Article

Deleuze's Interpretation of Job as a Heroic Figure in the History of Rationality

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Abstract: Traditional rationality takes the form of thinking-as-representation. Motivated by the conviction that it is possible to articulate one true account of the real, the three theologians in the Book of Job employed concepts to reduce objects to categories of sameness. In his exposition of such thinking-as-representation, Deleuze demonstrates how the four elements of representation thinking subordinate difference to conceptual categories of identity, opposition, analogy, and resemblance. Deleuze considers Job to be a heroic figure in the history of thinking, for Job demonstrates that the subject has nothing to say in his own name, as long as the subject adheres to norms of representational thinking. Job's disavowal of blame amounts to a transgression against traditional theology of his time. The figure of Job exemplifies the heroic potential that lies within this crisis of theological representation.

1. Introduction

Traditional rationality takes the form of thinking-as-representation. In simple terms, it argues that "this (concept) is that (object)."[1] Representational concepts are always immanent within the process of thinking. They contribute synthetic a priori claims that condition the cognition of objects. Representational concepts can be conceived of in a variety of ways: As a culturally-shared taxonomy, as a shared cultural logic about causality, or even as shared cultural metaphors, for metaphors also function as concepts.[2]

In various ways, such representational concepts create a symbolic world. What human beings take to be the "real" world, existing independently of their perceptions of it, is actually a shared symbolic order, a phantasmatic effect of representation.[3] The dialogues between Job and his three friends or theologians—Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar—provide a case in point: Pelham (2012) reads the Book of Job as an exploration of two worlds: The symbolic world presupposed by the representational thinking of the three theologians, what she terms "the-world-as-it-ought-to-be" and the "real" chaotic world of Job's experience, the "the-world-as-it-ought-not-to-be." These dialogues are rooted in the traditional concepts and symbolic world of ancient Israelite society: Specifically, the concept of GOD

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1 In this article, I will designate representational concepts through the use of SMALL CAPS.
2 Nisbet (1969, p. 4) states that "Metaphor is, at its simplest, a way of proceeding from the known to the unknown. [It] is a way of cognition in which the identifying qualities of one thing are transferred in an instantaneous, almost unconscious, flash of insight to some other thing that is unknown to us."
3 According to Lacan (1978, pp. 53–66), what human beings take to be a "reality" is a delusion generated by language and the dominant symbolic order. The "real" cannot be expressed in language for entry into language entails an irrevocable alienation from the real.

as powerful, moral, and just; the concept of a WORLD that operates according to the moral law of retributive justice; and the concept of a SELF, which is either righteous or unrighteous, when measured against the standard of moral LAW.[4]

2. The Representational Thinking of the Three Theologians

In his key works, *Critique of Pure Reason* and the *Critique of Practical Reason*, Immanuel Kant developed an immanent critique of representational thinking. To avoid getting lost in phantasms and delusional worlds of our own making, he argued that we must employ *reason to critique reason itself*. Building on Kant's critique, Gilles Deleuze critiques the postulates of representational thinking. In this article, I will discuss the first four of his postulates in relation to the representational thinking of the three theologians; namely, common sense, recognition, the objective correlate, and representation and argue that, through Job's transgression of representational thinking, he demonstrates a way to move beyond the resulting crisis of reference (Deleuze 1994, pp. 130–40).

