp. 105-114.

17. For works with relevance to OT studies, see for instance H. Levine, “The Dialogic Discourse of Psalms,” in A. Loads et al. (ed.), *Hermeneutics, the Bible and Literary Criticism* (New York: St. Martin’s, 1992), pp. 145-161; W.L. Reed, *Dialogues of the Word: The Bible as Literature according to Bakhtin* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993); K.M. Craig, *Reading Esther: A Case for the Literary Carnavalesque* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 1995); D.T.

to this theme.<sup>18</sup> In *Job*, she holds, incommensurable ways of apprehending the world remain juxtaposed, requiring simultaneous acknowledgement.<sup>19</sup> There is much to learn from her writings. To my mind, there is also something else to be said. In particular, I would try to focus more upon the *poetics* of polyphony in *Job*, and certainly less upon dialogue between *genres*.

Newsom focuses differences in “moral imagination” expressed in the prose tale, the speeches of the three friends, the poem of wisdom, the speeches of Elihu, Job’s speeches and the speeches of God respectively.<sup>20</sup> She holds that the most profound reader’s response to the book is *not* a reflection upon propositions uttered by the dialoguing characters, but a “transformation of perception through aesthetic experience” (p. 19f). Moral is often expressed by aesthetic means, especially by narrative, metaphor and style (pp. 32-34). So Newsom elaborates upon moral imaginations in the *genres* of the book. This orientation is somewhat conspicuous. Bakhtin insisted that a dialogical composition involves personal *voices* speaking from a specific life situation. Newsom’s focus would seem potentially to jeopardize this point. Also, the actual utterances in *Job* seem to play a lesser role to Newsom. She aims to explore the combatants’ perception, not just their speech (90). These perceptions are construed in a way fairly

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Olson, “Biblical Theology as Provisional Monologization: A Dialogue with Childs, Brueggemann and Bakhtin,” *Biblical Interpretation* 6 (1998), pp. 162-180; E. van Wolde, “Texts in Dialogue with Texts: Intertextuality in the Ruth and Tamar Narratives,” *Biblical Interpretation* 5 (1997), pp. 1-28; B. Green, *Mikhail Bakhtin and Biblical Scholarship: An Introduction* (*Semeia Studies*, 38; Atlanta, GA: SBL, 2000); A.K.M. Adam (ed.), *A Handbook of Postmodern Biblical Interpretation* (Chalice, 2000); C.W. Miller, “Reading Voices: Personification, Dialogism, and the Reader of Lamentations 1,” *Biblical Interpretation* 9 (4/2001), pp. 393-408; Mandolfo, C., *God in the Dock: Dialogic Tension in the Psalms of Lament* (*JSOT Sup* 357; London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002); Mandolfo, C., “Finding their Voices: Sanctioned Subversion in Psalms of Lament,” *Horizons in Biblical Theology* 24 (2/2002), pp. 27-52; N. Perrin, “Dialogic Conceptions of Language and the Problem of Biblical Unity,” in S.J. Hafemann (ed.), *Biblical Theology: Retrospect and Prospect* (Downers Grove, Ill.: Inter-Varsity Press, 2002), pp. 212-224; S. Sykes, *Time and Space in Haggai-Zechariah 1-8: A Bakhtinian Analysis of a Prophetic Chronicle* (*Studies in Biblical Literature* 24; New York: Peter Lang, 2002); L.J.M. Claassens, “Biblical Theology as Dialogue: Continuing the Conversation on Mikhail Bakhtin and Biblical Theology,” *JBL* 122 (2003), pp. 127-44.

18. Newsom, “Bakhtin, the Bible, and Dialogic Truth”; *eadem*, “Job and His Friends: A Conflict of Moral Imaginations,” *Int* 53 (1999), pp. 239-253; *eadem*, “The Book of Job as Polyphonic Text,” *JSOT* 97 (2002), 87-108; *eadem*, *The Book of Job*; *eadem*, “Dialogue and Allegorical Hermeneutics in Job 28:28,” in E. van Wolde (ed.), *Job 28: Cognition in Context* (*Biblical Interpretation Series* 64, Leiden: Brill, 2003), pp. 299-305.

19. Adapted from Newsom, *The Book of Job*, 85, cf. 84-89, etc.

20. Thus Newsom, *The Book of Job*, 11-31, etc., and similarly in Newsom, “Job 28:28,” and already in Newsom, “Bakhtin, the Bible, and Dialogic Truth”.

abstracted from the actual speech presented. I certainly do not object to Newsom's overall reading. On the contrary, I am impressed and clearly influenced by her work. However, I aim to take a different route, focusing more upon voices actually dialoguing in the Book of Job and also on poetics, i.e. the literary anatomy, in the Book of Job. In so doing I hope to contribute to the discourse she initiated.

Not much more on Job and Bakhtin has been printed, but recently David Clines published a stimulating study that appears to apply Bakhtin to *Job*.<sup>21</sup> We return to this study later on. After this all-too brief overview, this paper will sketch a poetics of the book and the kind of reading such poetics might invite.

#### *Aspects of Dialogical Poetics in the Book of Job*

The question of whether or not it is sensible to apply Bakhtin to *Job* deserves separate treatment. Biblical scholars immediately recognise methodological challenges to such application. The move may seem strange also from the side of Bakhtin scholarship, since especially the Medieval Bible seems to have had some of the same significance to Bakhtin as Tolstoy had: it was one of those monological texts serving as background for Bakhtin's exposing the rise of dialogical force in literature. I return to this issue in the Postscript below.

