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約伯的受難與神的正義：《約伯記》的
解讀傾向研究

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Job's Undeserved Suffering vs. God's Justice: A Deconstructive Reading of the Book of Job*

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Abstract

The Book of Job is generally regarded as a demonstration of "the ways of God to man," with its seemingly prevailing concept of "piety for its own sake is true virtue and in the end is requited." The key concern for the Book of Job is the validity of the retribution law of "good begets good, evil begets evil." The said moral dogma seems to prevail at the end of the story. However, as we examine closer, we find such orthodox interpretation is pretty problematic. This study endeavors to disclose the tendency of self-deconstruction and indeterminacy of the moral dogma. Also, by exploring the causes and situation of Job's suffering, the significance of man's destiny and suffering will be discussed.

Key words: deconstruction, undeserved suffering, retribution law, indeterminacy

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In all the biblical stories, the Book of Job, with no doubt, is one of the most difficult and controversial stories. It is generally regarded as a demonstration of "the ways of God to man." There are lots of issues discussed in the Book of Job, such as moral truth, the problem of human suffering, and the human condition in general. Among all these concerns, a key concept dominates throughout the story – "piety for its own sake is true virtue and in the end is requited." Such a concept is taken for granted. It is easy to realize the pedagogical, as well as, theological consideration at the back of it. Yet, when reading the Book of Job, such an interpretation of the whole story seems, at times, inadequate and problematic, especially when we come to consider the reward Job finally gets and the punishment Job's three friends deserve at the end.

The prologue (Chapters one and two) and the epilogue (Chapter forty-two) are written in prose whereas the main body of Job is composed in verse. According to Paul S. Sanders, "The prose Prologue (1-2) and Epilogue (42:7-17) are usually considered the remains of a folk tale, in which apparently Job maintained his patience under testing and was rewarded. According to most critics, a later poet replaced its central portion by his own work, in which Job's friends are made to defend orthodox wisdom and Job to question it. Some discrepancies are evident. A few critics, nevertheless, attribute the prose to the poet himself. Others think that the poem existed independently and that the prose sections were added by a later hand" (Sanders 8). Such diverse threads of composition reflect the attempt for an justification of Job's story. But instead of providing a convincing justification for Job's suffering and God's justice, the prose sections and the verse sections undermine each other and thus cancel the intended moral dogma as we shall discuss later.

In the prologue, Satan raises the issue whether man fears God for nothing. For Satan, man fears God because he wants to become prosperous

through the Lord's blessing; whereas for God, man reveres God not because of some worldly reward. Being challenged by Satan, the (non-)omniscient God is unable to determine whether Satan or himself is correct. To testify to such an argument, God is obliged to agree that Satan may conduct a test on his servant, the very pious and perfect man Job. Since the crucial issue in the Book of Job – whether piety brings prosperity, sin brings suffering, or vice versa (that is, prosperity causes piety and suffering indicates sin) – remains indefinite or indeterminate, readers are encouraged to explore other possible interpretations instead of accepting the orthodox teaching.

From the very beginning, readers are informed of the reason and context for Job's suffering, but Job and his friends are ignorant of the fact. Thus the whole bulk of the work deals with the traditional doctrine of retribution in a negative way – Job, a perfect, pious and upright man, is afflicted with tremendous pain and torture. Job's friends further reverse the said doctrine by stating that since sin brings forth suffering and thus, suffering implies sin. To Job's friends, Job's suffering indicates that Job must have sinned in some way, even though Job asserts his righteousness throughout the story. It appears that the Book of Job overturns the retribution doctrine of "Good begets good, and evil begets evil."

Surprisingly, in the epilogue, God speaks directly to Job as requested, and "relieves" Job from his misfortune by doubling his wealth and giving him children. Job is rewarded at last. This epilogue undermines the anti-doctrine which the main bulk of the Book tries so hard to establish by confirming the retribution doctrine bluntly. Such an aporia (a contradiction, or irreconcilable paradox) not only subverts its own premises and coherence but disseminates its seeming meanings into indeterminacy. The Book of Job enacts its deconstruction, decentering to an open structure and refusing to become a formal closure in which meaning is fixed, stabilized and settled.

