

Suffering, Ambiguity, and Social Dialogue: Dax's Case in Light of Job's Story

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1. Introduction

Donald Herbert Cowart (1947 – 2019, hereafter Dax), a native Texan, sacrificed by a propane gas explosion with his father, is renowned for his persistent claim for a patient right to die. Although Dax overcame the tragic accident in his own way, he is still remembered as a social icon for medical ethics about life and death. To date, there has been minimal research as regards Dax's Case from the perspective of the Hebrew Bible. One can point to, at best, a work of a systematic theologian, Lonnie D. Kliever.¹⁾ He appreciates analogies between Dax and Job in attempt to apprehend the horrendous incident of the burnt victim in light of the biblical story of the undeserved suffer. Kliever captures in many ways the relevance of the book of Job in connection to Dax's medical case, so that he rightly argues that, as shown in the nature of Job's suffering, Dax's adversity is not to be taken as redemptive.²⁾

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1) Lonnie D. Kliever, "Dax and Job: The Refusal of Redemptive Suffering," in *Dax's Case: Essays in Medical Ethics and Human Meaning*, ed. Lonnie D. Kliever (Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1989), 187-211. For Kliever's fine list of the narrative and thematic parallels between Dax and Job, see, pp., 193, 205.

2) What Kliever means by the phrase, "redemptive suffering," is perhaps that suffering

Kliever's approach, however, is not above reproach. Most of all, Kliever's evaluation of Dax's Case exposes his normative demands, which are inadequate to handle the dilemma inherent in Dax's suffering. Kliever employs Job as an interpretive tool by which, on one level, to *approve* Dax's marginal circumstances that destroy meaning of human life and, on the other, to *disapprove* Dax's immature manner of coping with his harsh reality. Then Kliever concludes that, despite Dax's honesty and courage, he "has not yet learned the whole of Job's truth."³⁾ Should Dax had gained the wisdom of Job, claims Kliever, Dax would become the complete hero, who confirms volition to live as much as right to die.

Dax's Case and its relevant issues—like the patient's autonomy to choose either life or death and its relation to doctor's paternalism⁴⁾—still remains highly controversial, to be sure. So Kliever's pedagogical suggestion on Dax's way of viewing life can be justified in its own. Even so, Kliever's criticism of Dax seems to demand seldom support. For not only is Kliever's comprehension of the book of Job, which is arguably most difficult in the Hebrew Bible,⁵⁾ founded on a strikingly limited

as a disciplinary procedure; For a good categorization of biblical suffering, see James L. Crenshaw, *Defending God: Biblical Responses to the Problem of Evil* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

3) Kliever, *Ibid.*, 210.

4) For a good study on the issue of doctor's criteria for the patient's decision-making of death, see James J. Walter, "Termination of medical Treatment: The Setting of Moral Limits from Infancy to Old Age," in *RSR* 16 (1990), 302-307, seeing Dax's case as posing more difficult problems, states that casting Dax's predicament in terms of sanctity of life vs. quality of life, or in terms of paternalism vs. autonomy actually obscures the plight of Cowart; Another reflection on the same matter, see Denis G. Arnold and Paul T. Menzel, "When comes 'The End of the Day?': A Comment on the Dialogue between Dax Cowart and Robert Burt," *Hastings Center Report* 28 (1998), 25-27.

5) As Kliever asserted that "Dax's own inherent honesty and courage may yet bring

scholarly resource,⁶⁾ but also the major evidence, in which he depreciates Dax's moral infantilism, is purely flimsy; Kliever's assessment of Dax's favor of death taps not into his original reading of Job's story but rather into his personal impression of selective lines within the drama *J. B.*, which scholars generally regard as deviating from the biblical story.⁷⁾

The purpose of this paper, therefore, is to provide a more rigorous analysis of Dax's case based on biblical exegesis of some foundational texts of Job—an interpretation that probes applicability of Joban wisdom to the ethical ambiguities of Dax's Case. I will *sympathetically* portray the similarities in the nature of pain between Dax and Job, re-examining the comparative approach taken by scholars such as Kliever. Then, I will *critically* examine the dissimilarities in the attitude to pain between Dax and Job, stressing that, unlike Dax, Job overcomes in God's providence his crisis of life. Our analysis of a complicate ethical

him to Job's final verdict" (Ibid., 210), he must have been unaware that Job's final speech (Job 42:2-6) are the notorious crux of interpretation. The speech, as will be dealt with in greater detail in section III, defies any translation to fix its meaning, while being highly susceptible to multiple, contradictory translations and thus leaving the reader hovering over the truth of Job's final response to his God.

- 6) In the notes of Kliever's article, "Dax and Job," one can see only a single volume of biblical scholar's work, which is a commentary written by Samuel Terrian in 1954. According to Kliever, he refers to the commentary to provide the reader of his article with a summary of many hypothesis of the composition of the book of Job, not with some hermeneutically debatable aspects of the book. What Kliever cites in his article is MacLeish's play, *J.B.* (6 times) more frequently than Terrian's commentary, which he mentions only once.
- 7) It is ironic that Samuel Terrian, on whose view Kliever's understanding of the book of Job relies, dismisses, quite contrary to Kliever, the drama *J. B.* as "departing" from the biblical version of Joban story (Samuel Terrian, "J. B. and Job," *The Christian Century* 76:1 [1959], 9-11). Similarly, James L. Crenshaw, "The Wisdom Literature," in *Urgent Advice and Probing Questions: Collected Writings on Old Testament Wisdom*, ed. idem (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1995), 29.

issue based on biblical figures or stories requires more rigorous exegetical attention to the relevant text. My comparison of these two sufferers revolves around three aspects which also structure this paper: existential, religious, and social dimension.

2. Existential Dimension: Alienation From Self

Both Dax and Job appear to fall in the situation, where one is unable to resist such pain that ultimately prompts desire for death. Appealing to the nature of pain that drives Dax and Job to crave for death rather than life, I will formulate parallels between two sufferers, by which I try to gauge the profounder meaning of Dax's Case. The death-wish, characteristic of the existential aspect of both sufferers, stems from the division of the inner self. Put differently, both Dax and Job are forced to experience radical alienation from the self, which seeks for a return to its formerly blissful state only to find the quest futile. Young Dax, for example, was an exceptionally vibrant athlete. He was the chief of his high school football team, and enjoyed surfing, rodeo, and skydiving. He was such an energetic person that during the Vietnam War Dax served as a pilot in the U.S. Air Force.⁸⁾ The pilot of a jet fighter was perhaps like an eagle, who flies in the air and swoops down to its prey on earth. An accidental explosion of leaking propane gas, however, takes total, physical strength from his body. What is worse, the loss of control of his body and his mobility appears to spur Dax to undergo something like ego-splitting, in the

8) The very beginning of the film, Robert B. White, *Please Let Me Die: The Wish of a Blind Severely Maimed Burn Patient* (Galveston: University of Texas Medical Branch-TV, 1974) sharply contrasts Dax as a pilot standing by a military aircraft with Dax as a patient groaning in a clinical tub; thereby implying how acutely Dax can be frustrated at the loss of his physical power.