At the outset of this article, it should be noted that Deleuze's use of the figure of "Job" is not based on a close reading of the Old Testament story, but rather on Søren Kierkegaard's interpretation of Job in his book, *Fear and Trembling/Repetition* (Kierkegaard 1983; Mooney 1993), for two essential aspects of Deleuze's own method, humor and irony, connect well with Kierkegaard's interpretation of Abraham as a humorous figure and Job as an ironic figure (Williams 2013, pp. 38–39). Kierkegaard considered Abraham a humorous figure owing to his blind obedience to God's command, which almost led to disastrous (humorous) results; Abraham inadvertently ridicules moral law through his blind obedience to it. He considered Job an ironic figure owing to his sarcastic dismissal of the three theologians, who blindly try to apply moral law to his particular misfortunes. For Deleuze, this "humorous" Abraham and "ironic" Job are more than figures who undermined the authority of moral law in their own lives; their stories also trigger feelings in us, such as shock, confusion, attraction, elation, and laughter. Indeed, their stories have the potential to transform *our* relationship to moral law, by re-enacting their stories. Through them, we learn how to laugh at the false claims of morality and construct resistance to it through the use of irony, sarcasm, parody, and paradox.

2.1. Common Sense

The postulate of "common sense" functions as the beginning of representational thinking. This postulate presupposes that every person is born with prepropositional common sense (cogitatio natura universalis) that endows thought with a natural orientation toward knowing the world as it is in itself (Deleuze 1994, p. 131). In daily life, this postulate is articulated by phrases such as "everybody knows that" and "no one can deny that" such-and-such is true (Deleuze 1994, p. 130). Despite the contradictions of Job's subjective experience, the three theologians asserted on the basis of common sense, in effect, that "everybody knows that God rewards virtue and punishes transgression," hence, Job is blamed for his own suffering.

2.2. Recognition

Deleuze's second postulate of representational thinking involves recognition. He defines recognition as "The harmonious exercise of all the faculties upon a supposed same object: The same object may be seen, touched, remembered, imagined, or conceived."[5] This postulate is connected to the first postulate, for it supposes that *common* sense relies on both the harmonious functioning of the faculties of recognition and, further, that the transcendental unification of these faculties functions

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4   (Coogan 2009; Roper 2005). Fischer (2000) presents five concepts of retribution in the Tanakh and analyzes the Book of Job under the aspect of retributive concept.

5   (Deleuze 1994, p. 133). The Kantian system paradoxically valorizes a closed transcendental system. While following Kant's immanent critique, Deleuze (1994, pp. 135, 143) rejects the residual psychologism of Kant's transcendental unity of apperception (TUA).

identically in every human being (Somers-Hall 2013, p. 108). It is this imagined unification of the faculties that provides the foundation for *common* sense. In the Book of Job, the arguments of the theologians presuppose that, since they share the same transcendental unification of the faculties, they all share a common understanding of Job's suffering.

2.3. The Objective Correlate

According to the third postulate, the unity of concepts extends to the objects of cognition; that is, concepts have objective correlates. As Somers-Hall (2013, p. 107) explains, "Common sense provides us with the formal nature of a unified subject to which objects correspond." This postulate, also known as the correspondence theory of truth, asserts that a proposition or concept is true insofar as it corresponds to facts or objects as they are in themselves. For example, the three theologians supposed that the concepts of GOD, WORLD, and SELF, as understood by the ancient Israelite wisdom tradition, objectively correlated to an actual "God," "world," and "self."

2.4. Representation

According to Deleuze's fourth postulate, conceptual representation entails the four specific elements, or "iron collars": First, identity with regard to concepts; second, opposition with regard to the determination of concepts; third, analogy between concepts; and lastly, perceptible resemblance between concepts and between objects. These four elements correspond respectively to four faculties of recognition: Thought, imagination, judgement, and perception.

2.4.1. Identity with Regard to Concepts: The Most General Faculty of Representation Is the Faculty of Thought

The operation of thought, in coordination with the imagination, judgement, and perception, determines the identity of concepts (Massumi 1987, p. xi). Representative thinking depends on categories of identity, i.e., categories of the "same." Based on the epistemological assumption that sameness precedes difference, representational thinking reduces the objects of experience to predetermined categories of sameness. For this reason, difference has always been conceived of as an epiphenomenon of the same in the history of Western philosophy. Within representational rationality, it is impossible to think pure difference because the play of pure difference is always dominated by the rule of conceptual identity.