This paper intends to provide a deconstructive reading of the Book of Job. It is necessary to have a quick view of this key term and related concepts. Deconstruction, or better *destruktion*, mainly associated with Jacques Derrida, is appropriated from Heidegger's *Destruktion*. In this connection, deconstruction "reconstructs" some tentative structure by loosening or dissolving the former one. In this way, deconstruction explores some hidden possibilities which probably might never be exposed without such a decomposition. Derrida describes his deconstructive procedure as a "double reading." M. H. Abrams explains this "double reading" as follows: "in one aspect, it recognizes the 'legibility' of a text, as proffering illusory effects of meaning; in its other aspect, it deploys deconstructive operative terms, such as *diff'erance* and dissemination, to show that each text inevitably involves an *aporia* which subverts its own grounds and coherence and disperses its seeming meanings into indeterminacy" (Abrams 40). Jonathan Culler's formulation of the deconstructive strategy also sheds light on the present project: "To deconstruct a discourse is to show how it undermines the philosophy it asserts, or the hierarchical oppositions on which it relies" (Culler 86).

The Book of Job opens to deconstruction in several issues, especially its central concept — the moral retribution law of "Good begets good, evil begets evil." This study endeavors to disclose the vulnerability of presupposing the presence of a center, a logos, an origin, that is, a presupposed structure of wholeness. Just like the Book of Job, it tries to present some wholeness of the moral doctrine. But, consciously or unconsciously, unbridgeable gaps of language and ideas inevitably appear to undermine what has been carefully set up. Thus, I will explore the tendency of indeterminacy and self-deconstruction of the moral dogma the Book of Job intends to assert.¹ In addition, by exploring the conditions of Job's suffering, the significance of man's destiny and suffering will be discussed.

Undeserved Suffering

In the very beginning of the prologue, Job is introduced to us as following:

There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job, and that man was perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil. And there were born unto him seven sons and three daughters. His substance also was seven thousand sheep, and three thousand camels, and five hundred yoke of oxen, and five hundred she asses, and a very great household; so that this man was the greatest of all the men of the east (1:1-3).²

Soon after this brief introduction of Job, the almighty Lord asks Satan: "Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil" (1:8)? Satan cunningly replies: "Doth Job fear God for nought" (1:9)? He also points out that: "Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land" (1:10). Satan further challenges: "But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face" (1:11).

Satan "entices the deity to do all manners of evil to this man, only in order to find out if he will break faith" (Buber 140). Being challenged by cunning Satan, the omniscient God does not say anything to repudiate Satan's statement. In order to find out the answer to such inquiry He lets Satan test Job in person. So the Lord answers Satan, "Behold, all that he hath is in thy power; only upon himself put not forth thine hand" (1:12). Soon after, Job is reported to lose all his substances and children. This is the first test on Job.

In the second chapter, the Lord asks Satan exactly the same question: "Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil? and still he holdeth fast his integrity, although thou movedst me against him, to destroy him without cause" (2:3). Satan replies with his usual cunningness: "Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life. But put forth thine hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse thee to thy face" (2:4). Again, in order to testify whether Job serves God "gratuitously," the Lord has to said: "Behold, he is in thine hand; but save his life" (2:6). Poor Job suffers "sore boils from the sole of his foot unto his crown" (2:7). This is Job's second test.

After reading the first two chapters, we the readers have been granted the privilege of knowing the context and cause for Job's suffering, while Job himself is totally ignorant of the cause of his suffering. As stated in the beginning, Satan poses the question to the Lord whether Job's piety is gratuitous. Not directly answering such a question, the Lord allows Satan to test Job's integrity. At least two explanations are possible. One is that the Lord does not know the answer, so He lets Satan conduct an experiment on Job to find out the outcome. If so, then the Lord is not omniscient. As for the second possibility, the Lord lets Satan test Job, and, by showing Satan Job's integrity despite of all unexplained suffering, teaches Satan as well as other disciples a lesson. God is omniscient about the outcome throughout the whole trial. The orthodox reading will take the second possibility for granted. The second possibility may prevail in most discussions. However, the invalidity of the first possibility has never been confirmed. Therefore, it cannot be dismissed altogether, and remains latent and threatening to the seeming stability of the structure. This hidden threat reveals the deconstructive tendency of the Book of Job.