Presently I simply apply Bakhtin's analysis of Dostoyevsky for heuristic reasons.<sup>22</sup> First, we should note that the concept "poetics" in Bakhtin's book on Dostoyevsky is not entirely conventional. Bakhtin stressed that his theory was "metalinguistic." He thereby appears to have pointed in part towards that which we would call pragmatics (see esp. p. 202) and in part to that which in Bakhtinian vocabulary is called "embodiment."<sup>23</sup> His views being developed as a critique of formalist narratology, he later referred to his analysis as "prosaics" rather than "poetics."<sup>24</sup> I use Bakhtin's terminology and practice in the Dostoyevsky book, sensing that this is the best bridge to my *Job* studies. "Dialogical poetics," therefore, designates the use of certain strategies, mostly from the realm of narratology and pragmatics, as applied in literature. These are thought to be instrumental in creating polyphonic texts.

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21. Clines, D. J. A., "Job's God," *Concilium* (4/2004), pp. 39-51, is published in a popular style. Clines appear to apply an appropriated Bakhtinian perspective, also offering a critique of what he perceives of as unwarranted use of Bakhtin.

22. Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, is the book primarily used in this essay. Henceforth it is indicated simply as *op. cit.*

23. See discussion in Morson and Emerson, *Mikhail Bakhtin*, pp. 16-19, 123 f, 131-33, etc. and cf. Bakhtin's somewhat inelegant attempt at defining his research over against linguistics, *op. cit.*, pp. 181-185, etc.

24. Cf. Morson and Emerson, *Mikhail Bakhtin*, pp. 317-325, *et passim*.

1) Certain *prima facie* similarities between the poetics of *Job* and Dostoyevsky encourage a comparison in the first place.

a) First, there is the use of an adventure plot combined with a problem-oriented dialogue to focus and illustrate certain fundamental life problems. According to Bakhtin, in Dostoyevsky the adventure plot is “combined with the posing of profound and acute problems, [...] and in addition placed wholly at the service of the idea. It places a person in extraordinary positions that expose and provoke him [...] for the purpose of testing the idea and the man of the idea.”<sup>25</sup> The same is emphasized for Menippean satire, which Bakhtin saw as one of the genre roots for the polyphonic novel (p. 115.) As seen in my Postscript, Menippean satire would in some sense compare to the Book of Job in Bakhtin’s universe.<sup>26</sup>

The plot in *Job* could hardly be more pointed towards the function of framing a certain life problem for consideration by the following dialogue. This plot, as established in chs. 1-2 is certainly adventure like, bordering to fantastic literature. Scholars used to see this narrative as a traditional folk tale. Today it is more reasonable to side with Clines, Newsom and others, seeing this narrative as a self-conscious exaggeration of traditional narrative.<sup>27</sup> The tale initially presents itself as traditional while in reality being elaborated and sophisticated. This comes rather close to the way Dostoyevsky used traditional stories.<sup>28</sup>

b) A second similarity is the method to construe heroes as embodying a certain interpretation of human life. These interpretations form the *ideas* of the novel.<sup>29</sup> Bakhtin stresses the localising of “ideas” in specific, human lives, and the “testing” of these ideas by rubbing them against other “ideas” embodied by characters. Some quotations highlight the view:

[T]he hero in Dostoevsky is a man of the idea; this is not a character, not a temperament, not a social or psychological type; such externalized and finalized

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25. *Op. cit.*, p. 105. The “idea” referred to here is the interpretive bid on life and world in totality embodied by the character in the novel, see further below.

26. See further Bakhtin *op. cit.*, pp. 101-106, etc.

27. See D.J.A. Clines, *Job 1-20 (Word Biblical Commentary, 17; Dallas, TX: Word, 1989)*, pp. 8-9 (first argued in a 1985 publication); A. Brenner, “Job the Pious? The Characterization of Job in the Narrative Framework of the Book,” *JSOT* 43 (1989), pp. 21-35; W. Vogels, “Job’s Empty Pious Slogans (Job 1,2-22; 2,8-10),” in Beuken, *The Book of Job*, pp. 369-376, 369f.; and recently J.W. Watts “The Unreliable Narrator of Job,” in S.L. Cook et al. (eds.), *The Whirlwind: Essays on Job, Hermeneutics and Theology in Memory of Jane Morse (JSOT Sup, 336; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002)*, pp. 168-80, 173 and Newsom, *The Book of Job*, pp. 38-41, etc.

28. See again Bakhtin, *op. cit.*, p. 105.

29. This is a central topic, cf. Bakhtin, *op. cit.*, pp. 22-25, 31 f.; 53-65; 78 f.; 187 f.; 219 f.; 237-249.



images of persons cannot of course be combined with the image of a *fully valid* idea. (p. 85, italics retained).

Each individual [...] enters Raskolnikov's inner speech not as a character or a type, not as a personage in the plot of his life [...], but as a symbol of a certain orientation to life and an ideological position, the symbol of a specific real-life solution to those same ideological questions that torment him. [...] As a result his inner speech unfolds like a philosophical drama, where the *dramatis personae* are embodied points of view on life and on the world, realized in living situations. (pp. 238 and 239)

The opening of the Book of Job brings out the case that a "blameless and straight man" loses virtually everything. The story, in its exaggerated style poses Job's response to his experience as being so blatantly unrealistic, it is best heard as the narrator's "point of view of the world." As is evident, the ideological position thereby expressed, is one of the recurring ideas in the book.

c) A third similarity in poetics is the technique to let characters speak without the author leaving hints as to whether or not their speech is reliable. We return more fully to this literary strategy below.<sup>30</sup>

d) A fourth point is the tendency to use extensive dialogues that are fundamentally independent of the plot in which they occur. Bakhtin says:

The potential endlessness of dialogue in Dostoevsky's design already in itself answers the question why such dialogue cannot be plot-dependent in the strict sense of the word, for a plot-dependent dialogue strives toward conclusion just as inevitably as does the plot of which it is in fact a component. Therefore dialogue in Dostoevsky is [...] internally independent of the plot-related interrelationships of the speakers – although, of course, dialogue is prepared for by the plot. (252).