state of which the ego, asserts Freud, wants to kill itself as it treats itself as an object.⁹⁾ Dax, with his sense of powerlessness aggravating his savage pain of the burns, was led to see suicide as a salvific action to put him back together again. For Dax, suicide becomes nothing more than the means of, though violent and brutal, re-conquest of his self.¹⁰⁾

The physical, existential affliction of Dax is in part reminiscent of that of Job. Among others, Job's pain engendered from his skin disease is quite striking. Like the burn victim, Job is all of a sudden stripped of the health of his *dermis*. As fire consumes most of Dax's body, including his face, eyes, ears, and hands, so too Job is smitten with a dermatological illness that afflicts his whole body, "from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head" (Job 2:7). Job's skin malady and its accompanying torment are characterized in a fairly pathological overtone. Job's skin—covered with "running sores (שחין,¹¹⁾ 2:7)," "infectious virus (רמה,¹²⁾ 7:5)," and "scabs (גיש,¹³⁾ 7:5)—

9) Sigmund Freud, Mourning and Melancholia, in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, Vol. 14 (London: Hogarth Press, 1957), 252.

10) For the view of suicide as an expression of self formative process, see Alfred Alvarez, *The Savage God: A Study of Suicide* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1972), 131.

11) Although it seems hardly possible to pinpoint the identification of Job's disease, some cognates of the Hebrew are suggestive in that they are evocative of something like Dax's pain engendered from burns: Akkadian *šaḥnu* ("warm"), Syriac *šūḥānā* ("ulcer, boil") and *šaḥḥinūtā* ("heat"), Arabic *suḥn* ("hot, warm") and *saḥānat/suḥūnat* ("heat, warmth; ulcer, inflamed spot"), and particularly, Ethiopic *siḥin* ("something set on fire"). See HALOT ... and David J. A. Clines, *Job 1-20*, WBC 17 (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1989), 49.

12) Literally, "worm(s)." LXX ἐν σαπρίᾳ σκωλήκων "in corruption of worms" and Jerome's *putredine vermium*, as nicely suggested by Clines, *Job 1-20*, 163, are aware of the sense of "rotting (flesh)."

13) This *hapax* appears to contain a certain medical sense. Its Greek counterpart βώλακας means a lump of earth or a clod. A variety of English versions (JB,

hardens, turns black and falls from him. (2:7; 7:4-5; 30:30a). The damages to Job's skin was severe to the degree that even Job's bones burn with fever (30:30b). All these symptoms of Job's disease—continual discharge of pus (7:5), blackening and peeling off of the skin (30:30), emaciation (19:20), fever (30:30b), nightmares (7:14), sleeplessness (7:4), and weeping (16:16)¹⁴—are resonant with those of Dax, who experiences pain through the contracture of scar tissue, further constrict movement, excruciating chemical tubing, cream-based dressings, dead skin, crusts, and so forth.¹⁵

Much like Dax's pain, Job's suffering too is not only pathological but also ontological. That is to say, Job's agony flows from being torn away from his past. Dax felt himself already dead as he asked a farmer for a gun, crying, "Don't you see, I am a dead man. I can't live!"¹⁶ In the biblical hero we detect the image of Dax, on whose life death encroaches. For example, Dax's struggle to restore his presently ruined self to its previously glorious self is nicely mirrored by that of Job. The disintegration of Job's skin, which "functions as the boundary between the self and its world,"¹⁷ motivates him to yearn for a homecoming to his "prime days," which he once wanted to multiply like "the phoenix" (29:4, 18).¹⁸ As the veteran of jet

NEB, NAB, NIV) render it into "scabs."

14) Clines, *Job 1-20*, 49.

15) On this horrible treatment which the third-degree burnt patient should take, see William F. May, "Dealing with Catastrophe," in *Dax's Case: Essays in Medical Ethics and Human Meaning*, 134-140, where the author calls the treatment "killing process" (p. 134).

16) May, "Dealing with Catastrophe," 132.

17) May, *Ibid.*, 135.

18) The phoenix refers to a bird of magnificent plumage who, after an extremely long life of several hundred years or more, would burn itself in its nest and from its ashes another bird would spring to life (Norman C. Habel, *The Book of Job: A Commentary* [Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1985], 412); In

pilot is resistant against the irrevocably damaged quality of his life and disgusted by its reluctant continuance, so the formerly mythical bird of immortality, pining away from the acute nostalgia for his golden days, comes to curse “the day” of his birth (3:1). Seeing his life as being less enviable than his death, Job, like the severely burned patient, nurtures an aversion to himself.¹⁹ In the book of Job suicide is never offered as a possible option, to be sure. Even so, Job’s mighty curse against the day of his birth, albeit less mighty than Job’s will to survive his death (19:26), seems to approach to the brink of the complete despair of life (3:3, 11-13, 20):²⁰

Let the day perish in which I was born; and the night that said,
‘A man-child is conceived.’

Why did I not die at birth; come forth from the womb and
expire?

Why were there knees to receive me; or breasts for me to suck?

a similar fashion, René Girard, “Job as failed scapegoat,” in *The Voice from the Whirlwind: Interpreting the Book of Job*, ed. Leo G. Perdue & W. Clark Gilpin (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1992), compares Job to Oedipus in that both personae pass “from an excess of good fortune to an excess of misfortune” (p. 188).

19) May, *Ibid.*, 132.

20) James A. Wharton, *Job* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1999), 25. The Job envying the dead is contrast to the Job denying his wife’s recommendation of suicide. As she asks, “Do you still persist in your integrity? Curse God, and die!” Job retorts, “You speak as any foolish woman would speak. Shall we receive the good at the hand of God, and not receive the bad?” (Job 2:9, 10). For the concept of suicide in the book of Job, see Israel Or-Bach, “Job—A Biblical Message About Suicide,” in *JPJ* 18 (1994), 241-247. As will be clearer, the present author strongly disagrees with such a view of Job as advocate for suicide. In the ANE wisdom literature suicide appears to be a popular advice to difficult life (e.g., “A Dispute over Suicide,” in James B. Pritchard ed., *Ancient Near Eastern Texts: Relating to the Old Testament* [3rd. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969], 407). Quite to the contrary, Israelite wisdom does not praise surrendering life but rather recommends encountering with its creator (e.g., Job 31).

Now I would be lying down and quiet;
I would be asleep; then I would be at rest
[W]hy was I not buried like a stillborn child,
Like an infant that never sees the light?

Themes of the monological self-curse in Job 3 virtually express caustic questions which Dax may well raises: “How is life, if any, better than death?” (3:11-19) and “What meaning can life possibly have in the face of my suffering?” (3:20-26).²¹⁾ How does Job fall into the misery, in which he longs for death more than for hidden treasures but cannot attain it (3:20, 21)? Job’s existential impasse is to be ascribable to Job’s God, who was a grateful resource of Job’s protection and of his success but now turns into a harassing surveillant. Job anxiously entreats God to cease God’s vigilance to him: “I should choose strangling; death, rather than this existence. I have rejected life ... Leave me alone ... Will you never take your gaze from me, or let me be till I swallow my spittle?” (7:15, 16, 19).²²⁾ Job’s troubles with God are suggestive of the nature of contention between Dax and his surgeons. Job directs his violent language toward God in order to obtain freedom from divinely intrusive guardianship. Likewise, Dax utilizes his aggressive language so that he may dispose his life to be released from involuntary treatment of his body.