No matter which is the case, Job becomes a bet between the Lord and Satan in either situation. For the Lord, Job's gratuitous piety is a demonstration of human reverence to his Creator; whereas for Satan, Job's piety is merely a result of God's protection of his well-being. From Satan's perspective, as David Clines puts it, the situation of cause and effect is reversed: "it is Job's prosperity that is the origin of his piety, that it is only in order to become prosperous or remain prosperous that Job is so exceptionally pious" (Clines 68). To readers and Job himself, Job's suffering is a false demonstration of the retribution dogma of "Good begets good, evil begets evil." And the controversy over the issue whether piety brings prosperity or prosperity brings piety remains unsettled and thus indeterminate. In order to determine whose proposition dominates, Job is deprived of all possession and has to undergo great physical and mental torture. As mentioned earlier, Job's being chosen for these tests is not because he has done something wicked, but because he is extremely upright and righteous.

Some critics take an easy way out by arguing that "The Prologue to Job serves to answer beforehand the major questions which the later philosophical disputation raises" (Kaufmann 67). Critics like this one seem to be too optimistic to be happy with the answer to Job's suffering in the prologue. Moreover, different opinions about the various possibilities for the composition of the prose sections and the verse sections further complicate the issue of Job's suffering. Such different and even diverging threads of composition inevitably bring along contradiction and ambiguity. In Job's situation, critics still find it difficult to solve the dilemma: "how to reconcile human suffering, especially the suffering of the righteous, with the existence of an omnipotent God of justice and love" (Daiches 38).

In the following some thirty chapters, Job asserts his righteousness stubbornly and honestly despite of the accusation of his three friends. Job's three friends, without the knowledge of the deal between the Lord and

Satan, simply infer Job's guiltiness from his ill fortune, and believe that Job must have sinned in some way or another to have been punished as such. Their opinion represents the worldly view concerning retribution dogma to be valid despite the possible falsity of the said principle in Job's case. Eliphaz, one of the three friends, speaks out the worldly opinions about man's suffering in general.

Is not this thy fear, thy confidence,
thy hope, and thy uprightness of the ways?
Remember, I pray thee, who ever perished, being innocent?
Or where were the righteous cut off(4:6-7)?

By saying so, Eliphaz reverses the retribution dogma from "sin causes suffering" to "suffering indicates sin." But is such reversion valid? It is definitely not applicable in Job's condition. Job is innocent and upright, and he has, in a sense, "perished" and been "cut off."

This kind of reversion reminds us of the "quarrel" or dispute between the Lord and Satan over the causality of piety and prosperity. For Job's three friends, it is taken for granted that "sin causes suffering" (or "evil begets evil"); it is also regarded valid that "suffering indicates sin." But as we find in Job's case that Job's suffering is not a result of doing something wrong; he is merely a victim of the dispute between the Lord and Satan. Here the assumption of "suffering indicates sin" cannot be applied to Job. It appears that what leads to suffering is not necessarily sin. The most absurd aspect in Job's suffering is that it is his exceptional piety that leads to his torture(Clines 73-74). So, we may preliminarily conclude that the retribution dogma the Book of Job intends and appears to assert is actually being undermined due to its indeterminacy. The "solid" ground for the orthodox retribution law turns out to be very shaky and deceptive.

Floating and Regressive Revelation to Job's Suffering

Job's three friends presume throughout the main bulk of the story that Job is a sinner, whereas Job asserts his righteousness and innocence. When compared with Aeschylus' *Oresteia*, the chorus of *Agamemnon* comments that Zeus

...has led us on to know,
that Helmsman lays it down as law
that we must suffer, suffer into truth.³

Richard B. Sewall contends, "Through suffering, as Aeschylus wrote, men learn — not only their littleness and sinfulness but the positive and creative possibilities of themselves and the world they live in" (Sewall 34). In contrast to the Greek sufferer, Job's suffering brings him wisdom and insight into the significance of human existence in general, but not the truth. With painful realization of his present predicament, Job pronounces his frightful affliction:

My flesh is clothed with worms and clods of dust;
my skin is broken, and become loathsome.
My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle,
and are spent without hope (7:5-6).

Under the great predicament, Job still maintains his dignity as a human being before his Creator, the almighty Jehovah. He even directly addresses, and, argues with, God:

What is man, that thou shouldest magnify him?
and that thou shouldest set thine heart upon him?
and that thou shouldest visit him every morning,
and try him every moment?
How long wilt thou not depart from me,
nor let me alone till I swallow down my spittle (7:17-19)?

Failing to find a possible explanation to his suffering, Job gradually regards his own fate as something universal for all humanity.

This is one thing, therefore I said it,
He destroyeth the perfect and the wicked.
If the scourge slay suddenly,
he will laugh at the trial of the innocent.
The earth is given into the hand of the wicked:
he covereth the faces of the judges thereof;
if not, where, and who is he (9:22-24)?