The dialogue in the Book of Job clearly transcends the book. We tend to hear each utterance not as a saying directed to the configuration of problems launched in the plot of *Job*, but rather as a bid on the fundamental problem actualised by that plot. Indeed, especially the speeches of the three friends and of God not infrequently seem wholly directed towards a *general* problem, more or less disregarding the situation of Job as presented in the plot of the book. Much more could be said to substantiate this claim, and some will occur below. Perhaps for now, it is sufficient to point to the dialogue of *Job* taking part in a larger discourse on emblematic suffering throughout ancient Near Eastern literature.<sup>31</sup>

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30. For now, see insights formulated in M. Köhlmoos, *Die Auge Gottes: Textstrategie im Hiobbuch* (FAT, 25; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1999), pp. 74-143 *passim*.

31. The problem has been variously construed for instance as that of the "just sufferer": L. Ruppert, *Der leidende Gerechte: Eine Motivgeschichtliche Untersuchung zum Alten Testament und zwischentestamentlichen Judentum* (Forschung zur Bibel 5; Würzburg: Echter, 1972), as the "Job problem": H.-P. Müller, *Das Hiobproblem. Seine Stellung und Entstehung im Alten Orient und im Alten Testament*

e) One further strategy is to deconstruct abstract, *separate* thoughts and speech – like maxims or sayings. Bakhtin refers to such sayings as “no-man’s-speech,” devoid of any *particular* life setting. A major point in his analysis is that in Dostoyevsky no-mans-thoughts, or *separate* thoughts are dialogised by becoming utterances of particular characters in specific situations countered by those of other characters in the story (see pp. 91, 93, and cf. 85-100). One remarkable feature of the Book of Job is that traditional maxims and poems are being re-contextualised into specific life settings precisely by their being applied in the dialogue. Typically, proverbs, sapiential topics and other “no-man’s-speech” are uttered by Job and his friends, thereby gaining a specific context, which allows for evaluation of the sustainability of the *ideas* expressed in such speech.

f) Finally, there is in Dostoyevsky a marked propensity to portray the carnivalesque through characters that are denied the position in life that would normally be appropriate for them. The concept of the carnivalesque in Bakhtin goes back to his work on Rabelais and is linked to the polyphonic through its capacity to generate simultaneity and distance through laughter.<sup>32</sup> The issue occupies a lot of space in the Dostoyevsky book.<sup>33</sup> Bakhtin says *i.a.*: “The catharsis that finalizes Dostoyevsky’s novels might be [...] expressed in this way: nothing conclusive has yet taken place in the world, the ultimate word of the world and about the world has not yet been spoken, the world is open and free, everything is still in the future and will always be in the future.” (166).

Several elements in Bakhtin’s theory of the carnivalesque would apply well to the Book of Job. Certainly, the combination of beauty and ugliness is present in Job. Also, Job’s “empty pious slogans” in chapters 1-2 are bordering on the carnivalesque.<sup>34</sup> An abolishment of social distance may be visible in the encounter between God and Job. Also in the friends’ speech we hear an echo of the same.<sup>35</sup> More importantly, perhaps, the central scene in the book, the court, is not for real. That is: the reader knows there is a court hearing in heaven, but the contestants of the dialogue do not. Rather, they employ court patterns almost as parody within the contest dialogue. In their own minds they are *playing* a court hearing in a manner that is not entirely

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(*Erträge der Forschung*, 84; Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1995) or “emblematic suffering”: K. van der Toorn, *Sin and Sanction in Ancient Israel and Mesopotamia* (*Studia Semitica Neerlandica*, 22; Assen: van Gorcum, 1985), pp. 58-67, etc. Though generally important, the differences here are of little consequence to the present argument.

32. Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, and cf. Bakhtin, *Dialogic Imagination*, pp. 68-82, 19-24.

33. *Op. cit.*, pp. 156-178, all related to Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*.

34. Cf. Vogels, “Job’s Empty Pious Slogans”.

35. Cf. for this dimension in the book Geeraerts, “Caught in a Web of Irony,” pp. 46-48, etc.

different from how medieval carnival played a crowning according to Bakhtin.<sup>36</sup> This apprehension of the “court hearing” in *Job* could perhaps shed light on the sometimes-severe arguments launched by Job and his friends.<sup>37</sup> More should be done before this relevance of Bakhtin to *Job* is sorted out properly.

2) A first more specific similarity between the poetics of *Job* and those of Dostoyevsky is found in the technique used to represent the external world. The narrator in Dostoyevsky gives no objective representation of environment, everyday life, etc. Instead, narrator (or author<sup>38</sup>) reports on external artefacts, relations, etc. *through the eyes of the characters*. In this way the author sanctions no single view of the external world. The effect of this is that the question of how to interpret that external world becomes a central issue. Bakhtin says:

Upon entering Dostoevsky’s novel, the enormously diverse world of things and relationships [...] is presented, as the characters understand it, in their spirit and in their tone. The author as carrier of his own idea does not come into direct contact with a single thing; he comes into contact only with people. [...] At the centre of Dostoevsky’s creative work there stands, in place of the relationship of a single cognizant and judging “I” to the world, the problem of the interrelationship of all these cognizant and judging “I’s” to one another. (pp. 99 and 100).

Conflicting interpretations of life and world are of course main objects in the Book of Job. Each character presents his apprehension(s) without intervention from the narrator. Only in the narrative frame of the book does narrator comment upon other characters in the book.<sup>39</sup> Two matters prevent us from hearing narrator’s voice in *Job* as a reliable report from an omniscient narrator. First, the narrative frame qualifies as fantasy literature. It is far from evident how characters and relations in the fantasy world of the tale would translate into the realistic world reflected in the dialogues. Secondly, following Clines, Newsom and others, the tale makes the impression of being “falsely naïve,” to the extent of overstatement.<sup>40</sup> Neither Clines nor Newsom exhaust the full impact of this apprehension of the tale. Clines argues simply to read narrator’s worldview as the one closest to the

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36. See Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, *passim*.

37. Cf. how Menippean parody poses the “scandal” for instance in form of the “inappropriate word” (Bakhtin, *op. cit.*, pp. 117 f.).