At the heart of the Joban objection to God’s irksome supervision is the essence of Dax’s vehement denial of those paternalistic therapists’ favors. Dax is unwilling to accept his present self that are wretchedly disfigured from his past self,

21) William S. Morrow, *Protest Against God: The Eclipse of a Biblical Tradition*, Hebrew Bible Monographs 4, ed. David J. A. Clines et al. (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2006), 131.

22) Following Cline’s translation (*Job* 1-20, 157). Particularly, for Cline’s suggestion on an elliptical form of the Hebrew “אֲנִי מִרְשָׁא (I have rejected),” which is not supplied with an object, see his note 16.a (p. 165-166).

whereas his attending physicians were determined that Dax should redeem his future self at the sacrifice of pain of his present self.²³⁾ However, as reaffirmed by Dax, it is because of the excruciating pain beyond his endurance that he wanted to refuse treatment.²⁴⁾ No matter how victorious over death medical technologies are and no matter who is convinced of the future well-being of a physically impotent patient, Dax may well choose death as a release from the dark power of those machines and of the tyrannical physicians.²⁵⁾ For Dax takes their protecting him from death to be tantamount to the extension of unworthy life, from which his self is ever alienated.

3. Religious Dimension: God-Forsakenness

Dax's pain, as has been observed heretofore, is destructive not only of his body but also of his mentality, to the extent

23) H. Tristram Engelhardt, Jr., "Freedom vs. Best Interest: A Conflict at the Roots of Health Care," in *Dax's Case: Essays in Medical Ethics and Human Meaning*, 90-94, both depicts this delicate issue of a clash between patient's selves and provides a perceptive response to it: "the present selves, not future selves, are all one has to deal with ... Past persons have created real debts and fashioned real obligations that can still bind those who are present. Future persons are but the possible objects of possible obligations. When they become present persons, they find themselves in a web of obligations fashioned by past persons" (p. 92).

24) Dax reaffirms two reasons why he refused treatment: "[o]ne was overriding—the pain. The pain was so excruciating, it was so far beyond any pain that I ever knew was possible, that I simply could not endure it ... There were other important issues, too ... my quality of life" (Dax Cowart & Robert Burt, "Confronting Death: Who Chooses, Who Controls?" *Hastings Center Report* 28 [1998], EBSCOhost Electronic version, 5).

25) However, Dax never chose death. After the crisis of his life, Dax got married with a woman and live a satisfied life as attorney and social activist. See his recent confession: <https://vimeo.com/64585949>.

that he forgoes will to live. This observation leads me to propose my second point of the analogy between Job and Dax, i.e., a feeling of forsakenness by God. As Job's piety withers in his torment,²⁶⁾ so Dax's attitude to his religion, if not dramatic as much as Job, was not intact from his experience of pain. Namely, Dax's exposure to the unrestrained pain, which not just severs him from life but imbues him with a sheer fantasy of death, appears as radically transformative of Dax's view of God. The massive impact of the monstrous pain on how Dax reacts to God, though implicitly, is attested in "power struggle," to which Dr. Robert B. White refers when the psychiatrist defines the difficult relationship between Dax and his mother.²⁷⁾ Facing her suffering that deprives her of much, Ada Cowart never lost her Christian faith and hoped that her son could find "new faith in God."²⁸⁾ Why was it "new faith" that she wanted Dax to attain? Why did she have to fear that her son had not yet made his "peace with God"?²⁹⁾ Do both "new faith" and "peace with God" indicate that Ada Cowart regarded Dax as abandoning his "previous" Christian faith that has been nurtured from his childhood by the Church of Christ?³⁰⁾ It seems to be surely

26) In the extreme pain that Job saw as undeserved Job pleads continuously his case directly with God. But the power of pain reduces his passion for his innocence into despair about the deity. Cf. Eric J. Cassell, *The Nature of Suffering and The Goals of Medicine* (2nd ed.; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 39-40.

27) *Dax's Case*, (Videotape; New York: Unicorn media, 1985).

28) Keith Burton, "A Chronicle: Dax's Case as It Happened," *Dax's Case: Essays in Medical Ethics and Human Meaning*, 10.

29) Burton, "A Chronicle: Dax's Case as It Happened," 6.

30) Burton's chronological reconstruction of Dax's case implies that on the Wednesday night when Mrs. Cowart heard the disaster of her husband and son, she was supposed to go to church to attend a bible class with them. So Burton writes: "Though Ray and Don still hadn't arrived home, Ada went on to services without them" ("A Chronicle," 3). It may be hardly far-fetched, therefore, to suggest that Dax's withdrawal from his Christianity be attributable in part to the fact

the case. Dax struggled not simply with his mother but also with her Christianity, against which Dax himself was resistant.³¹⁾ After all, it seems quite implausible that Dax as a Christian becomes inclined to death rather than life, as is affirmed by the story of Job, without undertaking a radical reshaping of his idea of God, whom Dax formerly considered the author of his life.³²⁾ For the doctrine of God (“theo-logy”), especially in the Judeo-Christian tradition goes with the doctrine of life (“bio-logy”). Given that Dax is “a transformed person,”³³⁾ who was terrified at the marginal experience of pain as well as severe deprivation of personal autonomy, Dax’s perspectives of God or life, which were perhaps utterly irreconcilable to those of Ada Cowart, might well intensify the clash between her agreement with physician’s treatment and Dax’s aggressive objections to it.³⁴⁾

that he suffered the horrible calamity on the very date when he planed to go to church.

- 31) Kliever perceptively observes that Dax neither addresses his situation from a traditional religious point of view nor invokes the Protestant heritage of Dax’s culture that is the Church of Christ teachings, rightly suggesting that Dax’s entire demeanor reflect Dax’s own deep alienation from the central symbol and from core commitment of the Christian religion (“Dax and Job,” 189-190).
- 32) One’s change of view of self or life derives from one’s theological crisis. So Robert C. Dykstra, “Intimate Strangers: The Role of the Hospital Chaplain in Situations of Sudden Traumatic Loss,” in *JPC* 44:2 (1990), 141, rightly states that “[T]he nature of crisis requires a radical transformation of one’s previous understanding of self or life, and crisis is at root a theological problem,” citing Charles V. Gerkin, *Crisis Experience in Modern Life: Theory and Theology in Pastoral Care* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1979), 35.
- 33) William J. Winslade, “Taken to the Limits: Pain, Identity, and Self-Transformation,” in *Dax’s Case: Essays in Medical Ethics and Human Meaning*, 119.
- 34) Winslade, *ibid.*, 120, is right as he suggests the religious nature of the conflict between Dax and his mother, stating that “The relationship between Dax and his mother is, of course, complex ... we cannot ignore certain prominent feature of their overall relationship. One such feature concerns Ada Cowart’s strongly

