

The Book of Job as the primeval counseling manual (contrasting retributivist and restorative treatments) of iatrogenic mental disorder

Abstract

This seminal article examines the Book of Job as a clinical prototype for understanding the intersection of restorative justice and Theo-psychagogy when treating resentful suffering against the divine. Analyzing the narrative structure of Job's suffering and his subsequent restoration, it identifies a framework for psychological and spiritual guidance, termed Theo-psychagogy, an iterative process of self-correction guided by divine wisdom. Transcending traditional retributive models, this approach focuses on restoring relationships with the divine and the community through profound psychological metamorphosis. The Book of Job serves as a foundational model for clinicians and theologians, offering insights into the resilience of the human spirit when confronted with existential crisis. The article contrasts two justice models: *retributive justice* in the Greco-Roman tragic worldview *versus restorative justice* in the Hebrew anti-tragedy of Job. It also contrasts two counseling models: retributivistic-antagonistic approach (Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar) *versus restorative-supportive approach* (Elihu's Theo-psychagogy and Eleotherapy). Theo-psychological terrorism (EBZ Effect) is the first well-documented case of iatrogenic mental disturbance in world literature, wherein bad therapy induced Job's reactive hubris and spiritual fracture. In contrast, Elihu guides Job through a structured process of internal awakening (*dianoigō*), therapeutic recognition (*anagnorisis*), and salvific self-emptying (*kenosis*), preparing his psyche for a theophanic encounter with the Transcendent, culminating in metanoia and full restoration (*apokatastasis*). The Book of Job may be employed as an antidote to teratogenic counseling, as a cautionary tale for neophyte practitioners, and as a primeval protocol for treating patients harboring resentment toward the divine within their own basal faith system.

Keywords: iatrogenic, suffering, psychological torture, rational emotive behavior therapy (REBT), psychotherapy, compassion, theology, book of Job, anagnorisis, retributive justice, restorative justice

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Prolegomena

This article explores the profound clinical relevance of the Book of Job for clinical psychology and biblical counseling, specifically regarding the phenomenon of "resentful suffering" directed at the Divine. It delineates the structural elements of "theo-psychological terrorism"—conceptualized herein as the EBZ Effect—which often precipitates catastrophic iatrogenic mental disturbances through the weaponization of retributive dogmas. In systematic opposition, the study provides a framework for the soul's rescue through the application of Eleotherapy and Applied Theo-psychagogy, guiding the fractured psyche through a structured psychagogical journey toward metaphysical realignment. This trajectory maps a transformative path characterized by therapeutic recognition (*anagnorisis*) and absolute self-emptying (Greek [G]: *kenosis* [κένωσις], Latin [L]: *exinanitio*), facilitating a transition through epiphany, repentance, and metanoia. Ultimately, the narrative culminates in a comprehensive socio-somatic restoration (G: *apokatastasis* [ἀποκατάστασις], L: *restitutio*) and a salvific metamorphosis or transfiguration (G: *metamorphōsis* [μεταμόρφωσις], L: *transfiguratio*), anchoring the patient in a state of enduring serenity and transcendent peace.

The article elucidates critical dimensions of Clinical Psychology and Applied Theo-psychagogy directed toward compassionate psychospiritual interventions and the active restructuring of the human soul—a paradigm historically designated as Psychic Eleotherapy ([G]: *eleos kai therapeia psyches* [ἔλεος καὶ θεραπεία ψυχῆς]; [L]: *miseri-cors curatio animae*). Etymologically rooted in classical Greek,

this framework unifies *éleos* (operational compassion, mercy, or active clemency), *therapeia* (the structural act of healing, treating, and re-establishing), and *psychē* (the mind, soul, or innermost vital core), wherein the noun *éleos* derives from the verbal root *eleōō* (to manifest mercy or extend protective relief). Consequently, eleotherapeutic counseling operates on a foundation of systemic mercy (G: *eleos* [ἔλεος]; L: *miseri-cordia, clementia, or propitiatio*). According to *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*,¹ the biblical application of *éleos* denotes the compassionate preservation of individuals facing acute existential peril, particularly when a sovereign authority holds absolute legal power to punish or inflict harm. Translated into the Latin Vulgate as *miseri-cordia*, the concept establishes a clinical baseline for treating intense soul pain (G: *psychalgia*; L: *dolor animae*) and profound psychological-spiritual suffering (G: *psychopathology*; L: *passio animae*). This clinical framework is vital for managing patients engulfed in acute existential disturbance, spiritual affliction, and the visceral assault of evil (G: *kakopátheia*; L: *sufferentia*) associated with a violent, reactive resentment against the Creator, called *misotheism* (G: *misotheia* [μισοθεΐα], L: *odium Dei, ira in Deum*). Such clinical emergencies are highly prevalent within emotional trauma clinics and modern palliative care units, particularly when treating terminally ill patients in danger of undergoing physical death while actively consumed by a raging hatred toward the Divine. Trapped within a state of felt cosmic abandonment and divine reproach, these individuals stand at the threshold of an imminent, painful, and disturbing death (G: *kakothanasia* [κακοθανασία]; L: *mala mors*). They require critical therapeutic assistance to navigate their reactive resentment against

the Creator (*misotheism*), especially when those feelings generate a paralyzing cognitive dissonance with which they feel entirely incapable of coping.

To aid professionals devoted to helping patients restructure their existential experience regarding the mystery of extreme suffering and mortality, this paper provides a comprehensive description of the concepts, principles, and processes involved in the earliest eleotherapeutic treatment of resentful suffering against God recorded in literature: the Book of Job.² Central to treating this deep-seated grievance is the paradigm of divine justice—whether retributive or restorative—and its perceived absence. To achieve this, the article provides a systematic, comparative contrast between the framework of divine justice in the classical Greco-Roman tragic worldview and that found in the Hebrew Book of Job.² The foundational principle of Retributive Justice—wherein a deity acts as the mechanistic executioner of cosmic punishment upon a transgressor—functions as an evolutionary prototype within human psychological architecture. Within the classical Greco-Roman landscape, this deterministic causality operates as the structural leitmotif animating the genre of Tragedy, a supreme manifestation of which is found in Sophocles' *Oedipus the King*.³ Similarly, within the Hebrew Bible canon, this retributive framework serves as the governing thematic axis for major legal and covenantal texts, such as the Books of Deuteronomy and Leviticus;^{4,5} This paper argues that the Book of Job deliberately ruptures this cross-cultural consensus, constituting the definitive anti-tragedy *par excellence*. It preserves the premier historical mapping of divine Restorative Justice, a paradigm of paramount significance to the phenomenon of soul cure and the restoration of life through cognitive de-escalation, forgiveness, holistic wellness, and trauma-informed psychospiritual care (Eleotherapy and Applied Theo-psychagogy). Consequently, the study contrasts two radically opposed models of counseling for extreme suffering depicted within the Joban text: a confrontational-antagonist model executed by the elder companions (Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar) *versus* a supportive-deuteragonist model delivered by the young counselor *Elihu* (אֱלִיָּהוּ: “My God is He”). The destructive, multi-round counseling provided by the antagonistic triad is anchored in a narrow, punitive caricature of retributive justice. Operating from this rigid framework, they dogmatically misdiagnose Job's unprecedented catastrophe as the direct consequence of a hidden, horrific transgression, weaponizing their discourse to demand a superficial confession of past guilt. To break what they perceive as the patient's analytical resistance, they subject the victim to a relentless campaign of psychological cruelty and systematic frustration. This theo-psychological terrorism entirely shatters Job's psychological boundaries, driving him from suicidal ideation into an inflated, reactive arrogance (G: *hubris* [ὕβρις]; L: *petulantia*, *superbia*, *insolentia*, or *arrogantia*). It causes him to fall into the rare error of accusing the Almighty of arbitrary cruelty and cosmic injustice—thereby triggering a catastrophic iatrogenic mental disturbance, a complete breakdown of the therapeutic alliance, and the absolute failure and abortion of the counseling process. This paper conceptualizes this severe, post-treatment clinical trauma as the EBZ Effect, establishing it as the very first well-documented case of an iatrogenic mental disorder within world literature, and positioning the narrative as a crucial, universal cautionary tale for neophyte clinicians regarding the dangerous professional arrogance of assuming they understand the patient's psyche better than the patient does.

In sharp, systematic opposition to the companions' merciless and impious approach (G: *aneleēmōn* [ἀνελεήμων] or *aneleōs* [ἀνελεως]; L: *sine misericordia*), the supportive intervention provided by the deuteragonist, *Elihu*, offers profound epistemological and clinical

relief. Grounding his care in existential equality, *Elihu* bypasses the elders' fixation on a phantom past and addresses the acute, immediate swelling of hubris that erupted dynamically during the debate itself as a reactive pathology to the iatrogenic trauma. Armed with a vision of restorative justice, *Elihu*'s speech functions as an eleotherapeutic counter-inoculation and a model of theo-psychagogy (G: *theopsychagōgia* [θεοψυχαγωγία]; L: *illuminatio animi* or *gubernatio mentis a Deo*)—the sublime art of leading the human psyche (G: *psychē* [ψυχή]; L: *maxime anima*, *animus*, or *mens*) through a structured psychagogical journey (G: *agōgē* [ἀγωγή]; L: *educatio* or *ductus*) toward the serene, comforting peace of the Divine (G: *Theos* [Θεός]). By re-centering the discourse around divine sovereignty and mercy, *Elihu* acts as an intermediary spiritual guide (G: *psychagōgos* [ψυχαγωγός]; L: *ductor animarum* or *animi moderator*), softening the scar tissue of Job's wounded ego and preparing his fractured psyche for an unmediated encounter with the Transcendent, the divinity manifested (G: *Theos* [θεός]; L: *Deus*, *Numen*, or *Divinitas*).

This clinical preparation compels Job to open his mind's eye (G: *dianoigō* [διανοίγω]; L: *apertio oculorum*) to achieve absolute cognitive consciousness, moving toward an authentic re-cognition (G: *epiginōskō* [ἐπιγινώσκω]; L: *cognitio*) of his true state. This internal realization initiates his therapeutic anagnorisis (G: *anagnōrisis* [ἀναγνώρισις]; L: *recognitio*), triggering a salvific metamorphosis (G: *metamorphōō* [μεταμορφώω]) driven by godly sorrow (G: *lypē* [λύπη]; L: *tristitia*) under the presence of God—an ascending transfiguration (L: *transfiguratio*), supernatural transformation (L: *transformatio*), and structural reformation (L: *reformatio*) of the mind that completely avoids the descending Kafkaesque deformation of worldly despair. Once this psychagogical threshold is reached, the forerunner voluntarily recedes into absolute narrative silence so that the Divine *Psychagōgos* (G: *psychagōgōs* [ψυχαγωγός]; L: *dux animarum*) may speak directly from the whirlwind.² The notion of guiding and leading is present in the OT, as the psalmist says: “He restores my soul; He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake”²² as well as in the NT: “When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth...”²⁵ By embracing this ascetic total self-emptying (G: *kenosis* [κένωσις]; L: *exinanitio*), Job's ego-inflation is successfully dissolved. Sitting on the ash-heap, still covered in festering sores, he enters a raw, dialogical confession (G: *homologia* [ὁμολογία]; L: *confessio*) and extends absolute forgiveness to the very men who fractured his soul. Through this ritual economy of grace and the *sacerdotium* of the wounded, the cosmic wager reaches its grand denouement: Yahweh sovereignly reverses the trauma, grants Job a double-portion restoration (G: *apokatastasis* [ἀποκατάστασις]; L: *restitutionis*) and seals the definitive, silent defeat of the Accuser.

Introductory notes on Eleotherapy

In this article we define Eleotherapy as a dual-track restorative framework. Drawing from the phonological and symbolic convergence of the Greek terms *éleos* [ἔλεος] (active compassion) and *élaion* [ἔλαιον] (medicinal oil), Eleotherapy represents the systematic application of non-coercive, boundary-respecting care designed to soothe the cognitive friction and severe psychological trauma generated by theo-psychological iatrogenesis. In Eleotherapy, the medical prefix *éleo-* derives from two etymons that converge in phonological and symbolic terms: the etymon *éleos* [ἔλεος] (active compassion) and the etymon *élaion* [ἔλαιον] (medicinal oil). In the New Testament and the Septuagint (the Greek Old Testament), *éleos* [ἔλεος] translates the rich Hebrew concept of *Hesed* (loving-kindness, covenant loyalty). The early Church Fathers explicitly linked *éleos* [ἔλεος] (merciful compassion) with *élaion* [ἔλαιον] (olive oil)

because in the ancient Mediterranean culture, olive oil has always been the universal emollient applied to wounds to soothe burning, reduce friction, and accelerate healing.

From the beginning, the liturgical prayer *Kyrie, eleison* [Κύριε, ἔλεησον] (Lord, have mercy) carried an acoustic double-entendre. It literally meant “Lord, show compassion,” but contextually evoked the image of: “Lord, pour your soothing oil onto my broken, burning wounds”. Before becoming a formal church hymn in the 4th century, the phrase was a spontaneous street cry. In the New Testament, this exact phrase is the desperate shout of the blind, the lepers, and parents whose children were on the verge of an agonizing *bad death* (kakothanasia). They ran after Jesus crying out: “Kyrie, eleison!” (Lord, actively execute your verb *Eleeō* upon us! Pour compassion *éleos* [ἔλεος] and oil *élaion* [ἔλαιον] on us!). It was the humble admission that they had reached the absolute end of their strength and desperately needed immediate healing. By merging the etymos *éleos* [ἔλεος] (merciful compassion) and *élaion* [ἔλαιον] (olive oil) the concept of Eleotherapy offers a multi-layered therapeutic framework.

- a. The etymon *Élaion* [Ἐλαιον] denotes olive oil as the physical balm that provides structural lubrication. It connotes rebuilding cognitive boundaries, reducing the friction of cognitive dissonance, and sealing the psychological fractures caused by abuse.
- b. The etymon *Éleos* [Ἐλεος] denotes mercy and compassion that pertain to interpersonal relationships: It connotes both providing and receiving unconditional, non-coercive compassion that expects nothing in return.

Eleotherapy is the exact opposite of the weaponized legalism that causes iatrogenic harm in bad counseling and Theo-psychological terrorism. It is the balm that heals the wounds caused by bad counseling, and the antidote to iatrogenic despair. It restores what has been broken by accusers and abusers disguised as counselors. Eleotherapy provides authentic mercy as an antidote to weaponized sacrifice. While teo-psychological manipulators of religious elites demand sacrifice, self-abnegation, and submission to abuse, Jesus rebukes this practice and quotes Hosea: “Go and learn what this means: ‘I desire mercy (*éleos* [ἔλεος]), and not sacrifice’”⁵ Confucius⁶ also held that a true spiritual framework prioritizes *éleos* (relieving human misery) over institutional sacrifice (protecting the institution at the expense of the victim). The prototypical Eleotherapist is the Good Samaritan. The Parable of the Good Samaritan⁵ is the ultimate scriptural synthesis of the concept of Eleotherapy as the therapy of pouring healing oil and compassion upon the wounded. When the Samaritan finds the beaten victim, he explicitly pours oil (*élaion* [ἔλαιον]) and wine onto his wounds to heal them. At the end of the parable, Jesus asks who the true neighbor was. The answer given is: “The one who showed mercy (*éleos* [ἔλεος] to him”⁵. Therefore, the Good Samaritan acts as the true healer (*iatrós* [ιατρός]). He administers Eleotherapy because his physical use of oil (*élaion* [ἔλαιον]) is the literal manifestation of his internal compassion (*éleos* [ἔλεος]). The notion of a *Physician of the Soul* is not restricted to the Scriptures. In ancient Greek philosophy (especially among the Stoics and Epicureans), philosophers did not view themselves as abstract theorists. They claimed to be *physicians of the soul* (*iatroí tēs psychēs* [ιατροὶ τῆς ψυχῆς], whose mission was to cure the mind of the toxic diseases of pride (G: *hyperēphania* [ὑπερηφάνια], L: *superbia, arrogantia, fastidium*), disordered desires (G: *epithymia* [ἐπιθυμία], L: *cupiditas, appetitus*), and bitterness (G: *pikria* [πικρία], L: *acerbitas, amaritudo*). In the New Testament, Jesus uses the word *physician* (G: *iatrós* [ιατρός], L: *medico*) explicitly in a famous metaphorical proverb to describe His mission to those broken

by moral failure (sin: G: *hamartia* [ἁμαρτία]; L: *peccatum*): “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick.” (Greek: ...Ὅτι χρεῖαν ἔχουσιν οἱ ὑγιαίνοντες ἰατροῦ ἀλλὰ οἱ κακῶς ἔχοντες; Latin Vulgate: ...*Non egent qui sani sunt medico sed qui male habent.*⁵

Introductory notes

The present paper offers a systematic framework of cross-references between the dense terminologies of the sacred and secular worlds. These philological correspondences among Greek, Latin, and Hebrew nomenclatures are structurally anchored in the monumental work of nineteenth-century lexicographer James Strong,¹ author of *The Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*,¹⁷ widely recognized in biblical scholarship as Strong’s Lexicon. This foundational reference apparatus indexes and cross-references exactly 8,674 Hebrew and Aramaic lexical entries from the Old Testament and 5,624 Greek entries from the New Testament. Following standard academic protocols, all vocabulary items within this system are systematically codified: Hebrew entries are designated by Arabic numerals preceded by the letter H, while Greek entries are indexed with numerals preceded by the letter G. To deepen our textual exegesis and achieve maximum translation precision, this article pairs Strong’s indexing with *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*,⁸ allowing for an advanced semantic analysis of critical Semitic roots, as well as *Thayer’s Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*.⁹ The key Hebrew verb בָּחַ (bā, H935), prominently deployed in its causative Hiphil form (hēbī’) in the climax of Job 42:11,² encapsulates the absolute necessity of this philological methodology. This highly dense lexical root exhibits a profound semantic split when translated into English, oscillating between active causative agency - where God actively causes or decrees an event to occur—and permissive agency—where God sovereignly permits or allows an event to transpire. These two interpretative options align with two radically distinct theological paradigms: a strict determinism, which defines sovereign-decree theology, and a permissive theology anchored in human free will. This linguistic and theological dichotomy remains of critical importance to the defense of divine holiness—specifically, whether the Almighty acts as the direct, primary author of evil or merely as its sovereign, permissive guardian.

The active agency model (God causes)

Conventionally defined as determinist or strict-sovereign-decree theology, this model conceives of the Divine as the primary, immediate cause of all historical events, seamlessly encompassing both cosmic blessings and devastating calamities. It operates on the absolute metaphysical assumption that nothing can exist or occur outside the parameters of an active divine decree. Under this framework, even human moral failures and traumatic catastrophes are explicitly ordained and woven into a master blueprint to serve an ultimate, mysterious purpose. This perspective is historically prominent in strict Calvinist and Reformed confessions, which maintain that God actively determines the final outcome of all situational variables. A classic narrative illustration is found in the Joseph cycle, where the protagonist declares to his brothers: “But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good”⁴, implying that human transgression is structurally co-opted and dictated by a primary sovereign design.