The wisdom tradition presupposed by the Book of Job assigned fixed identities to the concept of GOD as a supraterrestrial, almighty, eternal, and righteous being, who rewards and punishes human behavior on the basis of divine LAW, to the concept of a WORLD as a terrestrial plane of human habitation with a fixed moral structure; and to the concept of a SELF as a terrestrial being, which is subject to the divine laws of GOD. On the basis of the three interrelated concepts, the three theologians believed that they comprehended the hidden truth of Job's suffering; since God punishes transgression and rewards virtue, it follows that Job is being punished by God for his transgression (Fischer 2000).

2.4.2. Opposition with Regard to the Determination of Concepts Through the Exercise of the Imagination

The identity of a given concept is determined by means of imagined oppositions. According to the logic of simple opposition, concepts are determined by that which they are opposed. For example, in traditional theology, the concepts of MAN and WOMAN are locked in an oppositional relationship. The concept of MAN also functions as an oppositional concept in relation to GOD; whereas MAN is terrestrial, weak, temporal, and unrighteous, GOD is the opposite—supraterrestrial, almighty, eternal, and righteous. In Job 40–41, God defends himself on the basis of being all-powerful, all-wise, and absolutely just, in stark contrast to human beings. One could go so far as to say that the identity of GOD is *contingent*, because God only becomes GOD through an imputed opposition to human identity.

Through the theologian's opposition of GOD's identity to human SELF, they legitimized God's actions and naturalized this opposition, thereby literalizing this dissimulation of the real.

2.4.3. Analogy between Concepts and between Their Respective Objects through the Exercise of the Judgement

Analogical relations are relations of resemblance. As Massumi (1987, p. 11) explains, "Representational thought is analogical; its concern is to establish a correspondence between these symmetrically structured domains." The Tanakh (Old Testaments) generally reflects the view that even though God and human beings have different identities (or "beings") and inhabit different planes of existence (supraterrestrial versus terrestrial), they are nonetheless analogically related. Many analogical relations are embedded in the primary social institutions of ancient Israelite society such as kingship, benefaction, and the judicial system (McLean 2015). For instance, if GOD is an ideal(ized) KING, the Israelites by analogy are his SUBJECTS; if GOD is an ideal(ized) PATRON (or benefactor), then the Israelites by analogy are his CLIENTS (supplicants); and if GOD is an ideal(ized) JUDGE, then the Israelites by analogy are the ACCUSED.

2.4.4. The Resemblance between Concepts, and Resemblance between Objects, Can Be Perceived

Representational thinking presupposes an interrelation between concepts and an interrelation between the objects correlated with such concepts. Gilles Deleuze argues that "every concept relates back to other concepts, not only in its history but in its becoming or its present connections" (Deleuze and Guattari 1996, p. 19). Each concept is part of a circularity of concepts, which overlaps the primary institutions of society, giving the false impression that the whole of society functions as one predictable, deterministic, symbolic world. The entirety of human life is spent moving between one set of concepts to another, each possessing its own forms of interconnection and hierarchies of importance. Consequently, representational thought always operates within the norms and conventions of traditional society and its common-sense symbolic world.

To sum up, four faculties are involved in representation: The faculty of thought establishes conceptual identities; the faculty of imagination establishes conceptual oppositions; the faculty of judgement establishes conceptual analogies; and lastly, the faculty of perception establishes resemblance between objects and between concepts. Each of these four postulates constitutes an obstacle to understanding pure difference. For in its attempt to represent the objects of the world through concepts, representational thought fails to account for its own a priori postulates. It concerns itself solely with *what* is given by the faculties, but never with *how* it is given (Deleuze 1994, p. 140). By drawing attention to underlying tendencies of representational thinking, Deleuze has demonstrated the extent to which representational thinking is contingent, not necessary and constructive, not reproductive. As Foucault has argued, representational thinking does not reproduce, in conceptual language, the world as it is in itself; rather, it systematically constructs its objects according to a system of discursive "rules." The *causes* of thought are not of the same nature of the content of thought.