Such a collision fueled with their incompatible viewpoints between the human life in crisis and the Sovereign Lord of it is also one of the main topics that the book of Job profoundly concerns. This denotes the potential impact of pain on Dax's dissociation from his Christianity. Job's three consultants staunchly champion the traditional theology, claiming that Job's affliction is resultant from his sinfulness. By doing so they defend God's justice. However, Job, although oscillating between despair and faith, boldly asserts that God is responsible for Job's suffering.³⁵⁾ Here special attention needs to be paid to the fact, as well shown in Dax's case, that competing views of God, held by Job and his rivals, find expression in their subsequently discordant views of life. The reader is led to see disputation about God between two parties as being interwoven with that of life, or *vice versa*. In the aforementioned heart-rending poem in Job 3, for example, Job curses on his birthday to insist his integrity, albeit in rather subdued language, at the expense of trustfulness of the creator of human life³⁶⁾: "Let the day *perish* in which I was *born*" (3:3a). In response Eliphaz, catching Job's blasphemous voice couched in Joban wish for death, states, "Think now, who that was innocent ever *perished*?" (4:7). In

held religious beliefs that provided her with support in a time of crisis and a basis for her decision to consent to the physicians' request to treat Dax over his objection and against his will."

35) This Job is admirable since Job's clinging to his innocence is confirmed by God. In the prologue God reproves Satan, addressing the undeservedness of Job's suffering; "He still persists in his integrity, although you incited me against him, to destroy him *for no reason*" (2:3b, emphasis mine).

36) This rebellious flavor of Job's initial lament has been well appreciated by scholars, one of whom interprets Job 3 as "a counter-cosmic incantation" (e.g., Michael Fishbane, "Jeremiah IV 23-26 and Job III 3-13. A Recovered Use of the Creation Pattern," VT 21 [1971], 151-167). Fishbane rightly argues that "Let it be darkness (יְהִי חֹשֶׁךְ, Job 3:4)" is a Joban intentional inversion of the renowned words in the creation narrative, "Let there be light (יְהִי אוֹר, Gen 1:3)" (p. 153).

saying so, Eliphaz argues not only that God never destroys an innocent, but also that suicide cannot justify Job's righteousness. Bildad too in the same rebuking note that Eliphaz entertains, declares to Job, "How can one *born* of woman be pure?" (25:4); thus implying that Job as an innately sinful being is worthy of God's retribution. If Job decries life in the way of sarcastically eulogizing *darkness*, Bildad counters Job by identifying Job as the wicked, whose *light* is extinguished (3:6, 9; 18:5). In short, concerning the matters of God and life both Dax and Job may be dangerously heretic thinkers in the eyes of those traditionalists; Job's new and skeptical *Weltanschauung* of God and life, as is also powerfully demonstrated by the religious struggle between Dax and Ada Cowart, is virtually chaotic to those orthodox theologians.

The feasibility that Dax's radicalism about life stems from his detachment from God may well be bolstered by the striking analogy between the doctors with whom Dax struggles *and* God whom Job confronts. What I am proposing here is not that those physicians acted in certain ways which frustrate Dax's faith, but rather that Dax's experience of the compulsorily exerted pain could drive him to harbor deep pessimism of God. Probably, God's image may be perceived as hostile by one who is victimized by the kind of pain. In hospital external reality is cut off from Dax, whose eyes and hands are inoperative. He neither sees the doctors nor feels their body. To Dax, who is physically powerless to see, resist, flee, or shield his *body*, his unlimited harm comes from his *disembodied* doctors, who are similar to God in that the divinity is a spiritual being without a physical form. Dax's complicated ontological situation, in which he possibly encounters with God's power through his doctors, becomes more ironical, as Sally Gadow nicely points out,³⁷⁾ when

37) Sally Gadow, "Remember in the Body: Pain and Moral Uncertainty," *Dax's Case: Essays in Medical Ethics and Human Meaning*, 160-163.

we consider that it is only physician-inflicted *pain* that was able to let Dax affirm the physicians' healing *blessing*. That is to say, it is only through the physician-inflicted *pain* that Dax could experience the inexperienceable God in a way to affirm God's existence.³⁸⁾ According to Gadow, Dax is likely to have been tempted to take the physicians not an omnipotent Good but rather an evil regime,³⁹⁾ while being pressed in toward death as a sole realm free from the violent pain. For Dax, therefore, the persistently unwanted pain serves not as divinely graceful providence for a "renewal of belief,"⁴⁰⁾ but rather as divinely gradual destruction of his all hope.⁴¹⁾

Catalytic for Dax's spiritual transference from struggling with the unjustifiable pain to the falling in religious devastation is the absence of genuine sympathy with the burnt victim.⁴²⁾ What can be shared between Dax and Job, both of whom face physical and ontological crisis, is unavailability of a true comforter for, or better, partaker of their agony. As a matter of fact, both Dax and Job are deserted in their own pain, harassed by those

38) Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 202.

39) Gadow, "Remember in the Body," 161. Yet Gadow rejects the possibility that Dax views his pain as resulting from divine "cosmic indifference" (p. 161), and that pain is a divine vehicle to "display of power" for "the pleasure of overpowering" (p.162). But I suspect that Dax, who would identify himself as Job, saw his pain as unexplainable and thus as attributable to God, who would be hardly perceived as merciful to Dax.

40) Gadow, *Ibid.*, 162.

41) In Job 14:19 Job depicts God as a deity who "actively destroys all hope, wearing it away like the slow erosion of rocks brought about by flowing water." See James L. Crenshaw, *Old Testament Wisdom: An Introduction* (revised & enlarged; Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998), 97-98.

42) Dax is rather fortunate to have Dr. Robert White, who has a "quality of mutual respect" rather than the paternalistic dominance of his doctors and maternal dominance of his mother. Job is more tragic in that he has none to find mutual respect from his friends.

who purport to help them. In this regard, Job's agonizing condition, in which he confronts human consultants and his God, throws a light on Dax's thorny relationship with his mother and the attending doctors. It is notable that the discourse between Job and his rivals is not "mutually enabling discourse," lack of which a modern ethicist bemoans in his reflection of dialogical character of Dax's case.⁴³⁾ The three consultants advise Job to repent his sins so that he can be restored by God to the formerly perfect life. But Job is unable to follow their guide since Job is convinced that his suffering has nothing to do with sin. Even though their advices contain some good intentions, the advisors' disparate grasp of Job's suffering makes their goodness invalid.

What about Dax's case? The physicians of Dax espouse the view that for the sake of his treatment Dax ought to endure its inevitably subsequent pain. They might well justify their aggressive management of Dax's pain, imagining that "With proper care this young man would undoubtedly survive; he might again find life worthwhile, even though blind, severely scarred, and maimed—with no fingers on his right hand and only a stub of a thumb on his scarred left."⁴⁴⁾ However, Dax continuously refuses the treatment, since his pain like "hell" is occasioned not by his best interest but rather by the physicians' best interest.⁴⁵⁾ What aggravates the difficult situations of Dax

43) Richard M. Zaner, "Failed or Ongoing Dialogues? Dax's Case," in *Dax's Case: Essays in Medical Ethics and Human Meaning*, 59.