38. Bakhtin distinguishes between the two only when narrator is visible as a character distinct from the author.

39. The narrative frame is usually identified as Job 1,1–2,10 and 42,11–17. In addition 2,11–13 and 42,7–10 are adapted to the frame, and so also 32,1–5.

40. See Clines, *Job 1–20*, pp. 8–9; Newsom, *The Book of Job*, pp. 38–41, etc., and further Brenner, “Job the Pious?; Vogels, “Job’s Empty Pious Slogans,” pp. 369 f. and especially Watts, “Unreliable Narrator”.

author.<sup>41</sup> Newsom, having accepted and expanded Clines' argument (pp. 36-41), nevertheless holds that the "moral imagination" of this false tale would be similar to that of other – *truly* traditional – didactic tales (pp. 41-65, esp. 51ff).<sup>42</sup>

Employing insights from Bakhtin, I would say that the "falsely naïve" tale of Job 1-2 and 42\* holds a "double voiced" quality and therefore must in fact be read as a parody. First, there is the voice masquerading as a traditional narrator. Secondly, there is the hand of the author of the book communicating that the enticing quality of the tale is obscuring the matter of the book.<sup>43</sup> An "explanation" that God allowed himself to be provoked into having *Hassatan* test Job – despite God's never doubting Job's integrity – is no explanation at all. Rather, God's giving in to *Hassatan* is an example of the kind of divine behaviour that Job confronts in 9,15-23; 16,11, etc. Indeed, it is what Hermann Spieckermann called "*die Satanisierung Gottes*."<sup>44</sup> And yet, God's giving in to *Hassatan* is presented as a plain thing by the traditional narrator. Only the "second voice," *i.e.* the author stylising the tale into being "more traditional than tradition" and bringing it into proximity to the dialogue, gives depth to the matter.<sup>45</sup> As an effect, where the narrator voice *could* be heard as giving hints to our perceiving characters in the book, it is either so enigmatic or so pointedly exaggerated, it is difficult to take it seriously (in a realistic sense). Therefore narrator voice could not be granted a privileged position over other characters in the book, and the tale could not be taken on face value.

Consequently, in *Job* as in Dostoyevsky, there is a non-hierarchical presentation of characters' conflicting views of life and world, of conflicting

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41. Clines, "Job's God," pp. 50 f.

42. Newsom, *op. cit.*, pp. 41-65, esp. pp. 51ff. seems unaware of Watts, "Unreliable Narrator," (who sees narrator voice in Job as unreliable) and Vogels, "Job's Empty Pious Slogans".

43. My "hearing" of parody in Job 1–2 is inspired by G.S. Morson, "Parody, History, and Metaparody," in G.S. Morson et al. (ed.), *Rethinking Bakhtin: Extensions and Challenges* (*Series in Russian Literature and Theory*; Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1989), pp. 63-86, 65, 67-74, *et passim*. In particular I was intrigued by Morson's reflections on exaggeration and change of setting as elements of parody (pp. 70, 71 f.). Referring to Bakhtin, *Dialogic Imagination*, pp. 51 f. etc., this element of parody threatens to break down the genre constituents of the frame tale.

44. H. Spieckermann, "Die Satanisierung Gottes: Zur inneren Konkordanz von Novelle, Dialog und Gottesreden im Hiobbuch," in I. Kottsieper et al. (eds.), "*Wer ist wie du, Herr, unter den Göttern?*" *Studien zur Theologie und Religionsgeschichte Israels für Otto Kaiser zum 70. Geburtstag* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1994), pp. 431-444, 435 f., *et passim*.

45. This is my way of re-conceiving insights presented in Spieckermann, *op. cit.*

“ideas.” The book is void of an objective narrator to referee the conflict. This is the core of dialogical poetics in the Book of Job.

3) A second similarity in poetics relates to the function of *voices*. In his recent article Clines does comment upon such voices and their discourse in the Book of Job.<sup>46</sup> His views could be elaborated upon.

a) First, taking a clue from Bakhtin’s analysis of a “sideward glance” in Dostoyevsky, we would hope to find in each voice in *Job* awareness of and reference to the speech of others.<sup>47</sup> Such sideward glance has the function of making the other person’s opinion present even in a monologue, and it is a vital element in the polyphonic novel. Several passages in Bakhtin point to the importance of this phenomenon:

[... each] uttered word responds and reacts with its every fibre to the invisible speaker, points to something outside itself, beyond its own limits, to the unspoken words of another person. (197)

The hero’s affirmation of self sounds like a continuous hidden polemic or dialogue with some other person on the theme of himself. (207)

Among the strategies of this poetics Bakhtin portrays a “transferral of words from one mouth to another, where the content remains the same although the tone and ultimate meaning are changed.” (217)

Speakers in *Job* do refer to each other,<sup>48</sup> but the phenomenon is not dominating. At closer inspection there is a different “other” that permeates the speech of all characters in *Job*; namely *tradition*. I give only some instances: (i) As long recognized, the dialogues of *Job* cite from or allude to biblical passages.<sup>49</sup> (ii) Human speakers in the book claim insight derived

46. Clines, “Job’s God”.

47. Bakhtin, *op. cit.*, pp. 204-237, etc. for a sideward glance. Cf. further *op. cit.*, pp. 181-266, esp. the presentation of double-directed discourse, pp. 185-199.

48. It is no straightforward task to identify such references, since many of them are in unmarked quotations, obscure repetitions (cf. Bakhtin above!), etc. An identification must rely also upon rhetorical analysis. To give only a few examples where a speaker seems obviously influenced by some utterance, idea or sentiment in other speakers, see 4,2-6; 6,22-25; 11,4-6; 13,7-12; 16,2-6; 19,2-5; 23,2-7.