Taking his own experience as an example, on the one hand, Job perceives the complete reversion of the retribution law, that is, "Good begets evil, evil begets good." On the other, the existence of divine justice is simply nullified. Piety does not lead to prosperity but destruction. Job, the most pious and perfect man, becomes a radical skeptic. In his deep revulsion of his undeserved suffering, Job generalizes and induces the fundamental destiny for humanity in general:

Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble.
He cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down:
he fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not . . .
Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?
Not one.
Seeing his days are determined,
the number of his months are with thee,
thou hast appointed his bounds that he cannot pass;
turn from him, that he may rest,
till he shall accomplish, as an hireling, his day (14:1-2;4-6)

In contrast with Job's self-assertion of his integrity, Job's friends firmly believe in God's indisputable judgment and divine wisdom. They seem

to represent the orthodox perspective. Job's first friend Eliphaz argues:

Remember, I pray thee, who ever perished, being innocent?
Or where were the righteous cut off?
Even as I have seen, they that plow iniquity,
and sow wickedness, reap the same . . .
Behold, happy is the man whom God correcteth:
therefore despise not thou the chastening of the Almighty:
for he maketh sore, and bindeth up:
he woundeth, and his hands make whole (4:7-8;5:17-18).

After hearing Job's inquiry to God's intention to cast misfortune on him, the second friend Bildad blames Job in similar words and moral stance:

Doth God pervert judgment?
Or doth the Almighty pervert justice?
If thy children have sinned against him,
and he have cast them away for their transgression;
if thou wouldest seek unto God betimes,
and make thy supplication to the Almighty;
if thou wert pure and upright;
surely now he would awake for thee,
and make the habitation of thy righteousness prosperous (8:3-6).

Seen from the orthodox and worldly view as Job's friends do, Job's suffering has to be an ill outcome for his (or his children's) secret sin. God will definitely not smite the righteous as Job's friends put it.

Behold, God will not cast away a perfect man,
neither will he help the evil doers:
till he fill thy mouth with laughing,
and thy lips with rejoicing.

They that hate thee shall be clothed with shame;
and the dwelling place of the wicked shall come to nought
(8:20-22).

Job's desperate search and inquiry for the cause of his suffering cannot be easily dismissed by his friends' argument. In response to their orthodox defense, Job proposes:

If I speak of strength, lo, he is strong:
and if of judgment, who shall set me a time to plead⁴(9:19)?

The third friend, Zophar, resorts to another strategy by asking Job to repent before God:

If thou prepare thine heart,
and stretch out thine hands toward him;
if iniquity be in thine hand, put it far away,
and let not wickedness dwell in thy tabernacles.
For then shalt thou lift up thy face without spot;
yea, thou shalt be steadfast, and shalt not fear:
because thou shalt forget thy misery,
and remember it as waters that pass away:
and thine age shall be clearer than the noonday;
thou shalt shine forth, thou shalt be as the morning (11:13-17).

To turn away Job's inquiry for an answer to his suffering, Zophar offers Job another alternative to deal with his present predicament. Repentance is an easy way out of the present entanglement. But repentance is not the ultimate truth for Job. For what should he repent?

Job gradually realizes that "God is all-powerful and is the creation of everything that exists" (Daiches 46), including the evil aspect of life. And he finds it difficult to get justice from God because "there is no one above him

to act as arbitrator between him and his suffering creature" (Daiches 46). Due to the absence of an arbitrator between man and God, Job resolves to resort to arguing with God in person.

Resembling Oedipus, Job insists on knowing the reason for his affliction, "Though he slay me. . . I will maintain mine own ways before him" (13:15).

How many are mine iniquities and sins?
Make me to know my transgression and my sin.
Wherefore hidest thou thy face,
and holdest me for thine enemy?
Wilt thou break a leaf driven to and fro?
And wilt thou pursue the dry stubble (13:23-25)?

With his obstinate stubbornness, Job longs to obtain the obscure truth through his suffering. But Job's eagerness to find out the truth for his suffering is considered bold and proud from his friends' point of view. Similar to Oedipus, he refuses to take any easy way out. The only possibility for him is finding out the ultimate truth.