44) Robert B. White, "A Memoir: Dax's Case Twelve Years Later," *Dax's Case: Essays in Medical Ethics and Human Meaning*, 15. Dr. White's expectation finds its fulfillment in the latter part of Dax's life, though it is still unclear whether Dax returns to his Christian faith. See the video interview with Dax: <https://vimeo.com/64585949>.

45) In retrospect Dax criticizes his forcibly exercised pain motivated by doctor's best interest: "What I do feel grateful to them for is that I believe they honestly felt they were acting in my best interest. But no. I'm not glad they forcibly treated me because the pain that I went through was pure hell. We lose sight

and Job is that those, who prize either “treatment” (Dax’s doctors) or “repentance” (Job’s consultants), are blind to the fact that neither treatment nor repentance is a fundamental solution for the harsh realities of Dax and Job. No one participates in their particular situations, on which both sufferers themselves know their own best solution. Thus, the reciprocally empowering dialogue may be ever unavailable insofar as the paternalists’ best interest is in discordance with the sufferers’ own.

The unbridgeable gulf between Dax and his therapists is analogous to that between Job and his God. Not surprisingly, the moral of the book of Job functions as highly critical of such paternalistic physicians’ approach to Dax’s pain. True, Dax’s pain primarily comes from the therapists’ *unilateral* power that widens the chasm between Dax and them.⁴⁶⁾ With regard to the medical unilateralism, Job’s God evokes the physicians of Dax. Presumably, Job would perceive God as paternalistic when God permits terrible pain that the heavenly Adversary (Heb. “the Satan” 1:12; 2:6) inflicts on Job, in order that Job ultimately verifies God’s conviction by becoming an exemplar of disinterested righteousness.⁴⁷⁾ That sort of God is far beyond Job’s knowledge. From the viewpoint of the divine paternalism, Job’s pain is probably beneficial to Job, too. For Job’s pain eventually serves to make Job grow to be an ideal God-fearer, who proves God’s sublime expectation for human authentic piety. Much unlike Job in the prologue (chaps. 1-2), however, the Job emerging from the poetic section (chaps. 3:1-42:6) appears

of how painful pain can be” (Dax Cowart & Robert Burt, “Confronting Death: Who Chooses, Who Controls?” EBSCOhost Electronic version, 9).

46) Sally Gadow, “Remembered in the Body: Pain and Moral Uncertainty,” 163.

47) In the prologue of the book of Job a cynical question of the Adversary, “For naught does Job serve God?” (1:9), formulates the idea that Job’s piety depended on his advantageous external circumstances. God’s acquiescence to the Adversary’s testing Job, therefore, means God’s trusts in Job’s genuine religious devotion that is above selfish interests in relation to God.

to fail to become the *exemplum* of patience,⁴⁸⁾ being haunted by the thought, ‘why does God make me feel pain?’ As nicely shown by Job’s final response to God that I will discuss in greater detail in the next section, the book of Job forges the point that Job’s sublime pain, albeit quite irresistible, transform his immature relation with God through his knowledge of and faith in God. Unlike this Job, Dax fails to reach a new vision of life and God; Dax seems remains skeptic, rebellious, and ambiguous at best.

4. Social Dimension: Dialogical Character of Ambiguity

We have investigated existential and religious spheres of Dax’s case in light of how the book of Job presents Job’s anguish and his God. Here one needs to be careful not to fall in convenient dichotomies such as patient rights vs. medical professionalism, right to die vs. duty to treat, quality of life vs. sanctity of life, and autonomous choice vs. paternalistic control and so forth.⁴⁹⁾ Even if those issues are certainly worth ongoing debates in the broader context of medical care and informed consent, I still feel that much more can be said about a difficult case of human pain like Dax’s pain. Robert Burt is quite right, for example, as he speaks of the tendency that most able-bodied members of our society have rather stereotyped attitudes toward disable-bodied members.⁵⁰⁾ The unheeded aspect of Dax’s pain,

48) In Judeo-Christian tradition Job has been interpreted as a model of patience (Jean Daniélou, *A History of Early Christian Doctrine Before the Council of Nicaea, Vol III. The Origins of Latin Christianity* [Tr. David Smith & John Austin Baker; Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1977], 324-326).

49) Kliever, *Ibid.*, 187.

50) Robert Burt and Dax Cowart, “Confronting Death: Who Chooses, Who Controls?” EBSCOhost Electric Version, 2.

I argue, derives from the ought-to-be-shared-recognition that our able-bodied status is in its essence temporary and is critically vulnerable to potential damage not only of a disastrous accident but also of natural decrepitude.⁵¹⁾ In my view, people tend to ignore the possibilities of their own disability and consequently fail to recognize themselves in Dax. Yet a sympathetic hearing of Dax's heartbroken words *either* in the movies about Dax or *in* Dax's many conversations with his medical, legal care-takers ineluctably leads to a series of questions that put ourselves in the shoes of Dax: 'How should I react to my own disqualified life in a condition like Dax's?', 'Could I resist death more attractable than life which is unexpectedly given to me?', 'What possible transformation would my Christian relationship with God undergo?'⁵²⁾ This compassionate approach to Dax's case makes me go one step further to propose that the interpretation of Dax's suffering be required to clarify its *social* meaning, which requires us to set Dax's individual experience on the horizon of our *own* existential and religious situation.

The meaning of Job's story in its social context is also incontestable. Thus the following inquiries are certainly relevant: 'Does the book of Job suggest any social dimension of Job's suffering?' 'What is the literary pathos, in which the intended audience of the wisdom book were guided to perceive their own living condition in Job's story?' and 'how finally does Job/the audience find his/their own resolution/s about life, death, and

51) The biblical sage, Qoheleth, ends the book of Ecclesiastes with a long threnody on the ailments of aging, by which the sage warns the young to live carefully in the sight of the creator (Ecc 12:1-8). For fine analyses on the biblical text, see Michael V. Fox, "Aging and Death in Qoheleth 12," *JSOT* 42 (1988), 55-77 and Choon Leong Seow, "Qoheleth's Eschatological Poem," *JBL* 118 (1999), 209-234.

52) This may be also the question which a hospital chaplain would meet in crisis-counseling. See Robert C. Dykstra, "Intimate Strangers: The Role of the Hospital Chaplain in Situations of Sudden Traumatic Loss," 141.