3. Job's Critique of Representational Thinking of the Theologians

In his critique of the representational thinking of the three theologians, Job argues that he is blameless, which the reader already knows to be true (Job 1:8, 2:3). Job has helped the poor and hungry (Job 30:31–32) and he has always obeyed God's divine law (Job 23:12). According to the law of retributive justice, God should have rewarded him, but instead, his life is one of suffering and destitution (Magdalene 2006). Schlobin (1992, p. 35) goes so far as to characterize God's relationship with Job as a monster–victim relationship. On the basis of this injustice, Job rejects the conceptualization of GOD of the three theologians. First, with respect to the identity of concepts, Job challenges their concept of GOD as an almighty, righteous being. For if their concept of GOD does indeed correspond to God, as God actually is, then this God must somehow be responsible for Job's suffering. At the very

least, there is a lack of identity between the God who permitted Job to be brought to a state of suffering for no reason (Job 2:6) and the theologians' concept of a just, all-powerful GOD.

Second, regarding opposition in the determination of concepts, Job, in effect, challenges the oppositional relationship between the concept of GOD and the (human) SELF. The characteristics of God's identity, according to Job's experience, are not the oppositional to human identity. While the God of the whirlwind is unlike human beings in many ways, neither is he the polar opposite of human beings, as a perfection of justice, wisdom, and power. This God allowed Job to be victimized (Job 38). He entered into a wager with Satan, not sure of the outcome or consequences for Job (Job 1), and the text itself implies that Job's victimization served no spiritual purpose (Job 1:9–12, 2:1–7, 42:7–8). Elsewhere in the Tanakh, this God favored Abel over Cain (Gen 4); he tested Abraham by making the immoral demand that Abraham sacrifice of his son (Gen 22); he attacked Moses on his return to Egypt after having coaxed him to go (Exod 4); and he incinerated the eldest sons of Aaron for no apparent reason (Lev 10, cf. Greenstein 2009). Hence, God's identity, as attested in the Tanakh, is not always oppositional to human identity. A further difficulty arises with regard to analogy. Job argues, in effect, that the identity of God cannot be reliably determined through analogical relations, for an ideal king, patron, or judge would not victimize an innocent person, nor fail to punish the wicked who have oppressed such a person. As readers of Job's story, we must conclude that the three theologians' a priori elements of representation are responsible for the construction of a phantasmatic GOD, which lacks an objective correlate in their life-world.

4. Deleuze's Interpretation of Job as a Hero in the History of Rationality

Christian scholars often interpret the Book of Job as a story of Job's faithful submission to God (Sawyer 2013, p. 34). However, we should not lose sight of the fact that, in many ways, Job did not submit to God; he never retracted his arguments or accusations against God and when God finally intervened in the debate, he praised Job for his *truthful* speech. The event of God appearing in the whirlwind actually vindicates Job's ironic dismissal of the arguments of the three theologians. God was infuriated with the three theologians, not with Job: "I am angry with you and your two friends, because you have not spoken the truth about me, as my servant Job has" (Job 42:7). It was Job's "infinite contestation," and his refusal of "all second-hand explanations," that God praised, not Job's humble submission (Deleuze 1994, p. 7).

By exposing the failure of representational thinking, Job has created a *crisis of reference* for traditional theology. In effect, Job *transgresses* the discursive "rules" of traditional theology by exposing the phantasmatic nature of its concepts. According to Bechtel (1995), Job demonstrates the impossibility of reducing the complexity and arbitrariness of creation to concepts within a monotheistic framework. This failure of representational thinking entails the "speculative death of God," which is to say, the disappearance of an objective transcendental correlate (Deleuze 1994, p. 87). As Redell (2014, p. 49) explains, "God cannot be made an object of synthetic knowledge without death and timeliness entering into him. This means that the question of God's existence is unintelligible before the death of God and irrelevant after."