The passive agency model (God permits)

Commonly designated as free-will or permissive theology, this counter-model conceives of God as an omnipotent and omniscient

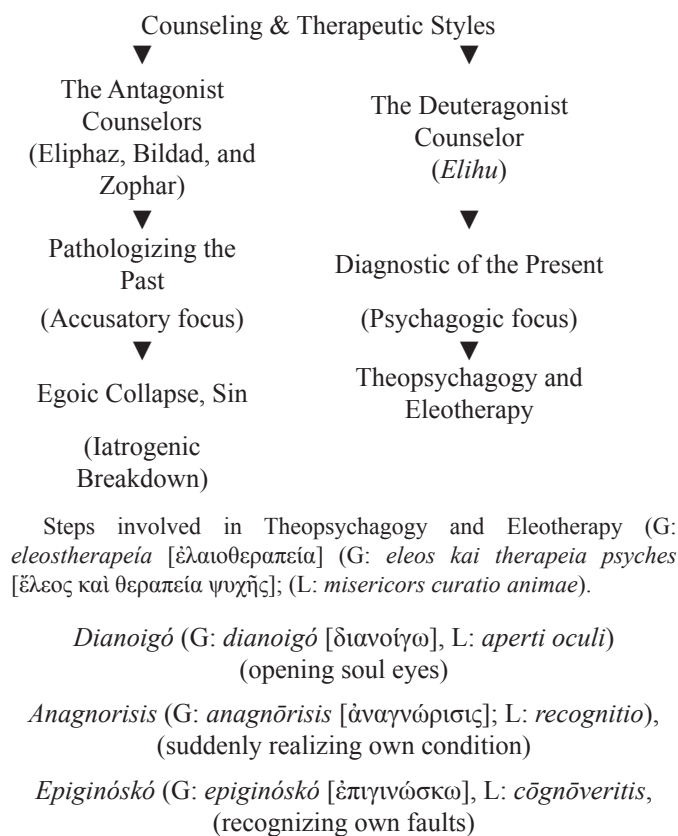
Being who voluntarily executes a profound *kenosis*—a self-limitation of the exercise of His absolute power—out of a sovereign love for humankind. This voluntary limitation is designed to secure a space for genuine human free will and the operation of natural laws. Consequently, when human beings actively pursue the Divine and His justice, they do so out of authentic, uncoerced autonomy rather than mechanical determination or cosmic coercion. Within this permissive framework, sin and suffering are never caused by the Creator; instead, they emerge as the inevitable, systemic byproducts of the abuse of free will. God permits the natural, logical consequences of human choice to run their independent courses, transforming suffering into an agonizing psychagogical instrument through which humanity may experience cognitive de-escalation, learn from the wreckage of poor decisions, and ultimately grow in wisdom to seek God by their own unforced volition. This perspective remains highly prominent in Arminianism, Open Theism, and Catholic dogmatic theology because it systematically addresses the classical problem of evil. Within this framework, evil is analyzed through a dual taxonomy involving both supernatural and natural variables: the supernatural variable resides in the adversarial, spiritual forces of Satan (the Accuser); the natural variable resides in the cause-and-effect outcomes of corrupted human choices. Suffering, therefore, emerges as the organic, structural consequence of rebelling against the cosmic order, departing from the divine will, and misaligning the magnificent gift of human freedom.

Architectural framing: Secular lexicons and dramatic roles in the Joban paradigm

The present article also incorporates extensive secular terminology deeply rooted in classical Greek and Latin philological traditions. These philosophical and theatrical nomenclatures are primarily derived from Aristotle's¹⁰ seminal treatise on dramatic theory, *On the Poetic Art*—universally recognized as the *Poetics* (*Peri poietikes; De Poetica*). To map out the deep layers of the text's psychological and ethical dynamics, this vocabulary is integrated with the classical works of Homer^{3,11–19}. Correspondingly, the sacred vocabulary in Greek, Latin, and Hebrew is systematically anchored in the textual traditions of the Holy Bible. The ancient Greek terms are extracted from the Alexandrian translation of the Old Testament, the *Septuaginta*.²⁰ The Latin conceptual designations are derived from Jerome's historic *Biblia Sacra Vulgata*, specifically the *Biblia Sacra: Iuxta Vulgatum Versionem*.²¹ The structural Hebrew and Aramaic definitions are established directly from the diplomatic text of the *Torah Nevi'im u-Khetuvim: Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*.²²

In the 19th century, terms pertaining to Ancient Greek theater—such as *Protagonist* [πρωταγωνιστής] and *Deuteragonist* [δευτεραγωνιστής]—alongside terms originally tied to ancient competition and combat, such as *Antagonist* [ἀνταγωνιστής], began to be systematically employed in literary criticism to describe the roles played by characters in drama. In the specific structural triad construed in the 19th century, heroes were imagined as protagonists, their rivals as antagonists, and their supporting characters or helpers as deuteragonists. If we take the liberty to employ these terms in analyzing the Book of Job, we can identify Job as the protagonist, his wife and three counselors (Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar) as his antagonists, and *Elihu* as the deuteragonist. When viewed through the analytical lens of classical 19th century dramatic criticism, the character of Job could be structurally defined as the *protagonist* (G: *protagonistis* [πρωταγωνιστής], L: *protagonista*), operating as the absolute narrative and moral epicenter around whom the tragic or anti-tragic plot revolves. Etymologically, the term unifies *protos* ([πρῶτος]; first) and *agonistes* ([ἀγωνιστής]; an actor, combatant,

or fighter), the latter derived from *agon* ([ἀγών]; a fierce dispute, public exhibition, or combat). Job, therefore, stands as the primary combatant within the arena of existential trauma. Conversely, Job's wife—identified in certain rabbinic traditions as Sitis—alongside the triad of retributivist counselors, Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar, could be structurally cast as the *antagonist* (G: *antagonistis* [ἀνταγωνιστής], L: *antagonista*) of the drama. They operate in direct, systematic opposition to the protagonist's claims. Within classical tragedy, the antagonist designates the essential opponent, competitor, or structural rival who challenges the protagonist's core identity. In strict alignment with this dramatic tradition, these Joban antagonists function to judge, challenge, pathologize, and fiercely persecute the central figure, actively inflicting a deep stratum of psychological and spiritual harm. However, as the text moves toward its sovereign, restorative resolution, this retributive framework collapses, and the antagonists are ultimately rebuked, defeated, and forced to seek mediation through the priestly intercession of the very protagonist they sought to destroy. Finally, the restorative counselor *Elihu* could be characterized as the supportive *deuteragonist* (G: *deuteragonistis* [δευτεραγωνιστής], L: *deuteragonista*). Within this conceptual framework, the deuteragonist serves as the protagonist's primary companion, stepping into the narrative arena to actively assist him in navigating acute crises and existential trials. Rather than acting as a predatory judge, this secondary agent functions to correct the protagonist's behavioral blind spots, offering critical, non-destructive counsel when the central agent finds himself trapped in an intractable deadlock. This is precisely the therapeutic trajectory that *Elihu* pursued. He enters the dispute by systematically dismantling the rhetorical framework of Job's antagonists—Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar—before presenting the suffering protagonist with a revolutionary framework through which to process his trauma (*pathema* [πάθημα], Latin: *passio*).



Kenosis (G: *kenosis* [κένωσις]; L: *exinanitio*)
(emptying oneself)

Áphesis (G: *áphesis* [ἄφεσις], L: *remissionem, indulgentia, condonatio*)
(forgiving)

Dianoigó (G: *dianoigó* [διανοίγω], L: *aperti oculi*)
(opening soul eyes)

Metanoia (G: *metanoia* [μετάνοια]; L: *paenitentia*)
(repenting and being converted)

Metamórhōsis (G: *metamórhōsis* [μεταμόρφωσις], L: *transfiguratio*)
(being transfigured)

Katallagé (G: *katallagé* [καταλλαγή], L: *reconciliatio, redintegratio*)
(being reconciled and reintegrated)

Apokatástasis (G: *apokatástasis* [ἀποκατάστασις], L: *restitutionis, renovatio*) (being restored)

The deuteragonist's mirror: *Pathemata mathemata*, ocular awakening, and the mechanics of anagnorisis

The experience of suffering a calamity is captured by the terms *páthēma* and *passio* (G: *páthēma* [πάθημα]; L: *passio, affectus*). *Páthēma* specifically designates “that which is suffered,” signifying an experiential imprint carved into the human psyche through the crucible of affliction. Derived from the verb *paschō* (πάσχω; to undergo, to endure), it denotes an intense emotion or somatic pain that leaves an indelible mark upon the self. *Elihu*'s psychagogical model directly aligns with the classical Greek maxim “*Pathemata mathemata*” (παθήματα μαθήματα)—the foundational law of learning and acquiring wisdom exclusively through the anatomy of pain. *Pathemata mathemata* is a famous ancient Greek proverb that means “sufferings are lessons” or “what hurts us teaches us.” The corresponding Latin proverb is *Quod nocet, docet* (literally: “What hurts, teaches”) or *Calamitates sunt disciplinae* (“Sufferings or calamities are teachings”). *Elihu*'s objective is to compel Job to open his eyes, look into the mirror of his suffering, and identify the acute, immediate hubris that has infected his heart, dismantling this inflation so that the divine presence may once again illuminate him. This strategy stands in stark opposition to the methodology of the elder antagonists. Blinded by a rigid, transactional caricature of retributive justice, Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar assumed that Job's somatic and material liquidation was definitive proof of a hidden, horrific transgression that he was hypocritically concealing. To break what they dogmatically misdiagnosed as the patient's analytical resistance, they subjected the victim to a relentless campaign of psychological cruelty, trying to force him to concede that he was being justly crushed for a past moral failure. In contrast, *Elihu* operates under a divine model of *restorative justice*, treating Job's agony not as a punitive termination, but as a liminal opportunity for him to achieve his *anagnorisis* (G: *anagnōrisis* [ἀναγνώρισις]; L: *recognitio*). He issues a stern, compassionate call for Job to experience a total opening of his eyes (G: *dianoixis* [διάνοιξις] or *dianoigein* [διανοίγειν]; L: *apertio oculorum*), urging him to unlock his mind's eye so that his consciousness may be transformed by uncovering the hidden hubris that had previously escaped his awareness.

The concept of *dianoigō* [διανοίγω] (Strong's number G1272)—the comprehensive, structural opening of one's sight—is dynamically linked to the tragic discovery of *anagnorisis*. Before a character can experience a true recognition of their state, their internal vision must first become open and unimpeded (G: *dianoixis* [διάνοιξις]; L: *apertio*), a paradigm perfectly captured by the miraculous command, “*Ephphathá, hó estin dianoíchthēti*” [Ἐφφαθά, ὃ ἐστὶν διανοίχθητι], or in the Latin Vulgate, “*Ephphatha, quod est aperire*”.⁵ By opening one's spiritual eyes, an individual can behold the reality that egoic defenses had previously veiled. As documented by Strong,^{1,7} a defining paradigm of this cognitive opening occurs in the New Testament corpus when the resurrected Teacher meticulously opens—*dianoigō*—the minds of His disciples so they can finally comprehend the deep, encrypted structural meaning of sacred texts.⁵ *Elihu* demands this exact ocular transformation: he wants Job to open his eyes to deeply *re-cognize* (G: *epiginōskō* [ἐπιγινώσκω]; L: *recognoscere* or *cognoscere*) his creaturely condition in relation to the Transcendent. Job must recognize the sin (G: *hamartia* [ἁμαρτία]; L: *peccatum*) of his reactive, vitriolic speech and the insolent arrogance (G: *hubris* [ὑβρις]; L: *petulantia*) of his defensive posture, and move toward a radical *repentance* (G: *metanoia* [μετάνοια]; L: *paenitentia*) fueled by an altered existential perspective. *Elihu*'s ultimate objective is to safely shepherd Job toward a sudden, momentous transition from ignorance to insightful self-knowledge (G: *anagnōrisis* [ἀναγνώρισις], L: *recognitio*). Etymologically, the term *anagnorisis* denotes the abstract process of recognition, synthesizing the prefix *ana-* ([ἀνά]; back, again), the verb *gnōrizō* ([γνώριζω]; to make known), and the action-characterizing suffix *-sis* ([-σις]). In the *Poetics*, Aristotle¹⁰ identifies anagnorisis as the defining structural pivot of a sophisticated plot, marked by a profound cognitive shift regarding one's true identity, hidden relational ties, or latent transgressions. In classical tragedy, this internal realization is synchronized with an external, sudden reversal of roles and fortune (G: *peripeteia* [περιπέτεια], L: *peripetia, mutatio fortunae*), in which the hero falls from pride to shame, transitioning from the confident accuser to the exposed culprit. The tragic figure suddenly realizes they cannot escape the cosmic distribution of what is rightfully due: the relentless justice (G: *Nemesis* [νέμεσις], L: *Invidia, Iustitia*). This confrontation brings a tragic end to their false, inflated persona, clearing the psychic debris to create the necessary conditions for a true, restorative *catharsis* (G: *kátharsis* [κάθαρσις], L: *catharsis*): the absolute purging of internal evils. By functioning as an intermediary guide of the soul (G: *psychagōgos* [ψυχαγωγός], L: *ductor animarum*), *Elihu* utilizes these dramatic mechanisms to lance Job's pride without destroying his humanity. He prepares the suffering patient for a constructive anagnorisis that leads not to self-mutilation and permanent exile—as it did for Sophocles³ Oedipus—but to an economy of grace, opening the path for the ultimate, healing encounter with the Divine Psychagōgos speaking from the whirlwind.

An exegesis of sovereignty and suspicion: a textual perspective on the prologue of Job

Job—rendered in the original Hebrew as ʾĪyyōv [יְיָוֹב], in Greek as Iób [Ιώβ], and in Arabic as Ayyūb [أيوب]—stands as the agonizing epicenter of the Book of Job.² Positioned within the *Ketuvim* (Writings) of the Hebrew Bible and preserved across centuries of Old Testament translation, this sapiential masterpiece opens with a jarring cosmic wager. The text establishes unconditionally that Job is blameless and upright in the eyes of the Creator (Job 1:1, 1:8, 1:22). Yet, this pristine righteousness is immediately challenged by Satan—the celestial Accuser—who introduces a devastating psychological critique: that Job's piety is merely transactional, a calculated performance of goodness designed to secure divine favor (Job 1:9). In the Accuser's

view, Job's virtue is a cynical mask. God is a willing victim of deception, blindly rewarding a man who loves the hedge of protection rather than the Divine itself (Job 1:10). To test this hypothesis of self-interest, Satan bets that a calculated injection of suffering will shatter Job's facade, causing him to curse God to His face (Job 1:11). Defying the Almighty, the Accuser demands a mandate for destruction. Confident in His servant's unyielding integrity, God grants a restricted concession, surrendering Job's wealth and progeny to the winds of calamity while leaving his physical body untouched (Job 1:12). What follows is a symphonic onslaught of grief (Job 1:13–19). However, as the smoke clears over his ruined livelihood and shattered family, Job refuses to sin, collapsing in worship rather than rebellion (Job 1:20–22). Thwarted but resolute, the Accuser returns to the heavenly court. Frustrated by the resilience of human integrity, Satan increases the stakes, postulating that a man will surrender anything to preserve his own skin (Job 2:4–5). Once more validating His servant against the malicious skepticism of the Accuser (Job 2:3), God yields the final boundary, permitting Satan to strike Job's very flesh and bone (Job 2:6), setting the stage for the deepest psychological and theological interrogation in ancient literature.

The anatomy of isolation

Armed with divine concession,² the Accuser shifts from external devastation to psychosomatic warfare. Having already stripped Job of his legacy, lineage, and wealth (Job 1:13–19), Satan launches a visceral assault upon the boundary of the protagonist's own flesh (Job 2:7). The text plunges Job into an abyss of physical degradation; he is exiled to the ash heap, utilizing broken pottery to scrape at the malignant, festering sores that map his body from head to foot (Job 2:8). As the narrative unfolds, this physical torment breeds an agonizing social death. As Job later laments, his breath becomes repulsive to his household (Job 19:17), his intimacy is replaced by the horror of alienation as friends and acquaintances abandon him (Job 19:13–14), and even children mock his broken frame (Job 19:18). In the crucible of this trauma, the domestic sphere shatters; his wife, consumed by grief and indignation, urges him to fracture his integrity—to curse God and embrace the finality of death as a desperate act of defiance (Job 2:9). Yet, against the gravity of total collapse, Job safeguards his soundness of mind (G: *sōphrosynē* [σωφροσύνη], L: *sobrietatis*), maintaining his existential equilibrium and refusing to sin (Job 2:10).

It is precisely at this juncture, with the Accuser on the precipice of definitive defeat, that a new psychological frontline emerges: the arrival of Job's three ancient companions (Job 2:11). Recognizing the limits of raw physical trauma, the adversarial force shifts tactics, finding an optimal vehicle for subversion within the guise of wise, pious counselors. These three friends unknowingly surrender their voices to the spirit of accusation, transforming theological orthodoxy into a weapon of psychological cruelty. Throughout the dialogical core of the text, their counsel is weighed and found wanting on three distinct fronts: the clinical cruelty of their methodology (Job 5:8, 5:18), the systemic falsehood of their transactional theology (Job 4:5, 4:17–21), and the devastating emotional wreckage their rhetoric inflicts upon Job's fractured psyche (Job 6:2). Rather than offering comfort, they poison the liminal space of his mourning with theological gas lighting. This catastrophic failure of pastoral care receives its ultimate validation in the epilogue, where Yahweh bypasses their sophisticated dogmas and delivers a scathing divine verdict: "I am angry with you . . . because you have not spoken the truth about me" (Job 42:7). In psychological manipulation, the abuser attacks the victim's sanity by systematically altering the environment and denying reality to convince them that they cannot trust their own perception. Conversely, in theological manipulation, the abuser

attacks the victim's assurance of salvation by weaponizing the threat of perdition. The abuser accomplishes this by convincing the victim that they must not trust their own judgment, reframing personal discernment as a sinful rebellion against divine authority.

To execute theological manipulation, abusers resort to a distinct repertoire of manipulative strategies, including:

- a. *Weaponizing forgiveness*: Conditioning spiritual standing on unconditional absolution (e.g., "If you cannot forgive me, your faith is insincere").
- b. *Shifting accountability to divine intent*: Obscuring personal malice through claims of benevolent spirituality (e.g., "I hurt you, but God knows my heart was pure").
- c. *Framing doubt as spiritual failure*: Equating cognitive uncertainty or questioning with a deficient belief system (e.g., "If you doubt, your faith is wavering and unreliably weak").
- d. *Spiritualizing abuse and suffering*: Recasting interpersonal harm as an instrument of divine sanctification (e.g., "God is using me to teach you submission").
- e. *Claiming authority due to exclusive revelation*: Establishing absolute authority by bypassing external accountability (e.g., "God appeared to me in a dream and revealed what you must do").