God?’ An answer to these vital questions comes from God’s speeches and Job’s response (chaps. 38:1-42:6). As one reads the wisdom book with these questions in mind, its final chapters immediately loom large—the climax where God from the whirlwind speaks to Job, who, nearly dumfounded at the deity, utters his last statement. Particularly, Dax’s wish for death in confrontation with his extreme pain appears to be remarkably pertinent to Job’s final remarks (42:2-6) in that Job’s enigmatically ambiguous diction implies a sort of an idea of spiritual death, i.e., a surrender of his early attitude hostile to God. Put differently, although it is true that Dax’s advocacy of freedom to choose death rather than life resonates with Job’s many words that seem to opt for a certain rebellious attitude against the established values of God,⁵³⁾ the Job emerging from his “right” words about God (cf. God’s evaluation of them in

53) In order to appreciate properly the Joban skepticism, one needs to apprehend its literary, theological context in the book of Job. Divine speeches to Job, with the dominance of rhetorical questions, dramatically heighten the pathos, representing the climactic moment of the book’s thematic development. In God’s speeches we have “disputation which is the supreme achievement of sapiential rhetoric” (Crenshaw, *Old Testament Wisdom*, 28). The disputatious features of the divine speeches can be capsuled by noticing the artful intertextuality, in which God addresses the issues dealt with by Job. God’s splendid yet cruel rhetoric dismisses Job’s inclination to death: Job feels himself “going (הלך, 10:21)” to the land of deep “shadow (צלמות, 10:21),” driven by his fear that God will bring Job down to “death, (מוות, 30:23).” But God doubts the very trustfulness of Job’s groan, questioning whether Job has any experience of “walking” (הלך, 38:16) in the recesses of the deep and whether Job has seen the door of “death” and its “shadow” (38:17). Job not only assimilates himself to the Phoenix, the mythical bird who sadly lost his “nest (קן, 29:18),” but also portraying his life as passing by so swiftly just like an “eagle (נשר, 9:26)” that swoops on the prey. However, rather than consoling Job, God highlights Job’s impotence in use of a strong creature of God, an “eagle” who makes its safe “nest” on high and finds its new prey from there (39:27). To sum, in this light Job’s recoiling from and skepticism of this God becomes rather understandable.

42:7-8) only serve to highlight the ultimate value of Job's final decision to withdraw from his wrongly-driven self-justification through condemning his mysterious God (40:8).

Let me briefly describe Job's transformation that is planted in elliptical wording of Job's replies to God (40:4-5; 42:2-6) and return to the topic of the social analogy between Job and Dax.

Why Job entertains the skepticism of the *traditional* piety readily becomes graspable once we consider how Job meets a *strange* God in the whirlwind. Much unlike Job's (and the intended audience's and the modern reader's) expectation for sincere comfort from God, whom the Israelites traditionally believed to be their Heavenly Mercy, Job encounters a stunningly new face of God, that is, an experience of what a modern counselor calls "radical newness," which threatens our previous way of ordering our lives and creates a severe threat of disintegration of the self.⁵⁴⁾ So the divine voice from the whirlwind refutes Job's claims and virtually maximizes Job's pain. In a sense Job is skeptical of God as destructive as God of the divine speeches is. God whom Job encounters may well be demonstrated by God, who is keenly aware of Job's curse on life which we previously regarded as being approximate to Dax's hope for death wish. Indeed, God's poetic language of repetition is powerful as well as unrelenting enough to Job's dark wish for death. For example, God sharply contrasts Job, who "searches (חָפַר, 3:21)" for death more than for hidden treasure, with a war horse, who "paws (חָפַר, 39:29)" fiercely and rejoices in its imminent mortal combat.⁵⁵⁾ Job is so weak

54) Robert C. Dykstra, "Intimate Strangers: The Role of the Hospital Chaplain in Situations of Sudden Traumatic Loss," 141. See also David K. Schweizer, "Crisis Intervention and Problem Solving," in *Clinical Handbook of Pastoral Counseling*, ed. Robert J. Wicks et al. (New York: Paulist Press, 1985), 134-136.

55) Note that Hebrew here means horse's "pawing" at the same time Job's "search"! This kind of repetition as typical Hebrew rhetoric is well-renowned. See Robert

that he “is glad (שׂוֹשׁ, 3:22)” to find a grave, is unceasingly terrified at divine “dread (אִיָּדָה, 9:34; 13:21),” and “is scared (חָתַת, 7:14)” of a divine nightmare. On the contrary, the war horse, not “dismayed (חָתַת, 39:22)” at swords, “exults (שׂוֹשׁ, 39:21)” mightily with “terrible (אִיָּדָה, 39:20)” snorting.⁵⁶⁾

Why is God so harsh in regard to Job’s favoritism for death? It is perhaps because Job in his enduring torment both obscures God’s justice and challenges God’s lordship.⁵⁷⁾ In chaps 38-41 Job thus submits a writ by which to summon formally “Shaddai (i.e., The Almighty)” to appear in court as Job’s legal “respondent”⁵⁸⁾ (31:35). In doing so Job portrays himself as an ideal ruler who perfectly fulfills his role as chief in the community, while accusing God of denying Job the justice that Job practiced toward others as a ruler.⁵⁹⁾ Full analysis of God’s speeches goes beyond the limit of this essay. Yet it might suffice to mention that God’s self-manifestation points to a deity far removed from the difficulties of human beings and communities. God proclaims God’s sovereignty over human antagonists like Job by shattering Job’s “illusion that he occupies the central position in the universe.”⁶⁰⁾

Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York: Basic Books, 1980).

56) Again, notice the web of the intertextuality: “glad(Job)/exult(horse),” “scare(Job)/terrified(horse),” and “dread(Job)/terrible(horse)”!

57) Thus God reproves Job, saying, “Who is this that *darkens* counsel by words without knowledge?” (38:2). Job reflects the divine rebuke in his response, “Who is this that *hides* counsel without knowledge?” (42:2).

58) Habel, *The Book of Job*, 439.

59) Richard J. Clifford, *The Wisdom Literature* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998), 86. The divine speeches shows God’s counter to Job’s attack on the divinity. Job, who “is full of (שָׂבַע, 7:4; 10:15; 14:1)” tossing, disgrace, and trouble, becomes vexed by God, who “fills (שָׂבַע, 9:18)” Job not with fresh air but bitterness. Job then declares himself as a lord whose household under his tent “are satisfied with (שָׂבַע, 31:31)” good food, implying that he is quite contrary to the nonchalant, divine Lord. God then displays that the deity saturates (שָׂבַע, 38:27) the desolate waste land to make the grass sprout forth, underscoring divine fatherly love superior to Job’s mercy.

What seems to be Job's skepticism about his God, which may be similar in spirit to Dax's disillusionment with his life, should be understood in that particular circumstance, where Job/Dax flounders in face with the worst experience of God/life.⁶¹⁾ Both sufferers not only evade from the God/life but also doubt the values given already to God/life. How does Job cope with this difficult God? We see that Job's first reply to God is a roundabout expression of his frustration and anger.⁶²⁾ And Job's second and final reply to God (42:6) is peppered with irony and ambiguity. It is terse, enigmatic, and grammatically odd. Almost every word in it, therefore, is susceptible of more than one interpretation. The Hebrew **סָנֵן** in its transitive form, meaning "despise" or "reject," requires an object, but none is present in 42:6a.⁶³⁾ Alongside it, likewise formidable ambiguity

60) Crenshaw, *Old Testament Wisdom*, 99.