Deleuze interprets Job as a heroic figure in the history of rationality, for Job demonstrates that the subject "has nothing to say in his own name so long as he adheres to the traditional norms" of thinking (Deleuze and Guattari 1983, p. 190). In his opprobrium against God, Job demonstrates the strength of will to *transgress* the common-sense norms of theological reasoning. In their assessment of Job, Deleuze and Guattari (1983, pp. 11, 17), citing Fortes (1959), juxtapose him to the figure of Oedipus. While Job disavowed all blame and responsibility, Oedipus accepted blame and responsibility for the evil, which had come upon the city of Thebes. While it is true that Oedipus *did* transgress divine law (in contrast to Job), his attempts to avoid transgressing the law were foiled by Fate. There was only one possible outcome for Oedipus, which was the outcome decreed by Fate. Girard (2004, p. 107) argues that, through Oedipus' willingness to accept blame, he became a successful "scapegoat," which is

to say, "an innocent party, who polarizes a universal hatred," and whose expulsion from society regenerates communal peace and the restoration of relationships.

Girard observes how religious violence in the ancient world was often accompanied by sacralizing myths, such as we encounter in the Book of Job and Oedipus Rex. These myths provide a transcendental rationale for the necessity of victimization of the innocent. Such myths are often juxtaposed to desacralizing narratives, which provide an *immanent* rationale for the same event; "The counterpoint between the sacred and desacralizing discourses reveals a generalizable truth about all violent religions" (Girard 1987, p. 33). For instance, the sacralizing myth of Oedipus provides a transcendental rationale to his suffering, asserting that his victimization was predetermined by Fate, while the desacralizing discourse attributes his suffering to an immanent cause, namely, his own transgressions. We encounter the same paradox in the Gospel accounts of Jesus's crucifixion. A sacralizing myth furnishes a transcendental rationale for Jesus's crucifixion: Jesus's victimization was predetermined by God for the salvation of the world (Girard 1987, p. 55). The sinless state of Jesus in a perennial them in the New Testament (e.g., 2 Cor 5:21, John 15:25, cf. 18:38, 19, 19:4, 35:19, 69:5, 1 John 3, Heb 4:14–16, 1 Pet 2:21–24). This myth is juxtaposed to a desacralizing narrative, which furnishes an immanent cause for Jesus's death, namely, the disfavor of the Jewish leaders and the crowd (Girard 1987, p. 33). Similarly, the mythic prologue of the Book of Job furnishes a transcendental rationale for the necessity of Job's suffering: God's wager with Satan regarding the character of Job (Job 1:6, 2:1). This myth is juxtaposed to desacralizing dialogues that provide an immanent cause for Job' death: The social disfavor of Job's community (Job 16:7–10, 19:13–19). But in contrast to Oedipus, Job disavowed blame for his suffering. Hence, Girard (1987, p. 55) describes him as a "failed scapegoat."[6]

That, which made Job a "failed scapegoat" for Girard, transformed him into a "hero" in Deleuze's estimation, who numbered him among his heroes of repetition. According to Deleuze, such heroes opposed, in their manner of living, "*repetition to all forms of generality*" (Deleuze 1994, p. 5). As noted above, Deleuze's interpretation of Job is based on Kierkegaard's *Fear and Trembling/Repetition.* Kierkegaardian "repetition" pertains to "thought"; it is a process whereby "the finite spirit contemplatively abandons itself in sympathy with its repetitive movement" (Kierkegaard 1983, p. 288). For Deleuze, who is reading Nietzsche on eternal return alongside Kierkegaard, "repetition concerns the most interior element of the will" (Deleuze 1994, p. 6). The will to repetition is the will to "make repetition the very object of willing" (Deleuze 1994, p. 6), for Deleuze asserts that the only way to break free from representational thinking, and indeed all forms of generality, is to have the strength of will to destroy, transgress, to act immorally and, in Job's particular case, to employ irony to dismiss the attempts of the three theologians to apply moral laws to his misfortune.[7] (Deleuze 1994, p. 5). Job's "infinite contestation" took the form of ironic rebuke: "The first way of overturning the law is ironic, where irony appears as an art of principles, of ascent towards the principles and of overturning principles." It is Job's transgression of traditional theology that makes him a heroic figure in Deleuze's assessment.