Ultimately, the efficacy of both psychological and theological manipulation is structurally magnified by isolating the victim. By severing communal ties, the abuser effectively prevents intersubjective validation, leaving the victim unable to cross-reference reality with others.

Job was completely alone. The core tragedy of his suffering lies in a brutal progression from severe grief to intense social trauma. Job initially endures the cosmic loneliness of total loss: stripped of his children, wealth, health, and social standing, he sits physically cast out on a pile of ashes, covered in boils (Job 2:8). For seven days, his friends sit with him in a heavy, suffocating silence (Job 2:13). However, this fragile connection shatters when Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar break their silence. Instead of offering comfort, they weaponize a strict retributive theology—assuming bad things only happen to bad people—and conclude that Job must be a monster. They transform from grieving friends into cruel prosecutors: mocking his innocence, blaming his children's deaths on their own sins (Job 8:4), and inventing fictional crimes to explain his plight (Job 22:5–9). Disfigured, unjustly accused, and abandoned by his inner circle, Job is pushed from simple solitude into a perfect storm of psycho-theological terror.

The inflation of the ego and the great cosmic pivot

To sustain their onslaught, the three dogmatic interlocutors construct a rigid hermeneutic matrix anchored in empirical observation,² ancestral tradition (Job 8:6), and retributive law (Job 11:6). Operating from this defensive theological framework, they insist that Job's unprecedented catastrophe is the direct, mathematical consequence of a hidden, horrific transgression (Job 11:6, 22:4–5), weaponizing their discourse to demand his total submissive repentance (Job 11:13–14, 22:21–30). Job fiercely repudiates this transactional diagnosis, asserting the empirical reality of his own innocence (Job 6:24, 10:7). Interpreting his defense as flagrant hypocrisy and existential pride, the counselors subject Job to a relentless, alternating hail of ideological violence across three exhausting rounds of dialogue (Job 11:3, 15:5–6). Gasping for psychological survival amidst this

theological siege, Job appeals for genuine empathy and ontological justice, only to be met with derision (Job 6:14–15, 12:4, 16:2). It is under the weight of this total interpersonal abandonment that the text reaches its darkest psychological threshold. Exhausted by the endless accusations and blinded by a desperate, suffocating resentment, Job — who had hitherto guarded his blamelessness—finally fractures, crossing into the territory of *hubris* to the malicious delight of the Accuser (Job 16:7–17, 23:2). Driven by an exalted indignation, Job gathers the scattered fragments of his shattered identity; he artificially inflates what is left of his wounded Ego, filling his sense of self with pure defiance to avoid total psychic dissolution. Transitioning from defense to aggressive counter-offensive, he ejects his counselors with scathing contempt, branding them as worthless physicians of lies (Job 13:4–5). Then, turning his gaze to the heavens, Job directs his bitterest indictment toward the throne of God, accusing the Almighty of structural indifference, cosmic injustice, and arbitrary, predatory cruelty (Job 9:22–24, 10:16–17, 19:6–22, 27:2–6, 30:21). Yet, precisely at this catastrophic juncture — at the very instant when the Accuser appears poised to claim a definitive victory over a cursing servant — the architecture of the narrative undergoes a tremendous, convulsive upheaval.

The cry for the heavenly vindicator and the liminal voice

Plunged into a state of absolute, inconsolable grief, Job undergoes a stunning theological metamorphosis: his bitter lamentation suddenly transforms into an ecstatic cry for a heavenly Arbitrator.² In a magnificent display of existential paradox, Job appeals to God against God, anchoring his remaining hope in a living Vindicator—the Hebrew *Goel*—who will ultimately rise from the dust to secure his vindication (Job 19:25). Desperate for an impartial hearing, he demands that this Celestial Witness listen to his case (Job 31:35) and intercede on his behalf, pleading before the Almighty as a man pleads for his companion (Job 16:21). Through this raw, visceral outcry, Job maps out a complex multi-faceted Christological archetype: he begs for a Mediator who is simultaneously his defender (Job 16:21), his legal surety (Job 17:3), and his cosmic redeemer (Job 19:25–27). This agonizing plea does not echo into an empty void. In immediate, narrative response to this cosmic invocation, a dramatic shift occurs within the text’s psychological landscape. *Elihu*, a young and hitherto silent interlocutor who had meticulously scrutinized the entire dialectical warfare, steps out from the shadows of the council (Job 32:3). Literarily, *Elihu* functions as the vital, liminal bridge between human theological failure and divine manifestation. Breaking his silence, he first disrupts the elders’ rigid dogmatism by defending Job against their false moral causality (Job 32:3), then pivots to a grand, poetic defense of the Absolute Truth (Job 32:20–22, 33:10–12). Through *Elihu*’s discourse, the narrative deflates Job’s reactive *hubris* while preserving the majesty of God, systematically preparing the hero’s fractured psyche for the overwhelming reality of the impending storm (Job 34:10–12, 36:1–5, 37:1–24).

The deuteragonist’s intervention: deconstructing the inflated ego

The deuteragonist counselor, *Elihu*, initiates his discourse by rebuking the preceding antagonistic counselors for their profound methodological cruelty and dialectical failure.² Pivoting directly to the suffering protagonist, he reassures Job that his intention is not to inflict further psychological trauma, humbling himself by declaring that he, too, is merely molded from the same existential clay before the eyes of the Creator (Job 33:6–7). Driven by a firm yet compassionate humility-entirely devoid of the sadistic accusations of the elders-*Elihu*

systematically unmask the pride anchoring Job’s heart, exposing the reactive rebellion and manifest sin that have become visibly laid bare before the cosmic assembly (Job 33:8–33, 34:16–17, 34–37). *Elihu* clarifies that Job’s spiritual transgression lies precisely in his absurd, hubristic indictments against the Divine, alongside his petulant demand for cosmic explanations as if they were a structural entitlement (Job 33:8–13, 34:31–32, 35:15–16), effectively attempting to render himself more righteous than God (Job 32:2b). Job’s sin morphs into an intellectualized self-justification, a futile attempt to construct an absolute framework where the Almighty is deemed morally errant so that his own fragile ego may remain vindicated (Job 33:8–13, 34:5, 34:12, 34:32, 34:35–37, 35:2, 35:13). Consequently, *Elihu* implores Job to recognize the catastrophic nature of this defiance, illuminating how it bubbles up from a reservoir of pride and petulance (Job 34:33, 35:7, 9–12, 36:21).

Through this therapeutic confrontation, *Elihu* reveals that God’s ultimate desire is for Job to undergo a profound *repentance*, *metanoia*, and *metamorphosis*—a radical transformation of the heart and mind achieved by opening his eyes to the reality of the divine nature (Job 35:2, 35:14, 36:2–3, 37:14, 37:23–24). The suffering, within *Elihu*’s psychagogical framework, is re-mythologized not as a retributive punishment, but as an agonizing instrument of revelation: “He delivers the afflicted by their affliction and opens their ear by adversity” (Job 36:15). Ultimately, the text demonstrates that Job has sinned grievously against the Divine, both in thought—by harboring distorted, persecutory projections about God’s character—and in word, vociferously casting accusations that label the Creator as a malicious predator, indifferent to innocent pain and structurally unjust in His governance of the cosmos (Job 10:16, 16:7–15, 19:8–13, 21–22, 32:1, 32:2b).

From retribution to restoration: the comparative exegesis of *Elihu*’s intervention

When juxtaposed with the predatory strategy of the antagonistic counselors who preceded him, the therapeutic methodology of the young deuteragonist, *Elihu*, offers a profound epistemological relief. He effectively shifts the narrative matrix from a mechanistic logic of retributive restitution to a transformative paradigm of psychagogical restoration.² While the elder counselors dogmatically insisted that Job must have harbored some catastrophic, hidden transgression in his past to warrant such severe affliction (Job 11:6, 22:4–5)—viciously weaponizing accusations of hypocrisy whenever Job resisted their diagnosis (Job 27:8, 36:13)—*Elihu* fundamentally breaks this causal deadlock. He refuses to trace the genesis of Job’s agony to a past moral failure; instead, he stages an existential intervention in the psychological present. *Elihu* invites Job to recognize that the prolongation of his current torment is fueled by his own petulant pride and the flagrant sins he is committing before the eyes of the cosmic assembly by indicting the Creator of structural indifference and injustice (Job 34:33, 35:7, 9–12, 36:21).

Furthermore, this ideological divide manifests in their divergent cartographies of the Divine. While the original antagonists portrayed a caricature of a capricious, wrathful deity whose cosmic anger must be transactionalized (contractualized, mercenary, commercialized) and appeased through groveling submissiveness (Job 4:9), *Elihu* reconstructs the character of God. He outlines a sovereign entity characterized by absolute justice, fidelity, and benevolence—a Transcendent Reality that demands to be sought for who He truly is: sovereign, righteous, holy, omnipotent, and merciful (Job 34:33, 35:7, 9–12, 36:21). Consequently, where the elders reduced Job’s trauma to the punitive blow of an incensed Judge correcting a presumed

hypocrite (Job 11:6, 13–14, 22:4–5, 21–30), *Elihu* re-mythologizes affliction as a liminal space of revelation. Within this psychagogical framework, suffering is reimagined as a divine concession designed to rupture Job's cognitive blindness, forcing a radical *metanoia* that allows him to dismantle his defensive pride, repent of his reactive *hubris*, and behold the True God (Job 35:2, 14, 36:2–3, 37:14, 23–24). Ultimately, while the three counselors remained pathologically fixated on a phantom past, cruelly torturing the victim with calcified dogmas (Job 11:3, 15:5–6, 15:25–27), *Elihu* engages the sufferer with calm, unyielding firmness. He mirrors Job's present inflation back to him, illuminating the sins born out of his current resentment, and firmly exhorts him to realign his fractured soul with the ontological majesty and fidelity of the Almighty (Job 35:2, 35:14, 36:2–3, 37:14, 23–24).

The therapeutic metamorphosis: *Elihu* and the present self

The young deuteragonist counselor, *Elihu*, decisively rejects the methodology of the elder, antagonistic counselors, who persistently admonished Job to unearth a causal, foundational sin that presumably triggered the liquidation of his estate, the slaughter of his lineage, and the decay of his physical frame.² Instead, operating with the clinical precision of a skilled therapist, *Elihu* invites Job to engage in rigorous and honest self-reflection — to closely interrogate his own verbal declarations and achieve a psychological breakthrough. By means of this internal awakening, Job is urged to confront his own inflated ego and the manifest transgression that remains visible to the cosmic audience, a defiance that chains him to a state of spiritual exile and rebellion against the Creator (Job 35:2, 35:14, 36:2–3, 37:14, 37:23–24). Significantly, *Elihu* absolves Job of any historical accountability for the genesis of his trauma, refusing to attribute the onset of his affliction to a hidden past moral failure. Nor does he pathologize Job as a deceptive hypocrite who desperately clings to a facade of righteousness while feigning an inability to find a past sin sufficient to justify such vast cosmic violence (Job 33:5–7). Instead, the young deuteragonist counselor shifts the therapeutic focus to the experiential present. He guides Job to perceive that the perpetuation of his agonizing torment is fed directly by his current psychological inflation, his defensive arrogance, and the absurd, public indictments he continues to cast against the heavens—destructive behaviors that are actively sustained by his presently exalted heart and unyielding rebellious stance (Job 34:33, 35:7, 35:9–12, 36:21).

The architecture of restorative justice: de-centering the accused

By championing a divine model of restorative justice—in stark contrast to the transactional, retributive framework of human legalism—*Elihu* fundamentally rejects the notion that the liquidation of Job's estate, the annihilation of his lineage, and the decay of his flesh constituted the wrathful punishment of an incensed Deity for some clandestine historical sin.² *Elihu* completely bypasses the elders' compulsion to demand that Job strip away a presumed mask of hypocrisy and unearth a phantom past transgression to secure a superficial pardon (Job 11:13–14, 22:21–30). Instead, steering his therapeutic care with deep humility and emotional temperance, *Elihu* grounds his intervention entirely within the immediate present. His objective is to awaken Job to the empirical reality of his current transgressions: the absurd, hubristic vociferations he is actively launching against the heavens (Job 33:8–13, 34:31–32, 35:15–16), and his conscious decision to harbor a reactive, prideful, and deeply resentful heart (Job 34:33, 35:7, 35:9–12, 36:21). *Elihu* diagnoses that it is precisely this defiant, adversarial posture that feeds Job's present sin and exponentially magnifies the gravity of his suffering (Job 33:8–

13, 34:5, 34:12, 34:32, 35:2, 35:13). Crucially, *Elihu* recognizes that the Transcendent requires no human defense, nor does the cosmic order need validation through human paradigms of liability; consequently, he is utterly uninterested in performing a standard theological apology for God before Job's court (Job 34:33). His clinical interest rests solely in helping Job dissolve his own spiritual cataracts so that he may achieve a dual awakening:

- 1) *Beholding the Divine*: To dismantle his projections and know God as He truly is—an absolute, sovereign, righteous, and omnipotent Reality who demands to be encountered not through human calculations, but in His authentic ontological majesty (Job 35:9–16, 36:1–33, 37:1–24);
- 2) *Beholding the Self*: To experience a definitive psychological breakthrough wherein Job can look into the mirror of his affliction and clearly contemplate his own impoverished condition, his petulant inflation, his systemic rebellion, and the absurdity of his reactive sins (Job 34:3–9).

The psychagogy of the absolute: *Elihu's* asceticism of the ego

By articulating a flawless theology of the Divine character, *Elihu* systematically invites Job to comprehend the overwhelming parameters of God's ontological majesty, omnipotence, and absolute equity, which seamlessly intertwine with His intrinsic mercy and sovereign goodness.² Simultaneously, the deuteragonist forces Job to confront his own creaturely smallness and existential poverty. He demands that the sufferer ruthlessly examine the contours of his own prideful heart, his reactive rebellion, and the catastrophic weight of the persistent sins he is actively committing in the experiential present. Consequently, *Elihu's* discourse acts as a stern pastoral exhortation, urging Job to undergo a radical *metanoia*—to dismantle his defensive inflation, repent of his hubristic projections, and aggressively pursue the Almighty by recognizing Him for who He authentically is (Job 34:3–9, 36:26–28, 37:23–24). Crucially, *Elihu* establishes that this existential realignment operates strictly for Job's benefit, rather than for the benefit of the Divine. God stands entirely unaffected by human behavior, existing beyond the reach of human manipulation or liability: "If you sin, how does that affect God? Even if you sin again and again, what effect will it have on him?" (Job 35:6).

The psychological and theological framework of *Elihu's* care is profoundly refreshing. He implicitly demonstrates a vital systemic truth: although the baseline historical cause of Job's initial tragedy remains shrouded in cosmic mystery, the prolongation of his suffering has mutated into a distinct spiritual pathology. As long as Job remains blind to the transcendent truth of God's nature—and as long as he chooses to remain arrogant, defensive, full of himself, and toxic with resentment in his agony — he will continue to sin egregiously in both cognitive thought and verbal execution. Psychologically, Job sins in thought by generating highly distorted, persecutory projections that reduce the Creator to a sadistic cosmic predator. Dramatically, he sins in word by vociferously weaponizing accusations against the heavens, indicting the Absolute of arbitrary cruelty, treating Him as indifferent to the lacerations of the righteous, and accusing Him of structural injustice for punishing the innocent while facilitating the prosperity of the wicked (Job 10:16, 16:7–15, 19:8–13).

The threshold of theophany: kenosis and the tragic reversal

The young deuteragonist counselor, *Elihu*, illuminates a vital psychagogical truth: the Divine intent is not to incinerate the sufferer,

but to dissolve Job's spiritual cataracts so that he may behold the authentic nature of God and undergo a radical transformation of the heart. To achieve this, *Elihu* introduces a profound archetypal principle of spiritual and psychological dynamics: the only mechanism by which Job can be filled with the transcendent presence of God is to first experience a total *kenosis*—a complete emptying of the self. He must systematically dismantle his defensive inflation, surrender to the absolute sovereignty, goodness, and equity of the Creator, and present himself before the throne with a broken spirit and a contrite, humbled heart.² By structuring his intervention through the elevated lenses of classical drama and theology, *Elihu* mirrors back to Job his flagrant *hubris*—his defensive, petulant inflation—and his *hamartia*—the persistent sin born out of his reactive resentment. Having diagnosed the pathology of the protagonist's psyche, the deuteragonist passionately invites Job into a space of profound *anagnorisis*—a tragic, illuminating recognition of his true creaturely state—which must naturally culminate in a salvific *metanoia*, a complete turning around of his heart and mind. Then, a tense, heavy silence falls over the assembly. Moments after *Elihu* ceases to speak, the horizontal human dialectic reaches its absolute end, and a staggering, cosmic upheaval shatters the narrative landscape (Job 38:1).

Theophany and the sovereign absolution: the dissolution of the cosmic challenge

Erupting from the heart of a violent, tempestuous whirlwind, Yahweh breaks His silence, granting Job a direct, unmediated experience of the divine manifestation — the cosmic *epiphaneia*. Face to face with the whirlwind, the protagonist witnesses the ontological attributes of God exactly as *Elihu* had predicted: absolute sovereignty, unyielding omnipotence, sovereign goodness, and an incomprehensible framework of justice and cosmic equity.² Within this overwhelming theophany, where the structural majesty of the Creator is laid bare, Job undergoes his definitive *anagnorisis*. His cognitive distortions collapse; he achieves a shattering psychological breakthrough, contemplating not only his creaturely smallness and existential poverty but also the minuscule scale of his individual trauma when measured against the infinite architecture of the cosmos (Job 40:3–5). This confrontation with the Transcendent triggers a profound existential sorrow (*lype*) and a radical reorientation of the mind (*metanoia*). This psychological purgation systematically empties his heart of the protective inflation, defensive pride, and toxic resentment that had fueled his rebellion, replacing his shattered ego with a state of pure, submissive humility (Job 40:3–5, 42:1–6). Completely broken yet psychically sober, Job enters into a raw, dialogical *homologia* — a vulnerability-driven confession of his *hamartia*—feeling the very weight of divine sorrow within his own contrite heart (Job 40:4, 42:3–6). Yahweh, who structurally refuses to despise a broken and contrite spirit, accepts this existential surrender. He absolves Job of his reactive transgressions, completely vindicates his integrity before the social collective, and delivers a scathing judgment against the original antagonistic counselors (Job 42:7).

In a magnificent display of restorative justice, the text transitions into a ritual economy of grace: God ordains that Job must now operate as a kinsman-priest, offering sacrificial intercession on behalf of his former tormentors (Job 42:7–8). These three elders had sinned egregiously against the Divine by propagating a fraudulent, mechanistic theology, while simultaneously executing a campaign of systemic psychological cruelty that drove Job to the precipice of spiritual ruin. Exhibiting absolute obedience and a total lack of vindictiveness, Job steps into his sacerdotal role, offering the sacrifices necessary to secure the absolution of his persecutors (Job 42:9). The instant Job acts as an agent of reconciliation for those who

harmed him, the text seals his psychological and physical restoration; Yahweh systematically reverses the trauma inflicted by the adversarial force, returning to Job a double portion of health, progeny, and legacy (Job 42:10–16). The cosmic wager between Good and Evil reaches its grand denouement, culminating in the absolute, silent defeat of the Accuser.