In a sense, from the viewpoint of Job's friends, God would never violate the retribution law. Job's friends speak out the traditional moral value and mundane judgment. They are faithful believers of traditional retribution law. In their minds, "Good begets good, evil begets evil" is an unchangeable universal law. It is natural for them to infer that the most possible explanation for Job's suffering is that he is guilty. Ironically, by asserting the moral retribution dogma, Job's friends unconsciously undermine the moral law of retribution instead. First, "evil begets evil" is not equal to "suffering indicates sin." In Job's case, his suffering can never be interpreted as a result of his guilt or sin, as revealed in the prologue. Therefore, "good begets good" does not work out in Job's case. On the contrary, the good and the upright man Job suffers the fortune of the wicked.

Job's three friends, taking the orthodox idea and position, fail to supply a satisfying explanation to Job's suffering. Job's restless and urgent inquiry does not bring him too far either. His long winding quest is analogous to an regressive movement within a closed circle. He always ends at the starting point, and goes on and on in circularity. The intended disclosure of truth is forever regressive and floating. The final answer remains suspended.

God with Multiple Faces

Having read through the main body of the story, we find that the story undermines the traditional retribution law. But as we read further, in the even more "confusing" epilogue, the almighty God "appears" before Job and his friends in the whirlwind. In this mysterious and ambiguous theophany, the Lord appears to "answer" (or, actually, confound) Job's inquiry in his speeches. Let's take a quick look at this mysterious theophany:

Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind, and said,
Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge?
Gird up now thy loins like a man;
for I will demand of thee, and answer thou me.
Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth?
Declare, if thou hast understanding.
Who hath laid the measures thereof, if thou knowest?
Or who hath stretched the line upon it (38:1-5)?

The Lord goes on and on to question Job of the wonders of the universe in stern inquiry. After a short break of such incessant attacks, Job's former pride and arrogance completely dissolve. Job humbly repents and submits himself in humility:

Then Job answered the Lord, and said,
Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer thee?
I will lay mine hand upon my mouth.
Once have I spoken; but I will not answer:
yea, twice; but I will proceed no further (40:3-5).

Regardless of Job's repentance and submission, God relentlessly goes on "to bombard him further with rhetorical questions illustrating God's power and the unfathomable mysteries of the universe he created" (Daiches 59).

Wilt thou also disannul my judgment?
Wilt thou condemn me, that thou mayest be righteous?
Hast thou an arm like God?
Or canst thou thunder with a voice like him?
Deck thyself now with majesty and excellency;
and array thyself with glory and beauty.
Cast abroad the rage of thy wrath:
and behold every one that is proud, and abase him.
Look on every one that is proud, and bring him low;
and tread down the wicked in their place.
Hide them in the dust together;
and bind their faces in secret.
Then will I also confess unto thee that
thine own right hand can save thee (40:8-14).

Job remains submissive and reticent to God's second speech. The once Oedipus-like Job suddenly becomes silent and humble when God really "stands" before him. His earnest longing for the revelation of the cause of his suffering disappears altogether. The long-expected revelation of the ultimate truth turns out to be a vain hope which is never explicitly made clear to Job.

Daiches makes a brilliant comment on this problematic scene:

In an outburst of spectacular cosmic poetry the voice of God hammers home the point that the goings-on in the universe are far beyond the wits of man to comprehend; that nature was not created for man and has its otherness and its mysteries that man can never penetrate; and it is against this background of miracle and mystery which dwarfs man that the problems of human suffering must be set (Daiches 57).

Somehow, if this is the best answer God can provide, we cannot help feeling disappointed. Man's existence may be trivial and unimportant. But it is definitely not unworthy. God's stern rebuke as well as his purposeful evasion to Job's former inquiry only highlight the inadequate and problematic nature of the "vicious" experiment or trial Satan designs (with God's permission) to practice on Job.

In this short epilogue, what the whole bulk of the story tries to build is suddenly canceled and erased. As mentioned earlier, the moral dogma is undermined. But in the epilogue, after reproaching Job, the omnipotent and omniscient Lord turns to Job's three orthodox friends. He first angrily condemns them: "My wrath is kindled against thee, and against thy two friends: for ye have not spoken of me the thing that is right, as my servant Job hath" (42:7). Next he benevolently performs the following "miracle," and reverses the situation:

And the Lord turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends: also the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before. . . . So the Lord blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning: for he had fourteen thousand sheep, and six thousand camels, and a thousand yoke of oxen, and a thousand she asses. He had also seven sons and three daughters (42:10;12-13).