49. See for instance G. Fohrer, *Das Buch Hiob (KAT, 16; Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus Gerd Mohn, 1963)*, pp. 48-50; A. de Wilde, *Das Buch Hiob: eingeleitet, übersetzt und erläutert (Oudtestamentische Studiën, 22; Leiden: Brill, 1981)*, pp. 28-32, or Driver, S. R. and Gray, G. B., *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Job (ICC; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1921)*, pp. lxxvii-lxxviii listing 51 passages in the Book of Job relating to other biblical passages. In recent scholarship intertextuality in *Job* has been a focus, cf. Fishbane, M., “Jeremiah iv 23-26 and Job iii 3-13: A Recovered Use of the Creation Pattern,” *VT* 21 (1971), pp. 151-167; *idem*, “The Book of Job and Inner-Biblical Discourse,” in L.G. Perdue et al. (eds.), *The Voice from the Whirlwind: Interpreting the Book of Job* (Abingdon: Nashville, Tenn., 1992), pp. 86-98; T.N. Mettinger, “Intertextuality:

from “old age,”<sup>50</sup> thus citing what is professed to be tradition. (iii) Many passages of the book appear as traditional sapiential insight.<sup>51</sup> (iv) There are several references to codified, non-verbal tradition: conventional attitudes, action and ways of life.<sup>52</sup>

Dialoguing voices are apparent in the Song of Songs as well as in Job. Probably, this pattern could be found in much other biblical literature as well. T. A. Perry argued to identify dialoguing voices in Qohelet. He holds that in that book each voice does not simply respond to what the other says. Rather, it seems to comment upon positions that it would be conceivable for a competent audience that the other person should hold.<sup>53</sup> Obviously, in computing what position the other person’s utterance might reflect, one would have to be guided by convention and tradition.

Assuming an analogous interplay between voices in *Job*, it seems reasonable to say that the voice most intensely permeating the monologues in the book, is indeed that of tradition.<sup>54</sup> Awareness of the *implied* voice of tradition in the Book of Job is likely to open up for new dimensions in the text. Notably, given this awareness, it becomes evident that tradition utters herself not only on matters of theology but also on spirituality, good manners and other fields of religiously charged pragmatics. Our perception of a “sideward glance” in *Job* identifies the book as a thorough discourse on tradition, convention, religion and configurations of life prevalent in its

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Allusion and Vertical Context Systems in Some Job Passages,” in H. McKay et al. (eds.), *Of Prophets' Visions and the Wisdom of the Sages (JSOT Sup, 162; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993)*, pp. 257-280; M. Oeming, “Hiob 31 und der Dekalog,” in Beuken, *The Book of Job*, 362-68; A. Michel “Ijob und Abraham: Zur Rezeption von Gen 22 in Ijob 1-2 und 42,7-17,” in A. Michel et al. (eds.), *Gott, Mensch, Sprache: Schülerfestschrift für Walter Gross zum 60. Geburtstag (Arbeiten zu Text und Sprache im Alten Testament, 68; St. Ottilien: EOS-Verlag, 2001)*, pp. 73-98 ; E.F. Davis, “Job and Jacob: The Integrity of Faith,” in Cook, *The Whirlwind*, 100-120; D.J. Green, “The Good, the Bad and the Better: Psalm 23 and Job,” in Cook, *The Whirlwind*, pp. 69-83; V. Hoffer “Illusion, Allusion, and Literary Artifice in the Frame Narrative of Job,” in Cook, *The Whirlwind*, pp. 84-99.

50 . As in 8,8; 15,10; 20,11; cf. 8,9; 15,7 f.

51. See Habel, *The Book of Job*, pp. 119-121 etc. Whether or not such instances were *in fact* ancient tradition, they do in the present book represent the *voice* of tradition.

52. Codified action in mourning and court are obvious. There are references to “ways” that codify life styles and attitudes (4,6; 8,19; 17,9; 21,4, etc). Geeraerts, “Caught in a Web of Irony” has exposed shame and honour in relation to speech. Further examples of non-verbal tradition could be given.

53. T.A. Perry, *Dialogues with Kohelet: The Book of Ecclesiastes, Translation and Commentary* (Philadelphia, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1993), see pp. 13-32.

54. The importance of tradition in the Book of Job is accepted also for instance by Newsom, *The Book of Job*, pp. 130, 138 f., etc.

cultural subset – and therefore as less of a dialogue with distant ancient Near Eastern texts.

An emphasis upon the implied voice of tradition in the book might contribute to solving some exegetical riddles. First, it puts passages like Job 26 or 28 in a new perspective, allowing tradition to use Job as its “mouthpiece” – here as also happens elsewhere in the book. Secondly, scholars find several “misquotations” among speakers in the book. The view that speakers respond to traditional concepts conventionally associated to the other’s utterances might solve at least some of these problems. Thirdly, Job criticises *unspoken* words, namely those of God, see for instance 10,2; 13,3.7f, etc. Similarly the friends refer (more positively) to unspoken divine words (8,6; 11,5f; 15,11; etc.). Scholars have been puzzled by these never spoken words. In light of the above, it seems reasonable to assume that the divine words ghosting in *Job* are understood to be conventionally spoken in the voice of tradition in the cultural milieu of the book: they render what tradition inferred God would have said and done. At least in some of the instances, the fact that God does *not* repeat the words of tradition, or even seems to negate them, would express the author’s depiction of YHWH’s struggle with traditional interpretations of himself.

b) Are the voices in *Job* internally consistent? Clines identified six different *voices* in the Book of Job: one for the three friends, and one each for Elihu, Job, God, narrator and (implicitly) author. Such grouping is traditional, and it reflects a conceptual categorisation presupposing that each voice holds internally coherent utterances. As shown by Levenson, a comparable categorization (missing Elihu and the author) was used by Martin Buber to organize *images of God* in the book.<sup>55</sup> A similar arrangement (also lacking Elihu and presenting narrator and author under one heading) is found in Tryggve Mettinger’s work.<sup>56</sup> Clines see the three friends as “representing the traditional theology of Israel” (p. 40). He too finds in the friends one concept of God (p. 42). Likewise, the voices of Elihu, Job, Yahweh, narrator and author seem internally coherent to Clines.