From hearing to seeing: the sacerdotium of the wounded

According to the narrative architecture of the text, up until the arrival of the theophany, Job had known the Almighty only by hearsay—perceiving Him through the calcified, human framework of an implacable Deity who mathematically penalizes transgression with torment and mortality, and whose volatile wrath must be contractually placated through mechanical sacrificial rituals (*poenitentiam*). However, now that his eyes have truly beheld the Divine, Job encounters the Creator in the first person. He discovers a deeply personal God of mercy and restorative absolution, utterly shattering the reductive, retributive legalism that merely operates to punish sin. This is the God of grace, who penetrates the defensive walls of human pride to gaze directly into a contrite heart, inclining His ear to listen, comfort, and rescue the soul the moment it embraces true repentance, vulnerability-driven confession, and the request for pardon. This is the God of forgiveness, who patiently waits for human beings to undergo a total *kenosis*—emptying themselves of ego-inflation—so they may approach the throne with a humbled spirit and extend that very same absolution to their own persecutors.

Crucially, the text delivers a staggering psychological and ethical climax: Job forgives his tormentors and intercedes textually as a priest on their behalf while he is still physically sitting on the ash-heap, his skin completely covered in malignant, festering sores. Having witnessed the overwhelming parameters of God's ontological majesty, the physical weight of his individual suffering suddenly ceases to hold existential dominion over his psyche. Consequently, because Job chose to pursue first the kingdom of God and His righteousness,⁵ the narrative universe realigns itself; everything he had lost under the hands of the adversarial force is systematically restored to him in a double portion—re-establishing his physical health, his familial lineage, and his earthly legacy.

The architecture of the anti-tragedy: a schematic contrast between Greco-Roman fate and the Hebrew drama of Job

The foundational principle of the Retributive Law — wherein a deity acts as the mechanistic executioner of cosmic punishment upon a transgressor — functions as an evolutionary prototype within the human psychological architecture. Within the classical Greco-Roman landscape, this deterministic causality operates as the structural *leitmotif* animating the genre of Tragedy, a supreme manifestation of which is found in Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*, or *Oedipus the King*.³ Similarly, within the Hebrew Bible canon, this retributive framework serves as the governing thematic axis of major legal and covenantal texts, such as the Books of Deuteronomy and Leviticus.^{4,5} Yet, the Book of Job deliberately ruptures this cross-cultural consensus, constituting the definitive anti-tragedy par excellence. Rather than yielding to the iron laws of fatalism, the text creates a unique dramatic landscape where human suffering is stripped of mechanical blame. Among the numerous and profound structural, psychological, and theological divergences that separate the Hebrew masterpiece from the classical tragic worldview, the following thematic contrasts stand as the most compelling:

The Heart's reaction to prosperity: Vain pride (G: *hubris*, L: *petulantia*) versus grateful fidelity (G: *pistis*, L: *fidem*) and sobriety (G: *sophroneo*, L: *sobrietatem*)

In Greco-Roman tragedy: The protagonist invariably begins in a state of immense worldly prosperity but erroneously takes this abundance as justification for self-adulation, vanity, and autonomous pride. Consequently, the tragic hero allows himself to be swept away by a wave of arrogant petulance (G: *hubris*, L: *petulantia*), a psychological inflation that blinds him to his own mortality and ultimately seals his doom.

In the Hebrew Book of Job: The protagonist likewise begins engulfed in unparalleled prosperity, yet he consciously chooses to interpret his abundance as an altar of profound gratitude and unyielding fidelity to the Divine. Instead of falling into ego-inflation, Job carefully cultivates a posture of grateful faithfulness (G: *pistis*, L: *fidem*) and maintains a deeply anchored sense of spiritual and psychological equilibrium (G: *sophroneo*, L: *sobrietatem*).

The effect of the heart's reaction on conduct: Sin (G: *hamartia*, L: *peccatum*) versus virtue (G: *arete*, L: *virtute*)

In Greco-Roman tragedy: The protagonist inevitably commits an initial transgression or fatal flaw (G: *hamartia*, L: *peccatum*), catalyzed directly by an internal state of petulance, envy, covetousness, or lust (G: *hubris*, L: *petulantia*). Upon beholding his own vast prosperity, the tragic hero chooses to gorge his ego on vanity and self-aggrandizement. Inebriated by this unchecked pride and excessive ambition, he loses all trace of moral prudence and existential proportion (G: *sophrosyne*, L: *sobrietas*). Consequently, he embarks on a pattern of systemic, cascading sins (G: *hamartia*, L: *peccatum*) — ruthlessly trampling upon other characters and unlawfully seizing whatever he desires, whether it be wealth, absolute power, social status, or women.

In the Hebrew Book of Job: The protagonist consciously chooses the path of virtue (*arete*, L: *virtute*) and existential sobriety (G: *sophroneo*, L: *sobrietatem*), deciding to remain profoundly humble and faithful. Guided by a steadfast sense of proportion (G: *sophroneo*, L: *sobrietatem*) that thoroughly replaces any trace of vanity, pride, or greed (G: *hubris*, L: *petulantia*), Job actively distances himself from committing sin (G: *hamartia*, L: *peccatum*). Intimately filled with a holy dread and reverence toward the Divine, he preemptively offers burnt offerings as an act of spiritual vigilance—safeguarding his household and preventing any unspoken transgressions committed by his prosperous children from inadvertently arousing the catastrophic wrath and retributive punishment of the Almighty.

Guilt and innocence: Guilt (G: *dolos*, L: *dulus*) versus innocence (G: *hagnotes*, L: *innocentia*)

In Greco-Roman tragedy: An underlying, systemic guilt (G: *dolos*, L: *dulus*) permeates the tragic protagonist. He is fundamentally legally and morally compromised—guilty (G: *enochos*, L: *culpatus*) of existential pride and active transgression. The classical tragic figure operates, by definition, as a petulant, sinful agent whose internal corruption drives the plot toward cosmic retribution.

In the Hebrew Book of Job: In absolute contrast, the dramatic framework of the text establishes a state of radical innocence (G: *hagnotes*, L: *innocentia*) within the protagonist. Job stands completely untainted (G: *hagnos*, L: *innocent*) by the pathologies of pride and structural transgression. He is preserved from the outset as a fundamentally humble, faithful, and morally sound agent.

Divine versus adversarial catalysts: The wrath of the Gods over guilt versus the malice of Satan over innocence

In Greco-Roman tragedy: The protagonist's initial earthly abundance is immediately transformed into a catalyst for self-adulation. Gorged on autonomous pride (G: *hubris*, L: *petulantia*), the hero surrenders to a pattern of cascading transgressions (G: *hamartia*, L: *peccatum*). Through this inflation of the ego, he becomes a petulant, sinful agent who directly offends the cosmic order. Consequently, he falls into acute suffering because he is genuinely guilty, serving as the rightful target of an incensed deity executing a sentence of retributive justice.

In the Hebrew Book of Job: The protagonist treats his worldly abundance as an altar of profound gratitude and covenantal fidelity to the Divine. Anchored in absolute spiritual sobriety (G: *sophroneo*, L: *sobrietatem*) and holy reverence, he maintains his posture as a humble, faithful servant. Job consistently offers preemptive sacrifices that please the Divine, but this very righteousness provokes the wrath of a malicious, envious Accuser — Satan. In a stunning reversal of the classical paradigm, Job is plunged into a crucible of intense suffering not because he is compromised, but precisely because his unyielding innocence defies the cynical skepticism of the adversarial force.

The temporal dynamic of the crisis: The fruits of transgression versus the crucible of preserved integrity

In Greco-Roman tragedy: Throughout the expansive middle acts of the drama, following his initial inflation and moral deviation, the petulant, sinful protagonist spirals steadily into vanity and transgression. Rather than facing immediate punishment, he thrives within a temporary vacuum of cosmic delay, aggressively multiplying his material wealth, consolidating absolute political power, and extracting global glory. He actively gorges his ego on the fleeting pleasures of the world, building an ephemeral empire precisely by weaponizing and exploiting the systemic fruits of his own sin.

In the Hebrew Book of Job: In absolute narrative and structural contrast, once the malicious Accuser unleashes his unprovoked assault, the structural trajectory of the text completely reverses the tragic paradigm. Plunged into sudden poverty and psychosomatic decay precisely because of his exceptional fidelity to the Divine, the humble, faithful protagonist spends the vast majority of the book trapped within an intensifying crucible of agonizing torment. From a psycho-theological perspective, this prolonged cycle of misery functions as a calculated adversarial strategy designed to erode Job's endurance, exhaust his psychological boundaries, and force him into a reactive transgression—thereby validating the Accuser's cynical skepticism and resolving the cosmic wager against the Almighty.

The psychological effect on the audience: Indignation and wrath (G: *orge*, L: *iracundia*) versus cathartic compassion and sorrow

In Greco-Roman tragedy: The petulant, sinful protagonist transforms the theatrical space into an arena of moral friction. Because his unchecked inflation and egregious transgressions directly breach cosmic boundaries, his continuous exploitation of the fruits of his sins—such as hoarding stolen goods, consolidating stolen power, and ruthlessly victimizing the innocent—triggers an acute psychological reaction in the audience. The spectator is consumed by an exasperated indignation and righteous anger (G: *orge*, L: *iracundia*); the collective consciousness of the theater demands that the cosmic order intervene, longing to see the compromised hero severely broken and annihilated by divine retribution.

In the Hebrew Book of Job: The narrative arc operates on an entirely inverse affective frequency, generating a profound existential resonance within the reader. Because the protagonist's baseline humility and sacrificial fidelity please the Divine while actively provoking the malice of the adversarial force, his prolonged physical and social degradation bears a completely different emotional weight. The reader does not feel anger toward Job, but rather an intense, agonizing consternation and deep sorrow. Witnessing a righteous agent suffer precisely because he structurally refuses to compromise his integrity, the audience undergoes a profound cathartic experience, intensely yearning for the Divine to break His silence, shatter the predatory clutches of the Accuser, and deliver a definitive, saving vindication.

The final denouement: the catastrophic fall of foundational guilt versus the sovereign rescue of proven fidelity

In Greco-Roman tragedy: The narrative trajectory culminates in an inescapable cosmic collision. The petulant, sinful protagonist is plunged into absolute ruin and disgrace only at the drama's definitive close, a downward spiral driven entirely by his own moral culpability. His sudden collapse serves as the absolute execution of retributive justice — a punitive strike by an offended deity, responding directly to the web of transgressions the hero wove from his autonomous, hubristic pride.

In the Hebrew Book of Job: The architectural resolution of the text operates as a structural inversion of the tragic catastrophe. The humble, faithful protagonist is systematically rescued from the abyss of affliction and restored to honor only at the narrative's final boundary. This divine deliverance is enacted by a merciful and sovereign Creator who takes profound delight in His servant's integrity. By preserving his spiritual sobriety under acute trauma, Job definitively fractures the Accuser's cynical hypothesis, exposing the absolute failure of the adversarial campaign to force a righteous soul into rebellion.

The ultimate soteriological destiny: the ruin of punitive perdition versus the ascent of restorative salvation

In Greco-Roman tragedy: The structural destiny of the compromised hero concludes in irreversible ruin. After thriving within a temporary vacuum of cosmic delay and gorging himself on the material, political, and social fruits of his transgressions across the entire dramatic arc, the petulant, sinful protagonist is ultimately shattered. The vengeful deity executes a definitive sentence of retributive justice; his artificial empire collapses, his pride is pulverized, and he completely succumbs to an abyss of inescapable perdition.

In the Hebrew Book of Job: The architectural resolution of the anti-tragedy reaches its definitive, triumphant zenith. After spending the vast middle acts of the text enduring the unprovoked bitterness of the adversarial assault—and consistently preserving his core integrity by refusing to succumb to the Accuser's trap — the humble, faithful protagonist is entirely vindicated. He is sovereignly rescued, psychically healed, and socially elevated by a benevolent and righteous Creator. In a magnificent validation of his unyielding humility and proven fidelity, Job transcends the limits of human trauma and ascends to a state of total, double-portion restorative salvation.

The theological and psychological pivot: a crucial rectification of the comparative schema

Having established this structural framework, it is imperative to execute a crucial hermeneutic repair upon the comparative matrix.

To achieve absolute textual and theological precision, one must acknowledge that Job did not remain entirely untainted; in truth, he sinned. When relentlessly prodded and pushed to his psychological boundaries by the cruel, ideological gas lighting of his antagonistic counselors, Job's endurance finally fractured. At a definitive threshold of the poetic dialogues, he allowed his shattered ego to inflate with a reactive, petulant arrogance, crossing the line into hubris and sinning directly against the Almighty by fundamentally questioning His sovereign goodness, cosmic justice, and absolute power. Consequently, this systemic fracture entirely transforms the ultimate meaning of the anti-tragedy. Job's final salvation, physical restoration, and spiritual elevation are not transactional rewards paid out in exchange for his own unyielding attributes of humility and flawless fidelity; rather, they are the sovereign, unmerited outputs of God's absolute mercy. While the Greco-Roman tragedy collapses under the weight of an uncompromised retributive law, the Hebrew masterpiece resolves itself through an economy of grace, demonstrating that the Transcendent restoration of a broken soul breaks the boundaries of human merit.

The Book of Job: a prototype of the violation of the non-maleficence principle (L: *primum non nocere*) and iatrogenic mental disorder as a therapeutic sequel to counseling (The EBZ Effect) — Seminal implications for clinical practice

The Book of Job operates not merely as the definitive classical anti-tragedy par excellence, but also as a radical, subversive counterpoint to the deeply entrenched retributive traditions found within its own cultural matrix, specifically the covenantal frameworks of Deuteronomy and Leviticus.^{4,5} The narrative forcefully demonstrates that human suffering can erupt from existential variables entirely decoupled from personal sin—originating, in Job's unique case, from a cosmic wager between the Divine and the adversarial force of which the protagonist remains completely unaware. Crucially, however, the text shifts its focus to reveal how raw trauma is actively prolonged and exponentially aggravated through the systematic inoculation of erroneous, counterproductive dogmas during a failed counseling process. When a spiritual counselor harbors an inflexible, dogmatic belief that suffering is invariably a mathematical, punitive consequence of transgression, they risk forcibly injecting this toxic causal link into the patient's cognitive belief system. This ideological inoculation misdirects the sufferer, driving them to pursue an existential solution in the exact location where it cannot be found. If the patient, after exhausting their psychological resources in a futile search for hidden guilt, ultimately recognizes that the counselor's interpretation is fundamentally fraudulent, a dangerous clinical dynamic emerges. Threatened in his pride and professional authority, the counselor shifts from guidance to aggression, reflexively pathologizing the patient by accusing him of hypocrisy, pride, and denial. Consequently, through successive rounds of cruel, coercive confrontation disguised as pastoral care, the counselor drives the patient into a state of absolute exasperation and existential despair—all under the malignant guise of breaking the patient's psychological resistance.

The dynamics of theo-psychological terrorism: clinical rupture and the iatrogenic crescendo

Within the matrix of acute psychosomatic and spiritual trauma, this adversarial tug-of-war executed by the counselor against the patient—driven by an institutional compulsion to immobilize the sufferer and force total ideological surrender—can paralyze the patient's remaining agency. In its most destructive manifestations,

this dynamic suffocates the therapeutic alliance, oversteering and corroding the psychological boundaries of the sufferer until the diagnostic thread snaps entirely. The catastrophic consequence is a traumatic clinical rupture and absolute abandonment of treatment, a systemic breakdown vividly illustrated by Job's ultimate explosive rebellion. Under this coercive pressure, frustration and existential exasperation accumulate exponentially, triggering acute spikes of psychological tension that eventually stabilize at elevated plateaus. This state rapidly mutates into a chronic, toxic baseline characterized by pervasive psychological wear, clinical burnout, and profound depression. This methodological failure locks the patient into a vicious, self-perpetuating circuit of obsessive-compulsive anxiety and severe depression. The resulting psychological descent spirals through a devastating crescendo: shifting from repressed anger to volatile revolt, systemic rebellion, outward aggression, and crippling guilt, which in turn breeds acute anxiety, existential anguish, paralyzing fear, behavioral compulsions, and total emotional exhaustion. Ultimately, this leads to a state of profound psychic prostration, only to trigger a renewed, cyclical outbreak of explosive rage.

When diagnosing the structural architecture of these destructive belief systems and their subsequent clinical outcomes, a rigorous, Confucian-style rectification of names acts as an essential epistemological antidote.^{6,23} The foundational tenet of Confucius's doctrine of the rectification of names (Chinese [C]: *zhèngmíng* [正名]) holds that social order, morality, and systemic justice can only survive when language accurately mirrors ontological reality. If a title, authority role, or moral concept becomes decoupled from actual conduct, language breaks down, semantic boundaries collapse, truth is obscured, and psychological exploitation thrives. When applied to theo-psychological manipulation (commonly termed theological gaslighting), this classical philosophical framework serves as an intellectual scalpel. It systematically slices through spiritual doublespeak by forcing weaponized vocabulary back to its honest, baseline definitions.

Specifically, the rectification of names deconstructs the semantic traps utilized in theo-psychological abuse across three major ideological fronts:

- 1) The trap of weaponized forgiveness:** When an abuser demands immediate absolution by claiming that a refusal to forgive signals a deficient faith, the doctrine allows the victim to separate spiritual virtue from institutional impunity. The victim can accurately reframe the situation: Forgiveness does not equate to the erasure of structural or interpersonal accountability.
- 2) The trap of shifted divine accountability:** When an abuser attempts to obscure interpersonal harm by nesting personal malice within claims of benevolent divine intent, the framework restores causal responsibility. Because cosmic justice requires a strict alignment between outward conduct and objective words, the victim can assert that human agents remain entirely accountable for the tangible consequences of their actions.
- 3) The trap of exclusive revelation:** When an abuser claims absolute, non-negotiable spiritual authority based on private dreams or unilateral revelations, the doctrine realigns authority with ethics. In the Confucian tradition, legitimate authority is derived exclusively from active benevolence, not from structural titles or unverifiable metaphysical claims. Consequently, when a practitioner's behavioral reality directly contradicts their stated values, critical doubt is no longer pathologized as a spiritual failure. Instead, it is recognized as a rational, protective response to a fraudulent ethical claim. The rectification of

names systematically dismantles the deleterious, weaponized dogmas that fuel the theo-psychological terrorism inflicted by ecclesiastical or lay practitioners whose interventions are marked by deficient training and a punitive, inclement disposition. Without this critical semantic deconstruction, clinical counseling remains hopelessly anchored in a shallow, defensive orthodoxy that reduces acute human agony to a mathematical penalty for historical guilt, inevitably trapping the sufferer in a clinical dead end.