In the end, the good are "rewarded"; the "bad" are punished. But what seems disturbing is that such reward cannot replace what Job has previously lost. The so-called bad guys turns out to be Job's three friends who are pious in their own eyes.

On the surface, the retribution law seems to prevail at the end. But it is true only at the first glance. In the case of Job's friends, God admonishes them in harsh rebuke:

My wrath is kindled against thee, and against thy two friends: for ye have not spoken of me the thing that is right, as my servant Job hath. Therefore take unto you now seven bullocks and seven rams, and go to my servant Job, and offer up for yourselves a burnt offering; and my servant Job shall pray for you: for him will I accept: lest I deal with you after your folly, in that ye have not spoken of me the thing which is right, like my servant Job (42:7-8).

It is confusing why God says such thing to Job's three friends. It seems that the only mistake Job's three friends might make is their misjudgment of Job's integrity and innocence. Their taking his suffering as an indication of his (hidden) guilt results from the retribution dogma only in its reversion. Of course, such reversion is not applicable and valid in Job's case. Except this, they hold their faith and piety to the almighty Lord from the beginning till the end.

As for Job's reward, his wealth has been doubled and he gets seven sons and three daughters. After so much physical and spiritual pain and torture, such "happy" ending seems satisfying for Job himself and the readers too. But as we think further, we might wonder whether all these substances and children can really compensate Job for what he has gone through. Sewall also feels unhappy about the ending: "The resolution of the

folk story, by which Job for his piety and suffering was rewarded by twice his former possessions and a new family, was unacceptable. The poet [who composed the epilogue] saw Job's suffering as a thrust of destiny that raised the deepest issues, not to be accounted for by a heavenly wager and bought off by a handsome recompense. The suffering had been real; it could not be taken back; and it had not been deserved" (Sewall 24).

We could try to presume that all substances Job acquires can make up for his loss, but we could hardly accept the latter children he gets will substitute his former children, unless we believe man is like an object which can be substituted or replaced easily. And those children are slain, and will never be revived. Thus, the disturbing thing for this ending is the negation or cancellation of man's individuality. Here Job's children are being objectified — the former children are replaced easily by the latter children just like any utensil.

The problems the Book of Job tries to resolve remain unsolved: Ambiguities and uncertainties persist, and the central issue of the book is dealt with ellipsis and thus remains unanswered. We are not sure whether the moral dogma is valid or not, and we have no answer to the causes of man's suffering, especially that for the undeserved suffering. The only possible comfort for Job would be the final proof of his passing the tests set by the merciful/merciless Almighty. Also, one thing we may learn from Job is that we should hold fast to our own integrity when faced with challenges and torture, and try to persist to the end.

Notes

1. David Clines brilliantly demonstrates that the Book of Job deconstructs itself in several points, such as the moral issue of retribution, and its handling of the question of suffering. See David Clines, "Deconstructing the Book of Job," in *The Bible as Rhetoric: Studies in Biblical Persuasion and Credibility*, Martin Warner, ed. (London: Routledge, 1990) 65-80.
2. The passages from the Book of Job are quoted from *The Holy Bible, The King James, or Authorized, Version of 1611* (New York: American Bible Society, 1996). The chapters and lines of all quotations from this volume will be indicated in parentheses.
3. Aeschylus, *Agamemmon*, from *The Norton Anthology of World Masterpieces*, 553.
4. In another version, these lines are translated as:

If it is a matter of strength, yes, he is mighty.

But if it is a matter of justice, who would arraign him?

See David Daiches, "God under Attack," in *The Book of Job*, Ed. and intro. by Harold Bloom (New York: Chelsea House, 1988) 45.

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約伯的受難與神的正義： 〈約伯記〉的解構傾向研究*

儲湘君**

摘要

〈約伯記〉中約伯不畏上帝加諸之困苦磨難，堅守正道，終獲上帝獎賞。「善有善報，惡有惡報」之因果律是否報應不爽，乃〈約伯記〉之重要關懷。故事結尾時，約伯終獲獎賞，而其友人則遭責罰，表面上看來，善惡因果報應不爽，惟此種傳統道德之詮釋觀點有其值得商榷之餘地。本研究試圖探討〈約伯記〉所呈現的善惡因果律之自我解構傾向與不確定性。另外，並藉由約伯的受難經歷來探索人的命運與苦難。

關鍵詞：解構、無辜的受難、善惡報應、不確定性

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