Now, let us take the character Job as example, and keep in mind that he is dialoguing with tradition, including religious action as well as thought. Is Job’s voice really consistent? We start with pragmatics and are for now simply guided by speech acts implied in Job’s use of traditional genres. He moves from praise (1,21) to a peculiarly directed lament (3,1ff) and then to a more conventional one (ch. 7); he goes from premeditating a legal controversy (ch. 9) to symbolically performing one (16,18-21, etc.); he employs sapiential instruction (12,7-12), disputation (ch. 16) and appeals

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55. J.D. Levenson, *The Book of Job in its Time and in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1972), pp. 19-29.

56. See recently T.N.D. Mettinger, “The Enigma of Job: The Deconstruction of God in Intertextual Perspective,” *JNSL* 23 (2/1997), pp. 1-19, and similarly in T.N.D. Mettinger, *In Search of God: The Meaning and Message of the Everlasting Names* (Philadelphia, Pa.: Fortress Press, 1988).

(19,19.21f, etc.).<sup>57</sup> Already this incomplete list indicates that Job in his exploration of traditional responses to grief, expresses a range of attitudes, emotions, intentions and reflections. At least some of these would appear to be pragmatically or logically incommensurable.

A similar lack of consistency appears when reading the small segment of Job's utterances on his own life. The protagonist wishes he had never been born (3,2ff), he hopes to die before having profaned the Holy word (6,9f); he expects to be crushed when talking to God (9,15-17), prefers to die when speaking (6,8; 7,15); and still he also hopes to succeed in the heavenly court and get amends (13,13-16; 23,4-7). Moving on to a group of theological propositions, we realise that Job launches a whole band of potential explanations for his suffering. I convey only a few<sup>58</sup>: Job's suffering is but one example of general human misery (7,1-10); it is an effect of God's greatness leading to divine indifference towards humankind and to arbitrariness of life (9,15-23; 12,13-25); it is brought about by God having abandoned the world altogether to evil humans (9,24; 21,7-16); it is caused by God's failure to meet Job to set things straight (23,8-12); it is due to God's disproportionate reaction to the fact that Job, like all humans, is impure (13,26; 14,1-6); it is due to Shaddai haunting Job without reason (6,4; 16,12-17).

The paradox in launching conflicting propositions is brought out by leaving them side-by-side, for instance in chapter 23. The passage first argues that if only God could be found, he certainly would listen to Job (2-12). Secondly, it says that God is too sovereign to change his mind anyway.<sup>59</sup> (Both arguments are fought out with tradition. The first makes an ironic reversal of the concept of the ever-present God in Ps 139.<sup>60</sup> The

57. These genre classifications are tentatively offered, cf. Clines, *Job 1-20 ad. loc.*

58. Obviously, the precise sense of several of the quoted passages could be debated, due to philological problems. For now, I simply quote translations given in Habel, *The Book of Job*. Even if the apprehension of one or two of these passages should have to be altered, the point is not lost: Job applies a number of conflicting models to understand reasons for his suffering.

59. It is a question whether or not Job gives in to divine power in v. 17. Possibly it should be understood that in the end he upholds his desire to meet God in court, see discussion for instance in E. Dhorme, *A Commentary on the Book of Job* (Nashville, Tenn.: Thomas Nelson, 1984), p. 352; Fohrer, *Das Buch Hiob*, pp. 362f., both different from the translation given in Habel, *The Book of Job*, 345 f. Still, each of the two sections would imply a different fundamental problem causing Job's misery: (a) God is deaf and distant, or (b) God is sovereign.

60. On the background and import of this concept, see H. Spieckermann, "Die ganze Erde ist seiner Herrlichkeit voll.' Pantheismus im Alten Testament?" in, *Gottes Liebe zu Israel: Studien zur Theologie des Alten Testaments (FAT, 33*, Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1990), pp. 62-83.



second overstates the concept of God's "oneness" as found in the *shema*, "Deut 6,4-9."<sup>61</sup>)

Summing up, the voice of Job is *not* speaking consistently, neither from a pragmatic nor a propositional point of view. He seems to be dialoguing with convention and religion in every direction, exploring or denouncing their logical and pragmatic reservoir of responses to suffering. This is of course no more than one would expect from a suffering person. But from a literary point of view, it brings us to identify several voices promoting conflicting *ideas* from within one character. Recall Bakhtin's description of Dostoyevsky: "[T]he object of [authorial aspirations] is precisely the *passing of a theme through many and various voices*, its rigorous [...] *multi-voicedness* and *vari-voicedness*."<sup>62</sup> In the Book of Job this is brought about from within one character.

c) Still focusing the poetics of *voices*, it will seem that *Job* orchestrates some overarching dialogical *topoi* that are significant. This is indeed an instance where the question of literary mode goes directly to the issue of reading the book total (cf. my introduction). Presently, exemplifying with one single *topos* must suffice:

In the frame tale *Hassatan* poses the topic of whether or not the haunted Job will still speak tolerably (1,11; 2,5).<sup>63</sup> Narrator comments upon this issue (1,22; 2,10, cf. 32,5; 42,7) and so does Mrs. Job (2,9). Each friend expresses disgust for Job's speech (8,2; 11,1; 15,5f), thus responding to the issue raised by *Hassatan*. Job, of course, does the same to them (13,7). Also, initially he defends his speech (7,11; 10,1), but eventually he opts to keep silent (40,3-4), possibly implying that he should not have spoken.<sup>64</sup> Elihu is critical towards both friends and Job (32,11; 33,8f). God, at first, appears to be negative to Job's speech (38,2), but is later said to have found Job's speech (in total) better than that of the friends (42,7).