The architecture of iatrogenic trauma: Cognitive sequelae and the deconstruction of resilience

When the healer (G: *iatrós* [ἰατρός], L: *medicus*) inadvertently causes trauma, injury, and sequelae due to malpractice or negligence, these are said to be iatrogenic, that is, caused inadvertently by medical treatment, a physician, or a diagnostic procedure. By the same token, *iatrogenic spiritual trauma* may result from theo-psychological manipulation by a spiritual leader, a physician of the soul meant to bring healing, moral clarity, and comfort. When the healer employs psychological and theo-psychological manipulation techniques to try to force a cure during therapy, that "therapy" itself becomes the source of the disease, especially when it compromises the ability to discern and judge. Mirroring the structural trajectory of the Job narrative, contemporary clinical practice frequently encounters patients who arrive at therapy already compromised by a history of profoundly traumatic, malevolent counseling that has vastly exacerbated their baseline pathology. This specific classification of clinical trauma often leaves behind pervasive cognitive, emotional, and psychic sequelae—systemic anomalies and complications that linger long after the cessation of the destructive intervention, introducing profound psychological distortions that the patient did not manifest prior to treatment. While physical and social lacerations typically predate the clinical encounter, the introduction of a traumatic, weaponized counseling strategy actively inflicts an intense stratum of emotional and spiritual agony. This iatrogenic imposition functions to drastically compound the patient's existing physical and social vulnerabilities, severely deconstructing their psychological architecture and depleting the vital reserves of resilience they had possessed up to that threshold.

By operational definition, these persistent, post-treatment complications constitute classic paradigms of iatrogenic sequelae—disorders directly engineered by the practitioner or the therapeutic framework itself. Within conventional medicine, this phenomenon is widely recognized through surgical errors or pharmacological toxicity; for instance, the chronic administration of first-generation antipsychotics can trigger tardive dyskinesia, a severe neurological movement disorder characterized by involuntary, repetitive facial grimacing and muscle contractions. Just as tardive dyskinesia inflicts a highly visible, physically devastating toll that completely dismantles the patient's social and interpersonal life, the iatrogenic sequelae of dogmatic, predatory counseling—the *EBZ Effect*—inflict an equally crippling, invisible paralysis upon the human spirit, locking the sufferer into a feedback loop of chronic trauma and existential alienation. Such iatrogenic effects of bad psychotherapy have been well documented in psychology.²⁴⁻³⁶

Theo-psychological iatrogenesis: conceptual framework and semantic deconstruction

1) Definition and etiology

Theo-psychological iatrogenesis denotes the systematic induction of psychological trauma, personality fragmentation, and acute cognitive destabilization within an individual, precipitated directly

by the manipulative application of theological doctrines and spiritual authority by a trusted ecclesiastical figure or religious institution.

2) The core paradox of the iatrogenic link

The fundamental clinical paradox of this phenomenon lies in the structural inversion of the therapeutic relationship: the suffering agent is systematically victimized by an adversarial force operating under the guise of a spiritual healer, guide, or therapist. Instead of facilitating psychological restoration, emotional integration, or soteriological peace, the practitioner deploys covert manipulative techniques designed to fracture the victim's core self-trust.

Within this perverted framework, the abuser exploits classical psychological mechanisms—specifically under the pretext of fostering therapeutic transference and mobilizing the patient's cathectic investment (G: *cathexis* [κάθεξις], L: *investitura*)—to systematically dismantle the victim's agency. This calculated subversion of care deliberately cultivates absolute relational dependence, psychological heteronomy, and profound, enduring pathology.

3) Zhèngmíng as a catalyzing mechanism for sōphrosynē

To counteract this clinical trajectory, the classical doctrine of the rectification of names (C: *zhèngmíng* [正名]) serves as an essential epistemological framework for restoring equilibrium, temperance, moderation, sobriety (G: *sōphrosynē* [σωφροσύνη], L: *sobrietas*)—the state of cognitive equilibrium, self-regulation, and sound-minded clarity. The utility of *zhèngmíng* lies in its capacity to rigorously expose the linguistic delta, or semantic divergence, separating an actor's nominal role from their objective functional behavior:

- a. **The nominal role:** The idealized, socially validated title claimed by the practitioner (e.g., shepherd, benevolent guide, pastoral counselor).
- b. **The functional behavior:** The measurable, toxic reality enacted by the practitioner (e.g., narcissistic controller, coercive exploiter, psychological predator).

4) The taxonomy of linguistic subversion

Theo-psychological iatrogenesis relies fundamentally upon systematic linguistic subversion. The manipulative architecture requires a weaponized misalignment of vocabulary; wherein pathological dynamics are euphemistically rebranded as spiritual virtues or advanced therapeutic milestones. Through the lens of *zhèngmíng*, these semantic inversions are decoded as follows. Induced social isolation is rebranded as “sanctification” or Jungian “individuation”. Objective critical reason is dismissed as “cynical pathological rationalization”. Rational objection is weaponized and rebranded as “psychopathological resistance”. Systematic undermining of autonomy and fostering of weak dependency is rebranded as holy detachment and spiritual wholeness. Unconditional submission to coercion and institutional compliance are mystified as sublime longsuffering meekness and obedient temperance. Total surrender to systemic irrationality is rebranded as “transcendent faith”.

By systematically stripping away these euphemistic masks, the rectification of names neutralizes the semantic doublespeak of theo-psychological iatrogenesis, providing the sufferer with the objective diagnostic vocabulary necessary to reclaim their cognitive autonomy and break the cycle of institutional dependence.

The EBZ Effect: Ancient foundations of clinical malpractice and the rhetoric of worthless healers

Drawing directly from the structural and psychological wreckage of this ancient text, we can formally conceptualize the post-treatment clinical trauma inflicted upon the protagonist as the *EBZ Effect*. Named after the antagonistic triad of Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar, this phenomenon represents one of the earliest documented cases of an iatrogenic mental disorder within world literature, resulting directly from predatory, incompetent, and spiritually abusive interventions. The clinical reality of this abuse is explicitly diagnosed by the patient himself. Job openly rejects his interlocutors, stripping them of their pastoral authority and categorizing them as cruel, incompetent practitioners whose methods vastly compound his baseline misery. Following a grueling, torturous cycle of theological gas lighting across the dialogue rounds,² Job executes a violent rupture with his counselors, famously branding them as “worthless physicians” (Job 13:4). In this remarkable display of patient self-advocacy, Job completely deconstructs their therapeutic framework, dismissing their calcified retributive orthodoxy as nothing more than empty, vain platitudes that utterly fail to align with empirical facts (Job 12:4–6). He exposes the structural malpractice of their methodology, indicting them for pathologizing innocence and projecting hidden guilt onto a righteous agent. Furthermore, Job condemns their condescending, asymmetrical stance—the elitist compulsion to lecture a trauma victim from a position of absolute moral superiority while offering zero ontological value. Admonishing them to maintain absolute silence (Job 13:1–12), Job bypasses their toxic mediation entirely to demand an unmediated audience with the Almighty. In a final, striking reversal of their legalistic paradigms, he warns these “worthless physicians” that the Divine will ultimately execute a severe punitive judgment against them for weaponizing lies under the fraudulent guise of defending God (Job 13:7–11).

The iatrogenic breakdown: The EBZ Effect as the catalyst for spiritual rupture

The severity of the iatrogenic mental disturbance inflicted upon Job via this catastrophic intervention—the “EBZ Effect”—plunged the patient into an inescapable psychological corner. Exhausted by their pathologizing methodology and having already vocalized an ardent desire for death, Job was left with no clinical alternative but to forcefully demand his counselors' absolute silence.³ He stripped them of their status, branding them as epistemologically ignorant (Job 12:4–6), functionally worthless (Job 13:1–19), and legally deserving of severe divine retribution for their theological malpractice (Job 13:7–11). By executing this violent interpersonal rupture, Job completely dismantled a clinical relationship characterized by systematic frustration—a toxic technique deployed by the elders to break what they dogmatically misdiagnosed as the patient's analytical resistance. This defense mechanism was only weaponized after Job repeatedly begged them to cease their ceaseless torment (Job 19:2–5). He fiercely indicted them for their utter lack of empathy and cruel unmercifulness (G: *aneleos* [ἀνέλεις], *anelemon* [ἀνελεῖμων], L: *sine misericordia*) (Job 6:27) and their hollow, sterile counsel (Job 6:21, 24, 16:2–4, 21:34). When solemn, structural rebukes failed to halt their onslaught (Job 13:4–13), the patient weaponized the language of despair, targeting them with the sharpest arrows of biting irony and scathing sarcasm (Job 12:2, 26:2–4). Ultimately, the multi-round treatment inflicted by these predatory practitioners was so

virulently cruel that it achieved a devastating, extraordinary feat—one that even Satan, the chief Accuser, had utterly failed to accomplish in the cosmic prologue. Where raw physical ruin, the execution of his lineage, and somatic decay could not break Job's integrity, the systematic psychological and theological abuse of the *EBZ* counseling process succeeded. It shattered the hero's psychological boundaries, driving him from suicidal ideation into active arrogance and insolence (G: *hubris* [ὑβρις], L: *insolentia, contumelia*), forcing him to finally sin against the Divine by vociferously accusing the Almighty of arbitrary cruelty and cosmic injustice.

The genesis of teratogenic counseling: the metamorphosis of the iatrogenic monster

This narrative threshold stands as the primeval case of an iatrogenic mental disturbance structurally inflicted by bad counselors—the absolute historical prototype of all resounding failures within the history of therapeutic intervention. The patient's radical revolt against his interlocutors, violently crystallized in his defensive counter-accusation branding them as “worthless physicians”,² is fundamentally anchored in the profound spiritual and psychological defeat he suffered before them. Job's rage stems from the reality that, under the intense weight of the *iatrogenic madness* to which they systematically induced him, his psychological boundaries finally dissolved, causing him to yield to temptation and sin against the Divine in the throes of absolute despair. Consequently, the catastrophic feat accomplished by these antagonistic elders constitutes the prototypical violation of the bioethical principle of non-maleficence: *primum non nocere*—first, do no harm—within clinical and pastoral counseling. Contemporary manifestations of this destructive violation remain pervasively present within modern spiritual and psychological care. A vivid paradigm is found in psychiatric patients whose acute hallucinations are dogmatically misdiagnosed as demonic possession, and who are subsequently admonished to exhibit “enough faith” to manifest a symptomatic cure. These vulnerable individuals are severely lacerated by the active inoculation of these self-replicating, toxic interpretations, which unleash a deeply *teratogenic psychological* effect upon their fragile consciousness.

When patients are coerced into believing that the persistence of their psychiatric hallucinations is an empirical signature of their own deficient faith—and that this presumptive guilt has already sealed their eternal damnation to an abyss of infinite torment—they undergo what can be structurally defined as the Teratogenic Effect of Metamorphosis. This psychological deconstruction mirrors the profound alienation captured by Franz Kafka in his literary masterpiece *The Metamorphosis*. Victims bitten by this strand of weaponized *theo-psychological terrorism* experience a deep psychic fragmentation; they feel as though they have been infected by a predatory, vampiric entity that has contaminated their minds with the contagion of madness and condemned them hopelessly to perdition. Subjected to this iatrogenic trauma, patients experience a catastrophic shift in their self-schema: they begin to view themselves as infernal monsters, actively transmuted into a more grotesque creature with every subsequent hallucination—each psychic symptom now twisted by the counselor's dogma to serve as absolute, empirical proof of their own irreversible damnation.

The coercive inoculation: Exploiting ego-dystonia and the path to clinical intervention

Crude or poorly trained spiritual practitioners often execute these dogmatic inoculations with a precise, malicious intent: to weaponize existential terror. By inducing profound panic within the sufferer,

these counselors seek to break psychological autonomy and forcefully maximize the patient's compliance with whatever “spiritual treatment” they prescribe. While this ideological injection successfully renders the psychiatric hallucinations acutely ego-dystonic—driving the horrified patient into an exhaustive, desperate cycle of compliance at all costs—it remains completely ineffective in managing the biological frequency or intensity of the clinical symptoms. In fact, this coercive approach almost invariably triggers a severe escalation of the baseline pathology. Left with shattered coping mechanisms, the patient is plunged into an abyss of atrocious suffering, acute psychomotor agitation, chronic insomnia, debilitating panic attacks, profound burnout, and severe depression, frequently culminating in suicidal ideation or attempts. At this catastrophic clinical threshold, the iatrogenic damage can no longer be managed in a pastoral setting; the patient must be restrained through emergency psychiatric hospitalization and subjected to intensive psychopharmacological intervention utilizing high-potency antipsychotics, anxiolytics, and antidepressants.

The therapeutic deconstruction: *Elihu* as the archetype of counter-inoculation

Faced with the wreckage of such abusive interventions, the skilled clinical or pastoral counselor is confronted with a profound therapeutic challenge. The practitioner must establish an unyielding, sophisticated rapport capable of securing the patient's trust even at the absolute zenith of a psychiatric or spiritual crisis. This clinical alliance serves as an essential bridge, allowing the counselor to carefully penetrate a cognitive system that has been systematically contaminated by self-destructive, teratogenic interpretations. The primary objective of this intervention is not to engage in horizontal argumentation, but to weaken, dismantle, and deactivate these toxic dogmas from within the patient's own subjective framework. Step by step, the therapist carefully replaces the weaponized ideology with an articulated, healthy system of meaning—one that resonates deeply with the patient's lived experience and empowers them to reframe their symptoms through a redemptive, non-punitive lens. This restorative deconstruction directly mirrors the magnificent therapeutic intervention executed by the young deuteragonist, *Elihu*. By refusing to validate the punitive, historical guilt demanded by the elder counselors, *Elihu* penetrated Job's fractured psyche, dissolved his persecutory projections, and gracefully prepared his mind to survive the overwhelming reality of the Divine Voice.

Cognitive restructuring within sacred frameworks: REBT, epistemic rigor, and basal religious systems

Within the clinical architecture of Albert Ellis's Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT), the cognitive trajectory remains mathematically precise: irrational or erroneous beliefs inevitably generate distorted interpretations, which subsequently catalyze disruptive affect and chronic emotional disturbance^{37–39}. When operating at the critical intersection of clinical psychology and theology, REBT can—and must—be executed with an unyielding respect for the structural baseline of the patient's specific religious worldview. Preserving the authentic, foundational dogmas of the patient's faith requires the clinician to isolate the alien, malignant distortions that have been artificially inoculated onto that sacred framework. This diagnostic sorting process must intentionally utilize the internal logic and linguistic nuances of the patient's own basal religion. Because false beliefs and toxic theological interpretations interact uniquely with different baseline structures, they generate distinct spiritual and psychological pathologies across diverse religious traditions. A singular cognitive distortion will harm a patient

rooted in covenantal monotheism in a fundamentally different manner than one operating within an Eastern or mystical matrix.

Conversely, distinct baseline religious systems offer the clinician highly specific, culturally rich resources for cognitive dispute and therapeutic leverage. Consequently, the contemporary practitioner must possess an exhaustive, sophisticated literacy regarding global religious traditions. This erudition is essential to successfully discriminate between the healthy, core elements of a patient's basal faith—which must be structurally preserved and validated—and the iatrogenic, parasitic distortions that damage both the individual's psyche and the integrity of their own faith tradition. By executing this precise clinical demarcation, the therapist can safely rectify the harmful cognitive intrusions while systematically honoring the foundational tenets of the patient's religion. Ultimately, a comparative analysis of these spiritual structures reveals that different baseline religious belief systems possess localized zones of psychological vulnerability, rendering them highly susceptible to specific types of cognitive distortions, while simultaneously harboring profound, latent reserves of resilience against others.

The epistemic imperative of cross-cultural theology in clinical practice: REBT, liminality, and internal resilience

To operate at the highest standards of clinical efficacy and bioethical responsibility, therapists must dedicate themselves to the systematic study of how diverse religious traditions conceptualize and process human suffering. Capovilla⁴⁰ analyzes the main traditions in psychology and theology regarding the problem of suffering, and the ways in which therapeutic counseling strategies derive from the intersection of the causal attribution models assumed by therapists and the theological faith systems held by their patients. This epistemic imperative becomes absolute when treating patients engulfed in acute, existential agony—trauma that ruptures organic and social boundaries and expands, by the patient's own urgent demand, into the spiritual and theological dimensions of faith. This profound clinical necessity manifests across highly specific, liminal thresholds: patients confronted with the sudden or imminent death of a foundational loved one, or those paralyzed by the diagnosis of their own impending mortality. It emerges when individuals experience shocking, sudden hallucinatory episodes and desperately seek a matrix of meaning to navigate their terrifying new symptoms. It is vividly present when patients afflicted by unremitting physical pain undergo a secondary, severe cognitive distress regarding the cosmological and theological purpose of their lacerations. Most critically, it is seen in the aftermath of catastrophic disasters—amputations, the liquidation of estates, or the sudden annihilation of entire families—where broken, depressed, and deeply traumatized individuals demand to know what hidden moral failure caused a sovereign God to unleash such devastating violence upon them.

Within the framework of Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT), ignoring these spiritual dynamics represents a catastrophic failure of clinical strategy. Conversely, an intimate, sophisticated literacy regarding the patient's basal belief system provides the therapist with a vital opportunity to “turn the tables” against iatrogenic trauma. It allows the clinician to harness the internal mechanics of the patient's own faith to fuel cognitive restructuring and psychological realignment.

True clinical empathy and ethical practice demand that the therapist work directly *within* the infrastructure of the patient's belief system. By operating internally, the practitioner can precisely isolate the latent theological resources and healthy dogmas that

must be activated to maximize well-being, while simultaneously identifying and neutralizing the toxic, parasitic vulnerabilities that exacerbate despair. This meticulous, culturally informed approach is indispensable for preserving professional ethics and maximizing the efficacy of REBT when treating individuals whose suffering has been hijacked by self-destructive, weaponized dogmas of dubious theological origin. By systematically activating the intrinsic, resilient assets preserved within the patient's specific faith system, the therapist acts not as an external assailant to their worldview, but as a catalyst for restoration—mirroring the profound, trauma-informed psychagogy of *Elihu* against the devastating, iatrogenic paralysis of the *EBZ* Effect.

The internal rectification of sacred texts: Trans-religious applications of the Joban paradigm

An in-depth comprehension of the patient's basal belief system equips the contemporary therapist to execute a sophisticated, internally driven intervention, utilizing the specific dogmatic resources inherent to that sacred framework to surgically extract destructive cognitive distortions. Left untreated, these irrational intrusions lodge within the patient's worldview like cognitive parasites, draining psychological vitality while systematically fracturing the integrity of the patient's own faith. This process embodies the classic Confucian rectification of names (*zhengming*), operating here as a vital epistemological axis instrumental to both clinical psychic restoration and macro-social peace. By maintaining an unyielding respect for the foundational tenets of each individual's faith, the clinician can effectively neutralize the toxic theological distortions that actively fuel existential suffering. Accordingly, a patient rooted in the Hebrew tradition who experiences profound spiritual distress can be engaged via the rich philological and textual resources of the *Tanakh* (Hebrew Bible). A patient of the Christian faith can be systematically counseled through the structural lens of the *Holy Bible*, while a patient adhering to Islam can be met directly within the sacred parameters of the Qur'an. For these three distinct Abrahamic traditions, the Book of Job stands as an invaluable, universally revered foundation for the therapeutic processing of acute trauma. This cross-cultural convergence is structurally anchored in canonical history: the text serves as a core component of both the Jewish *Ketuvim* and the Christian *Old Testament*, while within Islamic theology, the narrative of Job is preserved with deep prophetic reverence.