Job's transgression constitutes his legacy to us, for Job installed the concept of transgression as a foundational principle for nonrepresentational theology. Nietzsche once stated that even if GOD is dead, we still possess the grammar of GOD that structures our world: "Fear we are not getting rid of GOD because we still believe in Grammar."[8] In many ways, the grammar of GOD, WORLD, and SELF, continue to provide a structure—albeit an empty structure that makes transgressions like Job's still possible, for without "law" there is no transgression (Rom 5:13, 5:20; 4:15, Gal 2:21; 3:21–22).

6　Girard (1992) argues that the Book of Job is not about Job's transformation from riches to poverty, or health to sickness, but his transformation from social favor to social disfavor among his people.

7　Irony is a pervasive feature of the Book of Job. For example, Job speaks ironically about himself as being such a dangerous "dragon" that God must set a "guard" over him for constant surveillance (Job 7:12–25). Elsewhere, Job feigns ignorance to confound the arguments of the three friends. For example, in Job 12:2, he pretends to believe that his friends have a monopoly on wisdom, despite the fact that they have proven themselves incapable of understanding Job's predicament.

8　Cited by MacIntyre (1990, p. 98), SMALL CAPS added.

For instance, Pierre Klossowsski reduced theological concepts to the status of simulacra, while retaining its function as an overarching "grammar" for theological discourse (Foucault 1998). In the twentieth century, Deleuze and others have similarly employed transgression to move beyond the impasse of representational theology. In Georges Bataille's "Story of the Eye," the transgression of the "eye" makes way for clarity of vision (Foucault 1977). Inspired by Klossowski, Bataille, and others, Deleuze asserts (Deleuze 1990, p. 322) that "Theology is now the science of non-existing entities, the manner in which these entities—divine or anti-divine—Christ or Antichrist—animate language and make for it this glorious body which is divided into disjunctions."[9] With these words, he lays out a vision for a style of non-representational theology, one which does not concern itself with matters of truth, but instead with *how* truth is given and with what are the effects of truth.

5. Conclusions

Traditional rationality takes the form of thinking-as-representation. Motivated by the conviction that it is possible to articulate one true account of the real, the three theologians in the Book of Job employed concepts to reduce objects to categories of sameness. In his exposition of such thinking-as-representation, Deleuze demonstrates how the four elements of representation thinking subordinate difference to conceptual categories of identity, opposition, analogy, and resemblance. Deleuze considers Job to be a heroic figure in the history of thinking, for Job demonstrates that the subject has nothing to say in his own name, as long as the subject adheres to norms of representational thinking. Job's ironic disavowal of blame amounts to a transgression against traditional theology of his time. The figure of Job exemplifies the heroic potential that lies within this crisis of theological representation. We are no longer obliged to think according to a historically condemned form of rationality.

However, in Deleuze's estimation, the story of Job is more than an event for thought; it is equally a somatic event. For Job's story exerts intensities on our bodies, without cognitive mediation, which are manifested in us as sensations and affects. Such intensities can "set into motion" in us new ways of resisting, imagining, and becoming. In this way, the "heroic" Job demonstrates not only how transgressive thinking can help us move beyond the prison house of our own concepts, it also transmits intensities directly into our bodies that provide the necessary conditions for us to re-enact Job's story in our own lives in ever changing ways.

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9　(Cf. Smith 2009, p. 8).

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