In this one, obvious case the book poses a topic and allows virtually every character to speak on the issue (sometimes with more than one voice each). This unfolding dialogue redefines the topic. *Hassatan* had invited a dialogue on Job's speaking *in* suffering. Job, Elihu and God also evaluate the friend's speaking *about* suffering. This redefinition would ultimately enable

61. With Habel, *The Book of Job*, pp. 348-351.

62. Bakhtin, *op. cit.*, p. 265, italics retained.

63. The apparently euphemic use of ברך in *Hassatan*'s speech renders it impossible to identify one specific verb that qualifies as fulfilling his prediction. Rather, one must include various Hebrew word for "speech," "word," etc., and also figures pointing to speech, when looking for follow-up's to *Hassatan*'s "simple" proposition. Searching for roots like קרא, דבר, שפה or פה produces a lot of hits. I have given here only the barest necessity of references.

64. Cf. G.Y. Glazov, "The Significance of the "Hand on the Mouth" Gesture in Job xl 4," *Vetus Testamentum* 52 (2002), pp. 30-41; cf. Geeraerts, "Caught in a Web of Irony".

a critique back at *Hassatan* and his proposal. While unable to substantiate it now, I think there are more such overarching dialogues in the book. In this way the dialogical mode of the book becomes characteristic for the composition in total.

d) Finally, we do note that no single voice in the Book of Job seems to make statements that are all either entirely salient or completely unacceptable. This profiling of the voices contributes to its invitation to dialogical reasoning.

As argued by Clines, Elihu launches insight that is supported by other voices in the book, and even the other friends do hold some insight that can hardly be discarded.<sup>65</sup> Claire McGinnis has shown that the single utterance of Mrs. Job (reported by narrator) makes her position enigmatic.<sup>66</sup> Unlike Clines, I do not think that the author of the book embraces the view of the narrator.<sup>67</sup> When reporting God's verdict on the friends and Job's offering (42,7-9), this voice too contradicts itself and becomes dialogised. Job's honesty is probably best perceived of as impressing. Still, some of his propositions are unbearable and, if taken seriously, would lead to chaos (cf. 21,7-21; 10,8). Evaluating the voice of God in the book is difficult.<sup>68</sup> Normally, in biblical narrative this would be the one character with the highest rate of reliability.<sup>69</sup> However, Spieckermann and Geeraerts have shown that God's speech acts demand submission and question Job's right or ability to speak.<sup>70</sup> God's responding in power rather than in morality is of course well dialogised by Job's speeches.

4) Let us round off our survey of literary strategies by citing a Bakhtin's description of Dostoyevsky's literary universe: it was "an artistic universe of tension in simultaneity rather than of resolvment through temporal evolution or plot."<sup>71</sup>

This remark opens our view of a dimension of simultaneity or non-narrativity that is crucial to appreciate the Book of Job. Of course, there is a plot with a certain development. One could say, I suppose, that the protagonist of 42,12-17 is a *richer* man, in more ways than one. His experience would have bought him new perspectives, more acute abilities to

65. Clines, "Job's God," pp. 42, 44. I think this applies to the voice of each friend.

66. McGinnis, C. M., "Playing the Devil's Advocate in Job: On Job's Wife," in Cook, *The Whirlwind*, pp. 121-141, see in particular pp. 136-139.

67. Clines, *op. cit.*, pp. 50 f. My alternative view of the frame tale is given above.

68. I would regard the *report* on God in chs. 1-2 and 42 as representing the voice of the narrator, not that of God.

69. Cf. Watts, "Unreliable Narrator".

70. Spieckermann, "Satanisierung Gottes," esp. pp. 441-444; Geeraerts, "Caught in a Web of Irony". One element perhaps opposing their interpretations is the fact of God actually meeting Job, cf. 13,16.

71. Cf. *op. cit.*, pp. 28-31.

empathy and discernment, perhaps new dignity, etc. But in one critical sense the situation has *not* changed between chapter 1 and chapter 42. The Job in 42,16 has no guarantee whatsoever that the cataclysms of chapters 1–2 would not hit him and his family again. *Hassatan* might once again endeavour to dare God, and who knows what would then happen? Job is perhaps OK, but the problem of the Book of Job remains.

In real life too, of course, emblematic suffering does keep haunting us. And hence: our engagement with the book continues. The dialogue and dialogism of *Job* extends way beyond the book. It dialogically engages religion in an extensive sense. It engages the reader not only to “calculate” the literary universe of the book, but also to engage by attempting to referee the contest of voices staged in the book. As is obvious, engaging in the dialogue would be more fundamental than describing its poetical grammar. That enterprise, however, will have to remain for a different occasion.

*Postscript: Is It Sensible to Apply Bakhtin to Job?*

Does it make sense to apply to the Book of Job a poetics conceived by a Soviet literary critic through his analysis of a Russian romantic author? Responding in a British setting, it would be tempting to argue that if the above analysis makes sense, then it is indeed sensible to apply Bakhtin’s insights to reading *Job*. Still, a few more remarks on conditions for and implications in applying Bakhtin to this biblical book might be required, especially since scholars sometimes portray dialogism as a novel and unprecedented literary invention.

1) Although his book is synchronically oriented, Bakhtin did see Dostoyevsky as taking part in a history of dialogical writing going back at least to (Greek) Antiquity.<sup>72</sup> Indeed, he identified the monological consciousness from which Dostoyevsky freed the modern novel as “a profound structural characteristic of the creative ideological activity of modern times” (82). Turning to pre-modern literature Bakhtin found greater sensitivity for the dialogical. In particular, he studied Socratic dialogue and Menippean satire,<sup>73</sup> finding there an awareness that truth is not captured by a single mind nor expressed in single statements. Bakhtin saw genre as “a representative of creative memory” (106). In his view Dostoyevsky did not

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72. In the foreword to the 1929 edition Bakhtin apologizes for having done only the synchronic half of his job. He thought every theory should be argued synchronically and diachronically, but for practical reasons this was impossible. Still, he claims the historical point of view is nevertheless taken into account, *op. cit.*, pp. 275f. Cf. additionally his two essays, *Epic and Novel* and *From the Prehistory of Novelistic Discourse*, in Bakhtin, *Dialogic Imagination*, pp. 3-40 and 41-83.