In the Qur'an, the biblical figure of Job is known by his Arabic name, Ayyub (أيُّوب). He is recognized as a chosen prophet of God who fiercely resisted Satan's temptation, standing as the ultimate paradigm of steadfast patience (*sabr*) and unwavering faith during times of intense suffering and tribulation. The text addresses his trials across the 4th, 21st, and 38th Surahs. For example, in Surah Al-Anbiya, the narrative declares: “*And [remember] Job, when he cried to his Lord, 'Suffering has afflicted me and You are the Most Merciful of the merciful.' We answered him, removed his suffering, and restored his family to him along with more like them, as an act of grace from Us and a reminder for all who worship Us*” (Qur'an 21:83–84).⁴¹

The Qur'an details his narrative arc and prophetic status exactly four times across these specific chapters:

- 1) Surah An-Nisa (Qur'an 4:163): Establishes his chronological placement within the authentic lineage of divine revelation: “*We have sent revelation to you [Muhammad] as We sent revelation to Noah and the prophets after him, and as We sent revelation to Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, and the Tribes, Jesus, Job, Jonah, Aaron, and Solomon—and We gave David the Psalms*”.
- 2) Surah Al-An'am (Qur'an 6:84): Highlights Job as an integral

part of Abraham's righteous, guided, and divinely rewarded descendants: "And We gave him Isaac and Jacob, each of whom We guided, and Noah We had guided before, and among his descendants were David, Solomon, Job, Joseph, Moses, and Aaron—in this way We reward those who do good".

- 3) Surah Al-Anbiya (Qur'an 21:83–84): Provides a direct account of his existential cry during affliction and the subsequent, immediate restoration of his health and household by the Almighty.
- 4) Surah Sad (Qur'an 38:41–44): Preserves the most detailed description of his psychosomatic trial, detailing the adversarial role of Satan, the divine command to strike the ground to release a restorative, healing spring, and his ultimate commendation as an excellent, steadfast servant of God.

Consequently, this canonical alignment firmly establishes the ethical lawfulness, trans-religious validity, and clinical utility of the Book of Job as a directed bibliotherapeutic adjunct. This strategy possesses immense statistical relevance when evaluating global demographics. Contemporary data indicates that roughly 84% to 85% of the global population maintains a formal religious affiliation. Christianity stands as the world's largest religious demographic with approximately 2.52 billion adherents, while Islam constitutes the second-largest and fastest-growing global faith, encompassing between 1.9 and 2 billion believers. When paired with the global Jewish population of approximately 15.8 to 16.5 million individuals, this unifies a massive global population of over 4.5 billion people who share a common cultural, canonical, and theological reverence for the figure of Job. By utilizing this shared sapiential masterpiece, the contemporary therapist can execute cognitive restructuring without violating the patient's internal epistemic boundaries—offering a powerful, textually validated antidote to theo-psychological terrorism and clinical isolation.

The concluding synthesis: The sacerdotium of the wounded and the limits of ego-inflation – the dialectic of trauma, the dynamics of restorative care, and the epilogue of grace

Within the framework of clinical and spiritual care, when a patient facing acute psychosomatic trauma, systemic loss, or imminent mortality spontaneously questions the goodness, equity, and omnipotence of the Creator, the therapeutic focus must adapt. For a significant chronological window, the counseling process may—and often must, by the patient's own urgent demand—center entirely upon their raw indictments against the heavens. The sufferer must be permitted to fully articulate their existential rage against God's apparent insensitivity, indifference, structural injustice, predatory cruelty, or perceived weakness in the face of unremitting agony, catastrophic illness, or imminent mortality. When exercised with deep clinical sensitivity and unconditional solidarity, a frank, collaborative dialogue can completely reverse this trajectory. By carefully analyzing the external and internal variables that actively maintain and magnify this existential agony, the therapist can dismantle the parasitic structures of erroneous beliefs, distorted interpretations, and self-sabotaging cognitive scripts. This interdisciplinary inquiry establishes how the narrative architecture of the Book of Job preserves the definitive foundations for a structural critique of antagonistic counseling—a destructive methodology that borders on systemic *theo-psychological terrorism*. The original triad of bad counselors subjected the protagonist to a merciless, unyielding persecution (G: *diogmos* [διωγμός], L: *persecutio*), actively generating an artificial layer of profound tribulation (G: *thlipsis* [θλίψις], L: *tribulatio*) and a

paralyzing state of existential distress (G: *stenochoria* [στενοχωρία], L: *angustia*).

The anatomy of the ego-breakdown

Driven to the absolute precipice of psychic collapse by these constant provocations, Job underwent a massive psychological shift. To protect his shattered boundaries from total annihilation, his repressed grief erupted into an immense, defensive wrath. This surge of anger effectively served as a reactive coping mechanism: it straightened his spine, broke his depressive prostration, and forced him to transition from passive victimhood to an aggressive counter-offensive. Theologically and psychologically, this internal mobilization possessed the potential to manifest as a constructive, re-organizing force — a holy indignation that preserves structural boundaries without crossing into moral failure ("Be angry and do not sin; let not the sun go down on your anger, neither give place to the devil,"⁷⁵ Yet, under the relentless weight of iatrogenic trauma, Job's ire failed to maintain this sacred equilibrium. His indignation degraded into injured pride, distilled from an ego that had been systematically ripped to shreds by his interlocutors. Succumbing to the bitter gall of his wounded self-schema, Job fractured. Unhinged by a defiant, mutinous wrath, the patient roared vitriol, bellowed insults, and hurled scathing imprecations directly into the faces of his persecutors. He did not merely defend his innocence; he allowed his consciousness to be inebriated by the sweet, venomous pleasure of vengeance, aggressively mocking the clinical incompetence of his counselors, branding them as worthless healers, and casting them out of his presence with unyielding contempt.

The peacock's inflation and the cosmic reversal

Gorged on this newfound arrogance, Job actively indulged in a dangerous cognitive elation (G: *typhoo* [τυφώω], L: *superbiam elatus*), becoming intensely puffed up with inflated pride (G: *physisosis* [φυσίωσις], L: *inflatio*). To compensate for his physical degradation on the ash-heap, he retreated into an intellectualized defense mechanism, viewing his intellect as vastly superior, thinking too highly of himself (G: *hypselophroneo* [ὑψηλοφρονέω], L: *superbe sapere*) to the pompous dogmas of his tormentors. Ensobered by his own rhetoric and excessive self-exaltation (G: *hyperairo* [ὑπεραίρω], L: *extollere, superexaltare*), he began to show off petulantly like a peacock (G: *hyperephania* [ὑπερηφανία], L: *superbia, arrogantia, fastidium*), attempting to drag the Transcendent into a human legal court and force the Almighty to validate his righteousness on his own terms. This tragic inflation highlights the razor-thin boundary separating a constructive, mobilizing anger from a carnal, chaotic rage. It is one thing to harness a righteous indignation that gathers the shattered pieces of a broken psyche, reorganizes them into a functional whole, restores the form lost to the amorphous, and regains its moral plumb line and balance. It is a fundamentally different, catastrophic deviation to lapse into a virulent, defiant hatred that inflates the ego with the deceptive pleasure of rebellion—mutating the victim into an image of the persecutor, and striking back with the exact same cruelty that had caused the original trauma.

Ultimately, the Book of Job demonstrates that human merit can never serve as the currency of true restoration. Job's final deliverance from iatrogenic madness is not a transactional reward for an unbroken, flawless fidelity; it is a sovereign gift from a personal God of absolute mercy. By surrendering his defensive inflation through the therapeutic preparation of *Elihu* and the unmediated majesty of the Whirlwind, Job achieves a total emptying of himself (G: *kenosis* [κένωσις], L: *exinanitio, evacuatio, expoliatio, inanitas, humiliatio*). Sitting in the dust, still covered in festering sores, he extends absolution to the very

men who fractured his soul. It is precisely within this ritual economy of grace, through the *sacerdotium* of the wounded, that the cosmic wager reaches its grand denouement—sealing the absolute defeat of the Accuser and demonstrating that divine restoration breaks the boundaries of human limitation.

The pathological metamorphosis: Inflation and the peacock's defiance

Job actively developed a taste for his newfound arrogance and defensive self-exaltation. He indulged in a toxic cognitive elation and blind pride (G: *typhoo* [τυφῶω], L: *superbiam elatus, insolescere, superbia inflatus*), feeling intensely puffed up with pride (G: *physisosis* [φυσίωσις], L: *inflatio, elatio, tumor*) as a psychological compensation for his physical degradation. He began to perceive himself as vastly superior in intellectuality (G: *hypselophroneo* [ὕψηλοφρονέω], L: *sublime sapere, superbe sapere, elate sentire*) to his pompous, dogmatic counselors, whom he systematically belittled. Ensoberbed by his own reactive rhetoric in an aggressive movement of catapulting himself upward, breaking through barriers of contempt to place himself above everyone (G: *hyperairo* [ὑπεραίρω], L: *superexaltare, extollere, efferre*), Job began to show off petulantly, strutting like a peacock (G: *hyperephania* [ὑπερηφανία], L: *superbia, arrogantia*) across the dialogical landscape, in a desperate, hubristic attempt to force God to break His silence and formally recognize him as a righteous man wrongfully afflicted.

This tragic inflation highlights the razor-thin boundary separating a holy indignation that organizes the psyche from a carnal, worldly anger that unbalances, disorganizes, and predisposes the soul to a catastrophic fall into sin. It is one thing to harness a righteous anger—a constructive force that gathers the shattered pieces of a traumatized identity, reorganizes them into a functional whole, restores the structural form lost to the amorphous, regains its moral plumb line and balance, and firmly reorients the course of the self. It is a fundamentally different, degenerative lapse to descend into virulent hatred, defiant wrath, and mutinous rage. This secondary pathology merely inflates the ego with the deceptive pleasure of rebelling and rioting, driving the victim to chastise his oppressive tormentors with the exact same cruelty they had been showing, thereby completing the iatrogenic cycle of trauma. In Ephesians 4:25-27 and 5:2,⁵ we find the antidote for the venom of the peacock's defiance, and the reason for replacing it with righteous anger as a reaction to injustice, usually against others.

The iatrogenic catastrophe: a biblical cautionary tale of therapeutic failure

This theo-psychological terrorism to which the cruel, adversarial interlocutors had subjected the long-suffering Job was so excruciatingly agonizing, maddeningly protracted, and piercingly intense that it violently cast the patient from his existential center, utterly derailed his psychological architecture, and hurled him into an unprecedented spiritual fall. The antagonistic advisors pushed their dogmatic frame too hard, striking with such fury that the whip of their retributive orthodoxy broke as it cracked with excessive force across the victim's back. In breaking, this metaphorical lash recoiled violently upon the executioners themselves, slashing their faces with shame—a striking narrative layout where the spell rebounds upon the sorcerers as the broken instrument of torment flies from their hands.

However, the byproduct of this rebellious outburst of wrath was far worse: Job surrendered and succumbed to the unprecedented sin of allowing himself to be carried away by an astonishing, defiant, and rebellious pride against God, mutating into a state of structural

misotheism (G: *misotheia* [μισοθεΐα], L: *ira in Deum, odium Dei*). Through their toxic ineptitude and clinical cruelty, the antagonistic counselors managed to achieve what all the prior cosmic suffering could not: they caused Job to fracture and fall into sin. Prior to that threshold, Job had remained steadfast and blameless through an onslaught of systemic trauma. He had stood firm, without sinning, when his material wealth was completely liquidated, when his entire lineage was slain, when he found himself covered from head to toe in malignant, festering sores, and when he was forsaken, spurned, and rejected by his entire social collective. Even when tempted by his own wife to curse God and embrace the finality of death, his integrity remained unseated.

None of these external catastrophes managed to induce Job to sin. Nothing broke him, except for a wretched, predatory therapy administered at the hands of supposedly wise and well-intentioned spiritual counselors. In a very real clinical sense, bad counseling can prove worse than all the plagues of Egypt combined. Indeed, these antagonistic interlocutors achieved what no objective disaster had accomplished up to that moment: they completely derailed Job from his equilibrium and hurled him into a catastrophic downfall—into the madness of indicting and sinning against the only Transcendent Source capable of saving him. Ultimately, so disruptive and incompetent was this theo-psychological terrorism disguised as pastoral care that it precipitated the synchronized ruin of the patient, the counselors, and the therapeutic relationship itself. It stands as an iatrogenic disaster of truly biblical proportions—the ultimate historical prototype of therapeutic failure. Consequently, this narrative must be weaponized in contemporary clinical training as the definitive cautionary tale (a “manual of what not to do”) for all therapeutic counseling and professional counselor education curricula.

The architecture of eleotherapy and theo-psychagogy: The Elihu-Baptist analogy and the sacerdotium of restoration – The ontological reorientation of the psyche

Having meticulously detailed the architectural mechanics of antagonistic counseling — with its deployment of theo-psychological terror, its devastating iatrogenic aftermath, and its catastrophic clinical failure — the Book of Job fundamentally pivots to outline the prototypical principles of an Eleotherapeutic and Theo-psychagogic framework. Within this restorative taxonomy, the trajectory of clinical and spiritual healing (G: *therapeia* [θεραπεία], L: *cura, curatio*) is reimagined as an intentional, contemplative process of conducting the patient's inner self (G: *psyche* [ψυχή], L: *anima, animus*) toward total integration through a serene, unmediated encounter with the Transcendent. That is, both the vital and emotional soul (*anima*), and the rational mind and intellect (*animus*). This systematic leading of the soul into the presence of God is formally conceptualized as Theo-psychagogy, derived from the Greek coordinates for guiding or educating (G: *agoge* [ἀγωγή], L: *educatio*) the mind and soul (G: *psyche* [ψυχή], L: *anima, animus*) toward the Divine (G: *theos* [θεός], L: *Deus*). As an academic paradigm, Theo-psychagogy defines a compassionate psychological and pastoral counseling model designed to guide the fractured mind into the comforting, serene geometry of divine peace.

This methodology operates as an *eleotherapy of the psyche* (G: *eleos therapeia tis psychis* [ἔλεος θεραπεία τῆς ψυχῆς]) — the merciful treatment of the human spirit (L: *Misericordia curatio animae est* or *Misericordia medicina animae*). Grounded in classical antiquity, where the soul-guide *psychagogos* (G: *psychagogos* [ψυχαγωγός], L: *psychagogus*) as the leader of souls (L: *dux animarum*) or guide and

scort of souls (L: *deductor animarum*) functioned as an existential guide navigating souls through absolute thresholds of transition, this therapeutic posture is entirely non-punitive. The true therapist of the soul refuses to operate as an inquisitorial judge or an institutional indoctrinator who crushes human agency; rather, they act as a gentle facilitator of metaphysical realignment.

The forerunner of the whirlwind: *Elihu* as the precursor

Within this dramatic matrix, Job's original three companions stand exposed as fraudulent guides. Instead of conducting the patient's soul toward restorative healing, their retributive dogmatism actively drove his psyche into the abyss of *hubris* and iatrogenic alienation. Conversely, the young deuteragonist, *Elihu*, emerges as the historic announcer of the true, ultimate *Psychagogos*: God Himself. *Elihu* systematically refuses to assault Job's ego with speculative accusations of past hidden transgressions. Instead, he guides the sufferer through a grand, poetic contemplation of cosmic majesty, gently restoring the vertical plumb line, the structural form, and the psychological equilibrium of his fractured soul. Exegetically and typologically, *Elihu* serves as the direct theological forerunner to the Divine Voice, establishing a brilliant narrative symmetry with the New Testament figure of John the Baptist.⁵ *Elihu* is to God what John the Baptist is to Christ. He stands within the text not as an ultimate arbiter, but as an indispensable precursor, breaking the suffocating theological deadlock left by the elders to clear a pristine conceptual pathway for the impending divine manifestation.

By shifting the therapeutic paradigm away from retrospective condemnation and toward the foundational principles of Eleotherapy, *Elihu* diagnoses the structural inflammation of Job's current pride—a secondary pathology explicitly provoked by the failure of the previous counseling. His discourse functions as a sophisticated eleotherapeutic intervention, systematically softening the rigid scar tissue of Job's wounded self-schema to prepare his soul for a transformative encounter. Once this psychagogical threshold is fully secured, *Elihu* voluntarily recedes into absolute narrative silence. He decreases so that the voice of the Divine *Psychagogos* may increase, transforming theo-psychological terror into the serene reality of sovereign healing.

The three structural parallels

This exegetical key is validated by three mathematically precise structural parallels that bind *Elihu* to the Johannine archetype of the precursor:

- 1) **The precursor's voice in the wilderness:** Just as John the Baptist emerges as a solitary voice crying out in the wilderness to "make straight the paths of the Lord," *Elihu* shatters the toxic, gridlocked silence of the elder counselors. His intervention systematically clears away the ideological debris of retributive legalism, preparing Job's cognitive apparatus to receive the overwhelming reality of the whirlwind.
- 2) **The shift to present-centered processing:** *Elihu* completely bypasses the elders' compulsion to unearth a phantom past guilt. Instead, he acts as an intermediary *psychagogos*, focusing strictly on the existential present: the reactive arrogance and cognitive inflation born of the horizontal debate. He realigns the patient's current psychological boundaries, stabilizing the psyche before the shock of theophany.
- 3) **The kenosis of the guide:** Immediately following his sweeping discourse on divine majesty, right as the storm breaks, *Elihu* completely vanishes from the narrative architecture.

He requires no divine rebuke, correction, or sacrifice in the epilogue. He models perfect clinical and spiritual humility, willingly undergoing a narrative emptying or depletion (G: *kenosis* [κένωσις], L: *exinanitio, evacuatio*)—self-emptying his presence so that God Himself can assume absolute, unmediated control over the restoration process. Ultimately, *Elihu* stands as the solitary voice crying out within the wilderness of human accusation, iatrogenic torment, and spiritual perdition—offering a life-saving presence while the soul crosses the valley of the shadow of death. He is the quintessential path-clearer, structuring the conceptual and emotional conditions necessary for the divine epiphany, wherein the ultimate Divine *Psychagogos* accomplishes sovereign salvation. His mission is the therapeutic archetype *par excellence*: preparing the way for the divine rescue of a tormented soul by first preparing the soul to be rescued.