61) But Job's skepticism should be differentiated from pessimism. Thus James L. Crenshaw, "The Birth of Skepticism in Ancient Israel," in *The Divine Helmsman: Studies in God's control of human events presented to Lou H. Silberman*, ed. James L. Crenshaw et al. (New York: KTAV Pub. House, 1980), 1, well summarizes this kind of skepticism: "In my view, skepticism includes both a denial and an affirmation. The negative side of a skeptic's mental outlook consists of the doubting thought, whereas the positive affirmation of a hidden reality indicates that it is altogether inappropriate to accuse skeptics of unbelief. This vision of a better world is inherent in skepticism."

62) James L. Crenshaw, *Old Testament Story and Faith: A Literary and Theological Introduction* (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1992), 314, states: "To be sure, he does this in *anger* and *desperation*, but he directs his dark thoughts to God." (Emphases mine).

63) A variety of translations of English bibles takes "despise myself" (RSV), "melt away" (NEB), "retract" (JB), and "ashamed of" (GNB). Many suggestions, though not entirely satisfactory, have been made for a possible translation of 42:6a. Scholars like Lester Jacob Kuyper, "The Repentance of Job," *VT* 9 (1959) 91-94, and N. Habel, *The Book of Job*, 582, suggest "I despise myself, (i.e., 'I retract') or 'I reject my words (i.e., 'I recant')." Yet other scholars argue that the object is present in the words. So some claim that the object is present in the phrase

is embedded in the next Hebrew, “נִחַמְתִּי” (42:2b).⁶⁴ The ambiguity of Job’s second reply defies every attempt to reduce it to a single, definitive interpretation. For this reason, one can justifiably translate 42:6, conveying simultaneously all diverse possibilities, as any of the following different manners⁶⁵: (1) “Therefore I despise myself and repent upon dust and ashes” (i.e., in humiliation); (2) “Therefore I retract my words and repent of dust and ashes” (i.e., the symbols of mourning); (3) “Therefore I reject and forswear dust and ashes” (i.e., the symbols of mourning); (4) “Therefore I retract my words and have changed my mind concerning dust and ashes” (i.e., the human condition); (5) “Therefore I retract my words, and I am comforted concerning dust and ashes” (i.e., the human condition); or (6) “Therefore I despise and repent of dust and ashes” (i.e., Job’s subdued sarcasm about God). Considering all these potential meanings with a variety of nuances, the author of the book of Job appears to have intended a kind of literary, polyphonic effect. In doing so, the author deliberately allows Job’s inner trembling at his face-to-face experience of God to pulsate with

“dust and ashes” (D. Patrick, “The Translation of Job 42:6,” VT 26 [1976] 369-371); Some claim that the Hebrew in question is a variant of a different Hebrew “נָסַח” (melt),” suggesting that it might be translated as “I submit” (E. Dhorme, *A Commentary on the Book of Job* [London: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1967], 646-647).

64) Williams S. Morrow, “Consolation, Rejection, and Repentance in Job 42:6,” JBL 105 (1986) 211-25, suggests that this be translated as “I repent upon/on account of ...” or “I have changed my mind concerning ...” or “I forswear ...”

65) For the first five possibilities and the sixth, see Carol Newsom, *The Book of Job: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections*, The New Interpreter’s Bible Vol. IV (Nashville: Abingdon, 1996), 629 and Edwin M. Good, “The Problem of Evil in the Book of Job,” in *The Voice from the Whirlwind*, 68, respectively. In the sixth translation Job is shown as giving up “the entire structure of the world as mirroring moral retribution,” convinced that “suffering has no connection with sin, and the world is not run by deserving” (p. 68).

Job's highly ambiguous diction. The ambiguity of Job's replies to God, therefore, calls for multiple interpretative attentions to Job's final decision about his God. This multivalence of Job's final answer, however, does not confirm Job's skepticism of God that he earlier entertains in his dialogues with his three friends. Rather, the author invites us to choose one of those possible meanings that we regard as most suitable for Job in face with God. In short, the author prompts us to stand as Job in making an ultimate response to God.

Moreover, a grasping of the polyphony of Job's diction provides valuable insight, in which the interpreters draw out a social dialogue from the ambiguity of Dax case.⁶⁶⁾ Job chooses silence rather than speech in his first reply to God, saying, "I will not answer; 'twice' but will proceed no further" (40:5). In his silence Job is overwhelmed by seeing the Almighty, who destroys his sweet memories of the deity who protected him and showered blessings on him. Similarly, Dax probably felt himself irresistible against an absolute dark power of pain, which devours his love for life that he relished in his prime days. This terrible situation of Dax, as seen in his existential, religious crisis, drove him to the realm of moral ambiguity, where life and death or the Christianity and atheism clash with each other so fiercely that in Dax the one obliterates the other. His individual, ambiguity-oriented experience of pain turns out to be a sort of communal problem when the ambiguity is perceived in the social level, where no single ethical recommendation can be absolute. Thus, an interpreter of Dax's case states⁶⁷⁾:

66) This dialogue is the "method" of dialogue or conversation as a mutual exploration of possibilities in the search of truth" (Thomas R. Cole, *Handbook of the Humanities and Aging*, ed. Idem. et al. [New York: Springer Publishing Company, 1992], xvi.).

67) Gadon, "Remembered in The Body: Pain and Moral Uncertainty," 152.

“The moral disagreement between Dax and his doctors ... has not abated. By now it appears that neither arbitration nor a different outcome would bring agreement. The intrinsic moral *ambiguity* of causing pain without permission has not been dissolved, and it is that *ambiguity* that keeps the anguish of Dax’s case from subsiding finally into the silence of moral certainty. The most elegant ethical reasoning cannot erase the *ambiguity*, because no argument on behalf of Dax’s good can fail to address the reality that, in addition to good—or instead of it—serious harm was done.”

Inasmuch as the ambiguity is the problem in interpreting Dax’s situation, as Gadow sensibly comments, “a moral framework cannot count as a solution.”⁶⁸⁾ Rather, one may well embrace an alternative way of dealing with Dax’s case, a way that I would call respect for hermeneutical aporia. In Platonic sense *aporia* (ἀπορία) means want of means or resource, embarrassment, difficulty, hesitation, or perplexity.⁶⁹⁾ Once the participant in dialogue is overcome by the aporia in which the participant cannot continue the quest for knowledge without contemplating the conundrum, the participant in effect undergoes “the concrete experience of not-knowing and wanting-to-know something deeply vital.”⁷⁰⁾ The aporia then leads the participant to a process of understanding: asking, being challenged, doubting, exploring, unearthing, freedom *from* temporary ignorance, and finally freedom *for* genuine knowing.⁷¹⁾ Hence, I propose that the ambiguity of Job’s response should signal a social aporia which both the audience of the sapiential book and the interpreters of Dax’s case experience in common. As Job’s polyvalent reply to God hinders the audience from

68) Gadow, *Ibid.*, 161.

69) *A Greek-English Lexicon*, Henry George Liddell & Robert Scott (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968).

70) Zaner, “Failed or Ongoing Dialogue,” 53. (Emphases mine).