73. *Op. cit.*, pp. 109-122 (cf. the immediately preceding pages, esp. pp. 105 f.) and cf. Menippa and carnevalization in Dostoyevsky pp. 137-156. See again Bakhtin, *Dialogic Imagination*, pp. 3-83, mentioning additional ancient documents.

connect to Socratic dialogue and Menippean satire directly. But as he challenged the monological novel, he came to resemble and redevelop “the objective memory of the very genre in which he worked [...]” (121). In short, Dostoyevsky reactivated a dialogical worldview that had been thriving in ancient literature and was stored in ancient genres before it was muted in the discourse of modernity.

We need not accept Bakhtin’s historical analysis wholesale in order to find it reasonable to compare Dostoyevsky and *Job*. The elements we must accept are (a) that literary genres (or modes) could be bearers of “memory” or “strategies” that transcend the consciousness of authors that use them; (b) that there was dialogical literature in Antiquity; (c) that Bakhtin made adequate observations on the dialogical mode found in Dostoyevsky. The rest of Bakhtin’s theories – including his distinction between monological and dialogical writings, his association of monologism to modernity and his assumption of a monologising tendency in poetry – may or may not be accepted. Among the above three elements, I take the first and the last for granted. The second warrants some comments.

2) Did the sages of biblical literature have a dialogical perception of world and truth? In his stimulating book on Qohelet, T. A. Perry makes a brief survey of the background of dialogue in Antiquity. Focusing upon the kind inherent in a proverb, Perry cites Hasan-Rokem: “The proverb reveals the continuous dialogue between the different discourses that are brought into contact within its framework. Similar to its next of kin, the quotation, the proverb refers constantly to a discourse external to its own occurrence.”<sup>74</sup>

In Bakhtinian perspective, a given proverb is easily seen as monologic: it is “no-man’s-speech.” However, the proverb Perry (and Hasan-Rokem) has in mind, seems to be one that is applied in a new setting, “like a quotation.” Such a proverb evidently represents a second voice. In particular, the procedure of *collecting* proverbs into continuous writing forces “monologic” utterances to meet and wrestle. Take an example from Proverbs 11. In this collection of fairly brave sayings it becomes clear that property and wealth have different implications, depending upon the situation in which they occur (cf. vv. 4.10.11.16.18.24.28.29.31). Applied to biblical collections of proverbs, Perry’s view strikes me as evident. These collections do indeed cite from a discourse going on outside of the literary context. Now, the *collecting* of proverbs marked the intellectual activity of ancient Hebrew sages. And, as is recorded, even in other sapiential genres, there is a discernable intent to engage outside discourse by citing it.<sup>75</sup> In short,

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74. Perry, *Dialogues with Kohelet*, p. 186, citing G. Hasan-Rokem, “The Aesthetics of the Proverb: Dialogue of Discourses from Genesis to Glasnost,” *Proverbium* 7 (1990), pp. 105-16.

75. See still R. Gordis, “Quotations in Wisdom Literature,” *Jewish Quarterly Review* 30 (1939/40), pp. 123-47.

therefore, it makes sense to assume that ancient Hebrew sages were versed in dialogical thinking.

I do not imply that ancient Hebrew sages saw the world as ultimately incomprehensible and therefore composed texts incapable of coherent interpretation. Every trace they left indicates that they did see the world as predictable and that they therefore saw it fit for coherent interpretation and action. But precisely when elaborating this view, they recognised a number of legitimate actions, insights and concepts which, when taken to their limit, could contradict each other (as they do in Proverbs 11, above). It is reasonable that these intellectuals would then develop dialogical strategies for reflecting upon such issues.<sup>76</sup> The Book of Job, of course, is focused upon one such topic where traditional action, experience and thought break down. It handles a subject that to the mind of an ancient Hebrew sage would probably seem apt for dialogical reasoning. Therefore it is indeed historically sensible to recognise a dialogical propensity in *Job*.

3) While it is unclear whether Dostoyevsky ever read Socratic dialogue, it is evident that he knew and used the Bible. Bakhtin, however, while pondering upon Socratic dialogue, only briefly identified the Book of Job as an influence in Dostoyevsky.<sup>77</sup> One can only guess why a Soviet literary critic would leave the dialogical resources of *Job* in the dark. One reason would seem to be that Bakhtin, especially in his medieval studies, had construed the Bible as *the* major monological text of European tradition, the one being dialogized by satire and carnival plays.<sup>78</sup> Bakhtin's sympathy, of course, was with the dialogising texts. He may have overstated the monologic character of the Bible (as he did that of Tolstoy<sup>79</sup>) in order to profile the dialogue that he cherished so highly. In so saying, I am perhaps after all siding with Paul de Man in questioning parts of Bakhtin's thinking and still praising the perspective it gained him.<sup>80</sup>

In any event, it does seem reasonable to make the following assumption: Dostoyevsky as a receptive poet gave literary profile to a dialogising movement found *i.a.* in the Book of Job. Bakhtin, equally sensitively, gave an exposition of the poetics and literary strategies of such literature. We should not fail to apply it in our reading of the Book of Job.

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76. Cf. how tension between *legitimate* interpretations lies at the core of Bakhtin's polyphony and dialogic truth, according to Morson and Emerson, *Mikhail Bakhtin*, pp. 233-37, etc.

77. Bakhtin, *op. cit.*, p. 280. This passage was from the foreword to the 1929 edition.

78. See Bakhtin, *Dialogic Imagination*, pp. 70 f., cf. pp. 14-17.

79. Emerson, C., "The Tolstoy Connection in Bakhtin," in Morson, G. S. et al. (ed.), *Rethinking Bakhtin: Extensions and Challenges (Series in Russian Literature and Theory)*; Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1989), pp. 149-70.

80. De Man, "Dialogue and Dialogism".