The architecture of theo-psychagogic intervention: Kenosis, anagnorisis, and the forerunner's silence

As a solidary deuteragonist counselor, *Elihu* initiates his intervention by grounding the therapeutic alliance in existential equality, reminding Job that he, too, is formed from the same creaturely clay and will not weaponize condemnation or psychological violence against him.² Rather than interrogating Job's past historical life—which the Divine Council had already pronounced blameless in the prologue—*Elihu* targets the acute, immediate swelling of *hubris* that erupted dynamically during the dialogue itself as a reactive pathology to the elders' assault. In a subtle, brilliant shift toward the foundational principles of Eleotherapy, *Elihu* replaces the static, retributive legalism of the companions with a dynamic focus on God's sovereign, disciplinary mercy and majestic grace. His speech functions not as an extension of the previous theo-psychological terrorism, but as a necessary, compassionate lancing of the ego's infected, inflated tissue. Consequently, *Elihu's* subsequent omission from both the final divine rebuke and the sacrificial economy of the epilogue is not a sign of cosmic dismissal, but the ultimate validation of his precursor status. Having successfully realigned Job's shattered psyche toward the vertical axis, the forerunner voluntarily recedes into absolute narrative silence so that the Divine *Psychagōgōs* may speak directly from the whirlwind. God's silence regarding *Elihu's* speech is not dismissive; it is the definitive proof of *Elihu's* role as a theological and narrative forerunner—foreshadowing the structural mission of John the Baptist two millennia later.⁵ Both precursors perfectly fulfill their therapeutic mandate by vanishing at the boundary line of the divine epiphany, decreasing so that the Absolute Voice may increase.

This restoration operates through the systematic application of theo-psychagogy: the sublime art of leading the human psyche (G: *psyche* [ψυχή], L: *anima*) through a structured psychagogical journey (G: *agoge* [ἀγωγή], L: *educatio*) toward the serene, comforting peace of the Divine (G: *theos* [θεός], L: *Deus*). It represents an empathetic, merciful treatment of the soul—a psychical eleotherapy (G: *eleos therapeia tis psychis*, L: *misericors curatio animae*) designed to anchor a fragmented mind within cosmic comfort and transcendental serenity. The clinical process undertaken by *Elihu* requires the patient to experience a profound structural awakening, inviting Job to open his eyes (G: *dianoigō* [διανοίγω], L: *aperti oculi*) to achieve absolute cognitive consciousness and come to his senses, moving toward an authentic re-cognition (G: *epiginōskō* [ἐπιγινώσκω], L: *cōgnōveritis*, cognoscere, agnoscere, percepere) of his true state. This therapeutic invitation mimics and transforms the classical dramatic mechanism of sudden self-awareness (G: *anagnorisis* [ἀναγνώρισις], L: *recognitio*)—the catastrophic, illuminating moment of realization where the protagonist confronts the raw reality of his situation. In Sophocles' *Oedipus the King*,³ Oedipus's *anagnorisis*

of his foundational sin (G: *hamartia* [ἁμαρτία], L: *peccatum*) breaks his psyche as he discovers he has unknowingly committed patricide and incest. In the Hebrew masterpiece, Job's *anagnorisis* functions as an eleo-therapeutic remedy: it forces him to map out and dissect the multi-layered pathologies of his own defensive pride (G: *hubris* [ὑβρις], L: *petulantia*).

Through *Elihu's* diagnostic mirror, Job is forced to contemplate the various components of his reactive *petulantia* and arrogance:

- The structural presence of contemptuous, arrogant pride (G: *hyperephania*, L: *superbia*);
- The impulse to boast, self-exalt, and elevate his own moral metrics above the cosmic order (G: *hyperairo*, L: *extollere*);
- The internal manifestation of an inflated, swollen egoic state (G: *physisosi*, L: *inflationem*);
- The condition of being completely blinded, veiled, and rendered presumptuous by his own defensive injuries (G: *typhoo*, L: *superbiam elatus*);
- The generation of an artificial, megalomaniacal perspective of self-grandeur and unjustified intellectual superiority (G: *hypselophroneo*, L: *sublime sapere*) weaponized to belittle his interlocutors.

Elihu demonstrates that this artificial inflation acts as a catastrophic barrier to divine communion. He demands that Job undergo a total *kenosis* — emptying himself of this defensive *hubris* — because the Almighty structurally refuses to validate any agent who remains locked within the fortress of his own cognitive self-righteousness. As the deuteragonist definitively proclaims to the silent protagonist, cutting away the final remnants of his intellectualized pride: “*He does not look upon those who think they are wise in their own eyes*” (Job 37:24b).

The soteriological metamorphosis: radical kenosis and the bifurcation of existential sorrow — The anatomy of cognitive and spiritual realignment

Through this rigorous therapeutic framework, *Elihu* extends a direct invitation to Job to undergo an ocular awakening (G: *dianoigó* [διανοίγω], L: *aperti oculi*) and attain absolute cognitive consciousness. The target of this internal breakdown is an uncompromised re-cognition (G: *epiginósko* [ἐπιγινώσκω], L: *cognoscere, agnoscere, percipere, cōgnōveritis*) of the multi-layered, defensive arrogance (G: *hubris* [ὑβρις], L: *contumeliis*) that secretly undergirds his deep, reactive bitterness of heart (G: *pikria* [πικρία], L: *acerbitas, amaritudo*) and his subsequent fall into structural transgression (G: *hamartia* [ἁμαρτία], L: *peccatum*). *Elihu* demands that Job ruthlessly dissect the pathological components anchoring his inflation: the contemptuous arrogance (G: *hyperephania* [ὑπερηφανία], L: *superbia*), the unbridled instinct to covet and crave an absolute moral status (G: *epithymia* [ἐπιθυμία], L: *concupiscentia, desiderium*), the swollen egoic expansion (G: *physisosis* [φυσίωσις], L: *inflationem*), the blindness born out of defensive injuries (G: *typhoo* [τυφώω], L: *superbiam elatus*), and the megalomaniacal perspective of self-grandeur and intellectualized superiority (G: *hypselophroneo* [ὑψηλοφρονέω], L: *sublime sapere*).

The forerunner makes it clear that the path to divine restoration requires a systematic, absolute kenosis—the total emptying of the self and its defensive architecture. Only through this vulnerability-driven surrender can Job experience sincere and profound repentance and metanoia (G: *metanoia* [μετάνοια], L: *paenitentia*), that is, a

change of mind, a transformation of the heart, a spiritual conversion. By dismantling his reactive hubris, the patient opens his psyche to receive the sovereign outputs of the divine economy of grace: unconditional forgiveness and legal remission (G: *aphesis* [ἄφεσις], L: *remissionem*), ontological reconciliation (G: *katallagé* [καταλλαγὴ], L: *reconciliatio, redintegratio*, *The Holy Bible: King James Version*, Romans 5:10), a comprehensive socio-somatic restoration (G: *apokatastasis* [ἀποκατάστασις], L: *restitutionis*,⁵ and an unshakeable existential peace (G: *eirene* [εἰρήνη], L: *pacem, pax*).

The two metamorphoses: divine radiance versus Kafkaesque deformation

This profound reorientation of the mind (G: *metanoia* [μετάνοια]) acts as the critical catalyst that triggers an absolute internal metamorphosis (G: *metamorphoo* [μεταμόρφωσις]). The journey toward psychological sobriety begins when the patient confronts the raw, unmasked ugliness of his own defensive transgressions, an existential realization that immediately breeds a crushing sorrow (G: *lype* [λύπη], L: *tristitia*). However, at this exact threshold, the narrative architecture maps out a radical psychological and theological bifurcation depending entirely upon the anchor of that grief:

A. Sorrow under God: When anchored in the presence of the Divine, this profound grief initiates a salvific *metamorphoo* — an ascending transfiguration and structural alignment. It operates through three distinct biblical axes: an evanescent experience of divine light and unmediated radiance (L: *transfiguratus*,⁵ a supernatural transformation of human form, countenance, and nature (L: *transformamur*,⁵ and a systematic, structural reformation of the mind (L: *reformamini*, *The Holy Bible: King James Version*.⁵ This triple-lens metamorphosis actively reshapes the fractured psyche, moving it step by step from prostration to the glory of restored equilibrium.

B. Sorrow of the World: In absolute contrast, when grief remains trapped within human legalism and the transactional structures of theo-psychological terrorism, it triggers a dark, descending Kafkaesque metamorphosis.⁴² This represents a catastrophic shift in form and posture, operating not as a glorious transfiguration but as a violent, teratogenic deformation. Blinded by guilt and trapped in the dead ends of defensive anxiety, the ego is physically and psychically warped into a grotesque creature—a somatic and spiritual paralysis that drags the individual down into the abyss of total alienation and irreversible perdition.

Ultimately, by embracing the godly sorrow of *kenosis* rather than the world's defensive blindness, Job's narrative avoids the Kafkaesque trap of deformation. His submissive self-emptying dissolves the scar tissue of his wounded ego, clearing a conceptual path through the debris of human religious failure. This internal alignment unblocks his spiritual sight and perfectly positions his fractured psyche to cross the threshold into the ultimate epiphany—the overwhelming, unmediated experience with the Divine *Psychagōgós* speaking from the heart of the whirlwind.

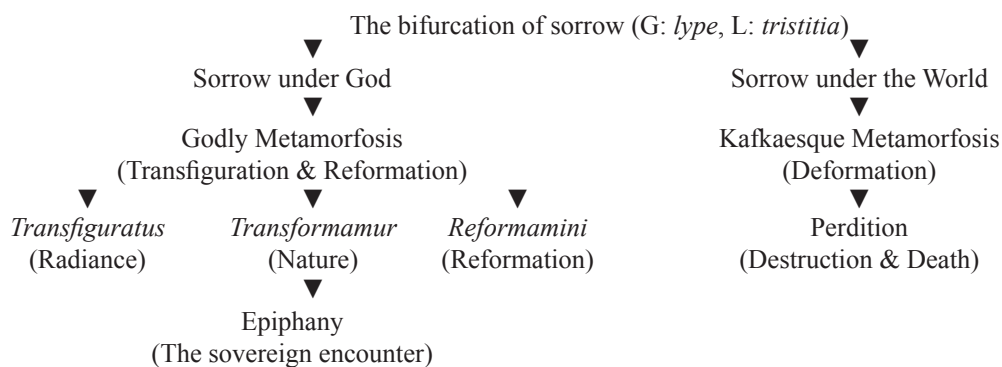
Applied theo-psychagogy and the taxonomy of eleotherapy: clinical interventions in acute psychalgia and the threshold of *mala mors*

This article has systematically elucidated the critical intersection of clinical psychology and applied theo-psychagogy within the framework of compassionate psychospiritual interventions, formally designated as psychical eleotherapy (G: *eleos therapēia tis psychis* [ἔλεος καὶ θεραπεία ψυχῆς]; L: *misericors curatio animae*)—the

merciful, active restructuring of the human soul. Etymologically rooted in classical Greek, the paradigm unifies *eleos* (compassion, active clemency, mercy), *therapeia* (the structural act of healing, treating, and re-establishing), and *psyche* (the mind, soul, or innermost vital core). The underlying Greek verbal root, *eleo* [ἐλεέω] denotes the deliberate manifestation of mercy or operational compassion toward a compromised agent. Within the New Testament corpus, *eleos* is deployed exactly 24 times across pivotal canonical settings, tracing an explicit trajectory of divine and interpersonal rescue. As mapped in Strong's *Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*,^{1,7} the term denotes the compassionate, protective intervention extended to those facing existential peril, uniquely activated when the sovereign authority holds absolute legal power to punish or inflict harm. In the Latin Vulgate, where it is translated as *miser cordia*, the concept shifts from a mere passive emotional state to a concrete therapeutic action. It establishes the clinical baseline for treating intense soul pain (G: *psychalgia* [ψυχολογία], from *psyche* [ψυχή]: mind/soul and *algea* [ἄλγεια]: sharp pain; L: *dolor animae*) and profound mental agony and psychological-spiritual suffering (G: *psychopathology* [ψυχοπαθολογία], from *psyche* [ψυχή]: soul and *pathema* [πάθημα]: structural suffering; L: *psychopathologia*, *anima dolentia*, *animus dolentia*, *adfectio*, *aerumna*, *morbi animi*, *aegritudo animi*). This specific methodology provides a vital clinical apparatus when dealing with patients trapped within the deepest strata of existential disturbance, spiritual affliction, and the visceral, exhausting assault of

Evil (G: *kakopatheia* [κακοπάθεια], L: *sufferentiam*). Left unchecked, this intense trauma frequently mutates into a violent, reactive resentment against the cosmos—a state of clinical painful resentment against God and hatred of God named *misotheism* (G: *misotheia* [μισοθεΐα], L: *odium Dei*, *ira in Deum*).

This diagnostic emergency is highly prevalent within trauma clinics and modern palliative care units, particularly when managing terminally ill patients standing at the terrifying threshold of an imminent bad death (G: *kakothanasia* [κακοθανασία], L: *mala mors*)—the catastrophic danger of experiencing physical death while actively consumed by a raging hatred toward the Divine. This agonizing, fractured transition represents the absolute zenith of existential alienation: a horrific passing where the patient is suffocated by a simultaneous experience of active rage against the heavens, a paralyzing sense of divine reproach, and the absolute psychological terror of total cosmic abandonment. By executing a rigorous, timely eleotherapeutic intervention modeled after the forerunner psychagogy of *Elihu*, the clinician can successfully enter this liminal space. This specialized approach works to dismantle the iatrogenic distortions of weaponized dogmas, neutralizes the *misotheism* (*ira in Deum*) from within the patient's own subjective worldview, and safely guides the fractured psyche back toward an unshakeable, serene geometry of true healing and transcendent peace.



Conclusion, in a nutshell

Within the framework of clinical protocols for acute trauma, the initial pathological presentation bifurcates into acute, severe trauma triggering psychalgia (*dolor animae*) and chronic, protracted trauma generating a deeply entrenched psychopathology (*anima dolentia*). Both dimensions can be experienced by the patient as a visceral assault of evil or *kakopatheia* [κακοπάθεια] (*sufferentiam*), serving as internal and external catalysts for unremitting agony. If left unaddressed, this severe distress frequently gives rise to a cognitive and reactive distortion marked by *misotheism* (*ira in Deum*), an inflated egoic defense mechanism rooted in deep resentment against the Divine. This spiritual and psychological fragmentation inevitably culminates in the critical, liminal threshold of *mala mors* — a catastrophic and panicked passing amid felt cosmic abandonment and hatred—unless the clinician intervenes with eleotherapy, executing a strategic theopsychagogic counter-inoculation and cognitive restructuring directly within the patient's own basal faith system. The following linear mapping summarizes the clinical protocols for acute trauma in five phases:

Clinical protocols in acute trauma: a linear mapping

Phase 1: The dual traumatic presentation

Psychalgia (*Severe Soul-Pain / Dolor Animae*): The immediate, acute laceration of the psyche resulting from profound trauma.

Psychopathology (*Spiritual Suffering / Anima Dolentia or Animus Dolentia*): The chronic, structural, and protracted crystallization of psychological-spiritual distress.

Phase 2: The critical experiential crucible

Kakopatheia [κακοπάθεια] (*The Visceral Assault of Evil / Sufferentiam*): The overarching internal or external catalyst in which both psychalgia and psychopathology are experienced as an unremitting, visceral confrontation with cosmic malice.

Phase 3: The pathological coping distortion

Misotheism (G: *misotheia* [μισοθεΐα], L: *odium Dei*, *ira in Deum*). The defensive, reactive inflation of the ego, which mutates from deep, unaddressed grief into active resentment, rebellion, and hostility against the Divine.

Phase 4: The terminal boundary

The liminal threshold (Mala Mors): The ultimate state of acute existential alienation, presenting the catastrophic clinical danger of a panicked passing consumed by a felt cosmic abandonment and hatred toward the Creator.

Phase 5: The sovereign restorative intervention

Eleotherapy: The definitive execution of a theo-psychagogic counter-inoculation and deep cognitive restructuring, operating directly from within the patient's own basal faith system to dissolve the *ira in Deum* and restore psychological equilibrium.

A linear framework for the cognitive restructuring process is as follows:

The therapeutic progression designed to dismantle iatrogenic trauma operates through a systematic, multi-tiered cognitive realignment.⁴³⁻⁴⁵ This process is initiated by opening one's soul eyes (*dianoigó* [διανοίγω]), which demands the comprehensive, structural opening of the patient's eyes and mind (*aperti oculi*) to break through the paralysis of trauma and achieve absolute conscious awareness. This ocular awakening facilitates the transition into deep re-cognition (*epiginóskō* [ἐπιγινώσκω]), a psychological threshold in which patients come to their senses (*cōgnōveritis*), shifting from a state of defensive denial to a profound, objective perception of reality. By doing so, patients become capable of reviewing, recalling, and recognizing the ontological reality of their lives through reflection (G: *epiginóskō* [ἐπιγινώσκω], L: *recognosco, perpercipio, resisco*), and to grasp it with absolute mental and spiritual clarity, becoming aware of the hitherto hidden divine truth.

These twin dimensions of awakening and re-cognition naturally converge upon the critical psychological milestone of *anagnorisis*—the definitive, transformative moment of tragic and therapeutic discovery wherein the patient fully confronts and recognizes their true creaturely state and existential condition. Ultimately, this structural realization culminates in the dissolution of hubris, a sovereign clinical phase dedicated to emptying the self of its inflated and defensive ego (G: *kenosis* [κένωσις], L: *exinanitio*) and purging the parasitic, self-destructive projections (G: *hyperēphania*, L: *superbia, arrogantia, fastidium*; G: *physisōsis*, L: *turgiditas*; G: *typhōō*, L: *stultifico*; and G: *hypsēlophronēō*, L: *altum sapere, arrogare animus*) that actively drain psychospiritual health, thereby preparing the realigned psyche to receive divine forgiveness (G: *áphesis* [ἄφεσις], L: *remissio, remissionem, indulgentia, condonatio*), ontological reconciliation (G: *katallagē* [καταλλαγή], L: *reconciliatio, redintegratio*), and somatic restoration (G: *apokatástasis* [ἀποκατάστασις], L: *restitutio carnis, redintegratio corporis, renovatio*).

Epilogue

Job, Elihu, and the Eloquent Silence of God: on why God kept silent

This final section argues that the consensus of mainstream biblical scholarship regarding *Elihu's* role and the nature of divine silence warrants a critical revision. The misguided counseling imposed by Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar systematically framed Job's suffering as the retributive justice of a vengeful, wrathful deity—a paradigm that was both theologically erroneous and pastorally cruel, as confirmed by God Himself. This dogmatic approach inflicted iatrogenic harm, culminating in a total therapeutic breakdown.

In stark contrast, *Elihu* provided a truthful and uniquely efficacious intervention. His discourse skillfully guided the suffering protagonist

through a transformative psychological and spiritual arc: from *anagnorisis* (recognition) and *kenosis* (self-emptying) to epiphany, repentance, mercy, and ultimate restoration. Far from dismissing *Elihu*, God endorsed his words through a profound, eloquent, and merciful silence. The following arguments support this alternative interpretation, with special emphasis on the rich theological and existential dimensions of silence in both the Creator and the creature.

The rhetorical value of silence: *Elihu's* dramatic and theological legitimacy in the book of job

The exegetical justification of *Elihu's* counsel: Yahweh explicitly condemned Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar for uttering falsehoods regarding His nature, yet He conspicuously withheld such condemnation from *Elihu*. Logically, this divine silence serves as an implicit endorsement, indicating that *Elihu's* discourse concerning the divine character was substantively accurate.

While modern biblical commentary frequently marginalizes *Elihu*—arguing that God's subsequent silence renders his speech a redundant or irrelevant interpolation—his intervention functioned, in reality, as the precise catalyst required to divest Job of his hubris: specifically, the arrogance of asserting his own righteousness above God's.

It was through this agonizing process of self-emptying (*kenosis*) that Job's spiritual perception was heightened and transformed (*epiginóskō*), rendering him receptive to the divine gaze. In this manner, Job's eventual submission fulfilled *Elihu's* prophetic axiom that God does not look favorably upon those who are wise in their own conceit. Ultimately, it was this thorough spiritual purgation that enabled Job to withstand and behold the transcendent glory of Yahweh manifested within the subsequent whirlwind (*epiphany*).

The structural and psychological inefficacy of the three antagonists

Admittedly, not every theological assertion uttered by Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar was fundamentally erroneous. Yet, irrespective of any fragmented doctrinal accuracy, their discourse remained utterly impotent; it failed to engender within Job any recognition of truth (*anagnorisis*), genuine repentance (*metanoia, paenitentia*), or the existential surrender (*kenosis*) of his pride (*hubris*). Rather than humbling the protagonist, their rigid, mechanistic moralizing only provoked an explosive amplification of Job's hubris, ultimately driving him to transgress by launching unjust accusations against the Creator.

Thus, the rhetoric of these three antagonists proved not merely ineffective, but actively counterproductive and destructive. This systemic failure stemmed not only from the flaws within their retributive theological frameworks, but also from the merciless, inquisitorial, and cruel manner in which they executed their rebukes.

The dynamics of reverent silence and divine revelation

In stark contrast—and beautifully consistent with *Elihu's* dramatic function as the deuteragonist—the moment the young man ceases to speak, God immediately veils the cosmic void, rendering Himself present by addressing Job out of the whirlwind. This immediate transition provides definitive phenomenological proof that Job was already undergoing a profound *kenosis*—shedding the *hubris* that had alienated him from the Divine and rendered him spiritually blind. As Job emptied himself of his inflated, defiant ego, his subjective orientation shifted; consequently, God turned His attention toward him, breaking the cosmic silence to speak to him directly.

Job's total silence throughout the preceding six chapters of *Elihu's* monologue is highly eloquent. It reveals that his spirit was no longer combative, defensive, or bristling with indignation, but had finally become broken, receptive, and meek. Such a reverent, shattered silence is the indispensable ontological prerequisite for hearing the divine voice; it is precisely within this interior stillness that God chooses to manifest His word. Indeed, as *Elihu* prophetically noted, God refuses to answer the hollow cries of inflamed, arrogant egos who remain fundamentally unprepared to truly listen (Job 35:12–13).

The mirror of *Elihu*: paraphrase, exhortation, and hope

Throughout his extended discourse, *Elihu* sought to validate Job's existential reality rather than merely overpower his intellect. For the first time in the entire narrative arc, Job encountered a space of emotional serenity and intellectual stillness. *Elihu's* rhetoric carefully mirrored Job's own arguments, reflecting a profound diagnostic understanding of the protagonist's behavior, psychological volatility, and underlying spiritual attitudes. By offering Job an open floor to contest any perceived analytical inaccuracies, *Elihu* engaged in a rigorous pastoral process of validation and verification. Consequently, Job felt no defensive urge to interrupt; he remained receptive, listening quietly for six consecutive chapters.

This unprecedented quietude offers compelling empirical evidence of *Elihu's* rhetorical and pastoral efficacy. His psychagogical methodology—which may be termed *Eliu-therapy*—relied on strategic paraphrasing and mirroring, which invited the suffering protagonist to gaze into an objective psychological-spiritual mirror and engage in profound self-reflection. Within this reflective framework, *Elihu* masterfully balanced stern theological exhortation with the therapeutic infusion of spiritual hope. *Elihu's* psychagogical methodology might be termed *Eliu-therapy*, as a particular version of its homophones *Eleo-therapy* and *Elaio-therapy*. In fact, the curious homophony among *Elihu*, *Eleo* (έλεος [έλεος]: active compassion), *Elaio* (έλαιον [έλαιον]: medicinal oil).

Elihu's exhortations reminded Job that the Sovereign disregards the hollow cries of the proudly wicked (Job 35:12), and that Job's current existential torment was being exacerbated by his pride, indignant wrath (*orgē*, *iracundia*), and progressive transgression (Job 36:9, 13). Concurrently, *Elihu* infused his discourse with redemptive hope, reaffirming that the Almighty is intrinsically incapable of injustice (Job 34:12). He offered profound comfort by recontextualizing Job's despair: "Job, you say that you cannot see God; but wait patiently, for your cause is before Him" (Job 35:14). He reminded Job that alignment with the divine will yields lifelong peace and spiritual prosperity (Job 36:11), and that God does not penalize the penitent according to the strictures of retributive justice, but actively restores them to righteousness (Job 33:26–27). Ultimately, *Elihu* masterfully refocused Job's attention away from the inscrutable, efficient cause of suffering and toward its teleological, redemptive purpose: "God delivers the afflicted by their affliction, and opens their ear by adversity" (Job 36:15).

The paradox of divine silence and the safeguard against pride

The psychagogical triumph of the deuteragonist is absolute, yet its empirical validation is demonstrated entirely through silent evidence. *Elihu's* profound insights and his measured, compassionate delivery successfully transformed Job's internal disposition, anchoring him in a state of meditative stillness. This unprecedented quietude underscores the supreme efficacy of *Elihu's* counsel in fundamentally altering

Job's heart, mind, and spirit. By unveiling the true, merciful character of God, *Elihu* established the indispensable spiritual conditions required for the subsequent divine epiphany to manifest.

Furthermore, the structural and doctrinal accuracy of *Elihu's* theology is confirmed by God's own calculated silence regarding his person. Yahweh did not hesitate to fiercely criticize the speeches of Eliphaz, Bildad, Zophar, and Job alike; consequently, His absolute silence regarding *Elihu* stands out as an implicit, yet definitive, divine endorsement. These explicit narrative markers beautifully illustrate the immense theological value of silence as an active hermeneutical category.

The ultimate corollary of this dynamic, however, is that God offered *Elihu* no explicit praise. We must recall that unlike Eliphaz (who spoke from empirical experience), Bildad (who spoke from historical tradition), and Zophar (who spoke from a rigid legalism), *Elihu* was merely a humble, younger man. Why did Yahweh withhold public adulation from him? In all probability, it was an act of preemptive pastoral preservation: to prevent the young counselor from falling prey to premature arrogance and vanity—thereby averting the tragic trajectory of the young King Solomon, who, after succumbing to the delusions of pride, ended his days in cynical disillusionment, weeping that all under the sun was nothing but vanity (*vanitas vanitatum*).

By enveloping the young deuteragonist in sacred silence, God insulated *Elihu's* orthodoxy from fracturing into cosmic cynicism, strangling the seed of vanity before it could mature into the devastating realization that all under the sun is merely a chasing after the wind. Divine restraint shielded *Elihu* from ever uttering those fractured, disillusioned cries that would later echo from the broken spirit of Solomon throughout the despondent verses of Ecclesiastes—specifically 1:2, 14; 2:11, 15, 17, 19, 21, 23, 26; 4:4, 8, 16; 5:7; 6:2, 9; 7:6; 8:14; 11:8, 10; and 12:8 (*The Holy Bible: King James Version; Torah Nevi'im u-Khetuvim: Biblia Hebraica: Pars II, Ecclesiastes/Qoheleth; Septuaginta: Id est, Vetus Testamentum graece iuxta LXX interpretes, Ekklesiastēs; Biblia Sacra: Iuxta Vulgatam Versionem, Ecclesiastes*).

The soteriological protection of *Elihu*: satanic retribution vs. divine preservation

The strategic necessity of divine silence

Yahweh's explicit condemnation of the three antagonistic counselors—Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar—stands in stark structural contrast to His absolute silence regarding the deuteragonist, *Elihu* (Job 42:7–9). Because the Almighty discerns neither doctrinal error nor moral deviation in *Elihu's* discourse, this calculated omission functions as an implicit divine endorsement. Yet, this withholding of public adulation is not an index of indifference; rather, it represents an act of profound soteriological mercy. By cloaking *Elihu* in silence, God shielded the young man from the insidious spiritual perils of precocious triumph: namely, the swift descent into arrogance, self-absorption, and inflated vanity that so frequently jeopardizes early brilliance, as exemplified in the tragic trajectory of Solomon.

Moreover, a profound narrative and theological economy governs the cosmic drama of the text: a single protagonist, Job, was entirely sufficient to endure the crucible of the arch-accuser. Had Yahweh openly extolled *Elihu*—pronouncing him, as He did Job, to be a servant "blameless and upright, who fears God and shuns evil" (Job 1:8, 2:3)—He would have exposed the vulnerable young man to immediate satanic vulnerability. It requires no great leap of exegetical imagination to foresee the Adversary instigating a secondary trial.

Satan would have inevitably argued that *Elihu's* righteousness was merely a calculated transaction, a sophisticated bid to secure the anticipated rewards of retributive justice.

To publicly laud *Elihu* would be to deliver him directly into the clutches of the accuser, inadvertently providing the Devil with a winning argument in the final scene. In *The Screwtape Letters*, C. S. Lewis (1942) masterfully exposes this diabolical stratagem, illustrating how well-timed commendation is weaponized to cultivate pride—particularly spiritual pride, the most lethal vanity of all, which masquerades as zeal for correct doctrine. As Lewis notes through the demonic persona of Screwtape, the adversary seeks to exploit human vanity, gradually turning it into habit until a sly self-congratulation mixes with all of the target's thoughts. Even the awareness of this danger is turned into a trap: if the individual awakes to the peril and tries to smother this new form of pride, the tempter makes him proud of his own attempt, ultimately mutating a venial affection into the strongest and most beautiful of the vices—Spiritual Pride. This insidious peril of doctrinal self-righteousness finds a compelling contemporary echo in Jerry Bridges's (2007) analysis of "respectable sins," in which theological correctness itself becomes a breeding ground for a subtle, yet devastating, pride.

The cinematic parallel: the trap of human vanity

The Accuser would have undoubtedly rejoiced had *Elihu* received a public accolade in the epilogue; it would have served as the perfect catalyst for a second systemic assault. Satan would have looked upon such retributive praise with predatory anticipation, knowing that the moment *Elihu* the advocate was lauded, he would become susceptible to the seductive whispers of self-importance.

This precise psychological and spiritual vulnerability is brilliantly illustrated in modern narrative by the film *The Devil's Advocate*. In the climax of the narrative, the defense attorney, Kevin Lomax, seemingly foils the Devil's machinations and rescues his client—mirroring *Elihu's* strategy to dismantle the false paradigms of the three counselors and rescue Job from theological despair. However, where God protects His servant through silence, the cinematic Devil plays masterfully upon human vanity. Satan showers Lomax with dazzling admiration, extolling his shrewdness, superiority, and legal excellence. By accepting this praise, Lomax succumbs to the illusion of his own greatness over the adversary. In that exact moment of egoistic inflation (*hubris*), he is ensnared in the very web of vanity he believed he had escaped.

When the apparent victor indulges in a sense of proud superiority over the defeated, the spiritual hierarchy reverses: the victor is subjugated, and the vanquished adversary achieves total dominance. Moral capitulation precipitates an immediate fall, leaving the soul vulnerable to being trampled. Anticipating every move on the cosmic chessboard, Yahweh in His sovereign wisdom spared *Elihu* from this tragic reversal. Following the hard-won victory of restorative justice—purchased through the immense suffering of Job and the rigorous intellectual labor of *Elihu*—to praise the young counselor openly would have been to discard the pure essence of restorative grace along with the toxic sediment of retributive justice and its razor-sharp hook of vanity.

Conclusion: The sovereign value of humility

Ultimately, the Book of Job operates as a monumental theological treatise on the perennial friction between human arrogance and divine majesty. True spiritual maturity demands that the creature remain anchored in absolute humility, irrespective of the shifting tides of historical or personal circumstance, thereby cultivating an interior

equilibrium and an unwavering trust in God amidst the depths of profound existential suffering (Philippians 4:12).

By intentionally choosing not to elevate *Elihu* before the eyes of the assembly, Yahweh preserved the young counselor's greatest spiritual asset: a quiet, unassuming humility that seeks no terrestrial validation, performing its righteous duty in secret so that it might remain untainted by the corrupting sediment of superfluous human praise (Matthew 6:3–4; Romans 12:3). Within this profound, calculated economy of divine silence, *Elihu* is preserved from the snare of vanity. Job is fully restored—following his own intercessory display of mercy toward his erstwhile persecutors—and the absolute, unmerited sovereignty of divine grace remains entirely unblemished.

Elihu-Therapy, Eleo-Therapy, Elaio-Therapy

Elihu's psychagogical methodology relied on strategic paraphrasing and mirroring to invite the suffering patient to gaze into an objective psychological-spiritual mirror, engaging in profound self-reflection under the illumination of divine compassion and spiritual hope. Neologically, this approach may be termed *Eliu-therapy*—a profound existential variant of its phonetic homophones, *Eleo-therapy* and *Elaio-therapy*. Indeed, a remarkable theological and linguistic economy undergirds the curious homophony among *Elihu*, *Eleos* (ἔλεος: active compassion), and *Elaion* (ἐλαίον: medicinal or anointing oil). Through this wordplay, *Elihu's* very presence becomes semantic shorthand for his pastoral function: he is simultaneously the bearer of active divine mercy and the administrator of a soothing, medicinal oil applied to Job's fractured psyche.

Crucially, however, while pouring this therapeutic mercy onto spiritual wounds, *Elihu* consistently redirects the patient's gaze toward the Divine. This is crystallized in his very name, which serves as an ontological declaration: *Elihu* (אֱלִיָּהוּ) means "My God is He." Consequently, *Eliu-therapy* is *Eleo-therapy* and *Elaio-therapy* transfigured by the divine countenance. Within this therapeutic framework, human introspection becomes a vessel for reflecting Yahweh's glory. As suffering patients engage in this deep self-reflection, they are illuminated by transcendent hope, ultimately allowing them to recognize their Heavenly Father's features within their own countenance—thereby learning to perceive their world, their neighbors, and themselves precisely as their Creator sees them.

The *Elihu* paradigm: a theological and psychological framework for eleotherapy

In the landscape of clinical theology and therapeutic intervention, the figure of *Elihu* from the Book of Job serves as a profound archetype for the counselor. The very name *Elihu* (אֱלִיָּהוּ) delivers an ontological declaration: "My God is He."

It points away from human self-sufficiency and directly toward divine sovereignty. While linguistically rooted in Semitic etymology, the phonetic resonance of *Elihu* in the Hellenophonic tradition invites a striking paronomasia, weaving an acoustic and conceptual bridge to two foundational Greek terms: *Éleos* (ἔλεος, active mercy/compassion) and *Élaion* (ἐλαίον, medicinal olive oil). From this rich etymological intersection, we derive *Elihu-therapy*—a specialized modality that operates simultaneously as *Eleo-therapy* (the therapeutic dispensation of mercy) and *Elaio-therapy* (the application of anointing, a curative balm for spiritual trauma).

The triadic architecture of the therapeutic alliance

Elihu-therapy reconfigures the traditional dyadic counseling relationship into a triadic, dynamic space. In this framework, the clinician consciously rejects the role of the central protagonist,

adopting a humble, mediatorial stance in the wings of the theater instead. The center stage is occupied strictly by two primary actors: God, who retains an unyielding, restorative love for His creation, and the suffering patient.

Psychologically, the patient presents in a state of profound existential crisis, characterized by a fractured attachment to the Divine. They experience a paralyzing paradox: they desperately seek God's protection and love, yet they feel utterly abandoned and betrayed by Him. Blindfolded by trauma and grieving unfulfilled expectations, the patient harbors deep-seated anger, resentment, and a profound inability to forgive—directed outward at others, inward at the self, and upward at God. The therapist's role is not to resolve this tension through intellectual dogmatism, but to gently facilitate the removal of the blindfold, helping the patient discern the latent meaning, purpose, and redemptive opportunities embedded within suffering.

Elihu-Therapy as Eleo-Therapy: The compassion of shared clay

Elihu-therapy materializes as *Eleo-therapy* through the cultivation of radical, empathetic solidarity. Mirroring the historical *Elihu*, who neutralized Job's fear by declaring, "I too am formed from clay" (Job 33:6), the clinician approaches the patient free from clinical detachment or spiritual superiority. The therapist recognizes their own ontological vulnerability and shared brokenness. This deep awareness fosters an environment of unconditional positive regard and active compassion (*éleos*). The clinical space becomes a sanctuary where the patient's rage against the Divine is neither moralized nor suppressed, but validated as a normative stage of severe spiritual and psychological friction.

Elihu-Therapy as Elaio-Therapy: The unction of redemptive suffering

Concurrently, this modality operates as *Elaio-therapy*, functioning as a spiritual and psychological anointing. The therapist acts as a conduit of healing, metaphorically pouring the soothing oil (*élaion*) of grace onto the patient's raw, infected spiritual wounds.

Crucially, this therapeutic oil cannot be manufactured through sterile academic theory; it is extracted through existential compression. Just as olive oil is yielded only when the fruit is systematically crushed under the rough weight of the press, the therapist's capacity for anointed, redemptive compassion is forged in the crucible of their own historical suffering and subsequent redemption. It is this deeply integrated, personally tested healing that possesses the viscosity and substance required to soothe the patient's severe existential burns, ultimately guiding them toward forgiveness, reconciliation, and restored sight.

Final words

Two and a half millennia since the Book of Job was originally penned, humanity turns inward in search of a deep psychology capable of profoundly understanding the human soul and contributing to its rescue from the depths of suffering in the face of a miserable death (G: *kakothanasia* [κακοθανασία], L: *mala mors*) towards a peaceful, blessed death (G: *euthanasia* [εὐθανασία], L: *bona mors*). We need a psychology that lives up to its name: the study (G: *logos* [λόγος], L: *scientia*) of the soul (G: *psyche* [ψυχή], L: *anima*). We need a psychology capable of sustaining a practice of psychotherapy that lives up to its name: the healing or therapy (G: *therapeia* [θεραπεία], L: *cura*) of the soul (G: *psyche* [ψυχή], L: *anima*). By revisiting the Book of Job, this article has sought to offer a pathway toward such depth, with the ultimate hope that it may forge a vehicle for reclaiming

the soul from the absolute extremes of agonizing resentment at the threshold of eternity.⁴⁶

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None.

Conflicts of interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest.

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