71) Zaner, “Failed or Ongoing Dialogue,” 53-54.

fixing simplistically either Job's repentance or Job's rebellion, so the ambiguity of Dax's case thwarts the interpreters' trial to side either with Dax's autonomy or with doctor's paternalism. And this social aporia provides both the interpreters and the audience with marvelous freedom, in which they grow to be a mature member of the community.⁷²⁾

IV. Concluding Remarks

All the three dimensions of the comparison between Dax and Job show that Dax's willing for death by rejecting medical treatment does not comparable to the multivalent nature of Job's suffering. Especially, the social aspect of our consideration helps us appreciate the profounder significance of the denouement of the book of Job. Namely, the author endows Job's final response, which is such a decisive moment in the book, with these ambiguities, in which no single translation is enough for its full potential meanings. It is because the author intends to let an interpretation of Job's response depend on how the audience wants to read it.⁷³⁾ In doing so, however, this careful author does not

72) Dax's retrospective comment on his ordeal is worth our special attention in understanding the concept of freedom in terms of responsibility of a mature member of the community: "I just did not feel that living my life blind, disfigured, with my fingers amputated and at that time not even able to walk, would be worthwhile. With that quality of life, it did not seem that I would ever want to live. I have freely admitted for many years now that I was wrong about that. I want to clarify this, though. Freedom, true freedom, not only gives us the right to make the correct choices; it also has to give us the right sometimes to make the wrong choices" (Dax Cowart & Robert Burt, "Confronting Death: Who Chooses, Who Controls?" EBSCOhost Electronic version, 5).

73) Newsom, *The Book of Job*, 629, nicely captures this point as she states: "A reader who has interpreted the divine speeches as a defense of God's honor and a rebuke to the audacity of a mere human in challenging God will tend to hear

compel his audience to decide on a certain attitude to their God and their religion. Instead, the author simply chooses to open the end of the book to the audience,⁷⁴⁾ in order that they may judge Job by themselves, while inspiring Job's second response with "unheard-of freedom"⁷⁵⁾ that is held by the ambiguity. My point is that this interpretative open-ended perspective would be also applicable to Dax's case. That is to say, one is able to re-actualize the biblical open-mindedness in a difficult case of medical ethics like Dax's medical predicament.⁷⁶⁾ If we view Dax's case as a social discourse, in which the participant can find his/her own expression of pain, life, death and God-forsakenness, why don't we leave it to each member's interpretative freedom, without being haunted by the moral question about which idea is clearly right or clearly wrong? I am not saying that Dax's wish for death

Job's words more or less according to the first alternative ... a reader who understands the book largely in terms of the legal metaphor and takes God's speeches as a rebuttal of Job's lawsuit might be inclined to hear Job's words in term of the second alternative. One who emphasizes the celebratory tone of the divine speeches might hear Job's words according to the third alternative. In the interpretation of the divine speeches proposed there, which understands them as challenging Job's legal paradigm and placing the question of human existence in terms of a world in which the chaotic must be acknowledged, either the fourth or the fifth alternative appears fitting."

74) Carol A. Newsom, "Bakhtin, the Bible, and Dialogical Truth," *JR* 76 (1996), 294.

75) Михаил Бахтин, *Проблемы Поэтики Достоевского* (Москва: Советский писатель, 1963), 48, cites the Russian Soviet critic, Lunarcharsky. Using the critic's renowned definition of Dostoevsky's poetics with regard to the freedom of the character in the novelist's works, Bakhtin writes that "А та неслыханная свобода голосов в полифонии Достоевского, которая поражает читателя [And that unheard-of freedom of voices in Dostoevsky's polyphony, which strikes the reader]" (Translation and emphasis mine).

76) As well pointed out by Denis G. Arnold and Paul T. Menzel, "When comes 'The End of the Day?'," 27, Dax's case requires one to discover its "open nature of the question of enduring truly agonizing pain in the hope of possibly realizing a worthwhile life."

should be right and thus embraced by our society. To the contrary, I propose that it is a wise way to help some Christians in crisis grow up to be steadfast to their God. Like Job, they overcome their own narrow vision of God and advance to be a new person beyond self.

If the audience of the book of Job could see their own crisis in Job's crisis, it would seem certainly possible for us to sense our own disable-bodied status in Dax's one. To some people, therefore, Dax's choice to refuse treatment means more than his wish for death, something like Dax's invitation for them to respond to their own harsh reality, freely and responsibly, without force or violence.⁷⁷⁾ With Dax and Job, we also boldly confront the ambiguity which ever triggers an uncomfortable suspicion that our lives and the world contain no real meaning,⁷⁸⁾ while interpreting freely and maturely our own life, death, and God.

<주요어>

윤기, 의학 윤리, 도날드 허버트 코워트, 의사의 치료와 환자의 권리, 고통과 변화

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77) So Zaner, "Failed or Ongoing Dialogue," 57.

78) Thomas R. Cole, *Handbook of the Humanities and Aging*, xv-xvi, nicely presents this situation, which "recalls us to the practical modesty that informed Renaissance humanists, who accepted the uncertainty, *ambiguity*, and plurality in all human knowledge but who nevertheless sought *wisdom*, virtue, goodness, and human completion" (Emphases mine).

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<Abstract>

**Suffering, Ambiguity, and Social Dialogue:
Dax's Case in Light of Job's Story**

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This paper examines a medical issue, a patient's right to die, in relation to Dax's Case from a theological perspective of the Book of Job. Donald "Dax" Herbert Cowart (1947–2019), a native Texan, was severely injured in a propane gas explosion and has since been a social icon for his persistent claim to a patient's right to die. The work of a systematic theologian, Lonnie D. Kliever, appreciates analogies between Dax and Job in an attempt to apprehend the horrendous incident of the burn victim in light of the biblical story of the undeserving suffering. Kliever captures in many ways the relevance of the book of Job in connection to Dax's medical case. However, Kliever's evaluation of Dax's Case exposes his normative demands, which are inadequate to handle the dilemma inherent in Dax's suffering. The main concern of this paper, therefore, is with a more rigorous analysis of Dax's case, based on biblical exegesis of some foundational texts of Job—an interpretation that probes the applicability of Joban wisdom to the ethical ambiguities of Dax's Case. I will *sympathetically* portray the similarities in the nature of pain between Dax and Job, proving the comparative approach taken by scholars such as Kliever. Then, I will *critically* examine the dissimilarities in the attitude to pain between Dax and Job, stressing that, unlike Dax, Job overcomes his crisis of life in God's providence.

<초록>

고통, 모호성, 사회적 대화

-옉기로 성찰하는 환자의 권리 주장-

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이 논문은 환자가 의료치료를 거절하고 스스로 죽음을 택할 권리가 있다는 주장을 성찰하되, 옉기의 고통에 대한 신학적 관점에 근거하여 비판적으로 접근한다. 닥스라는 이름으로 널리 알려진 도날드 허버트 코워트(1947-2019)는 젊은 시절 불의의 가스 폭발 사고로 온 몸의 기능을 거의 다 상실했다. 닥스는 그의 고통스러운 화상 치료를 거부했으나 받아들여지지 않았고, 이후로 환자의 죽음의 권리에 대한 사회 운동에 몸담았다. 조직신학자 클리이버(Lonnie D. Kliever)처럼 학자들은 옉과 닥스를 비교할 때 성경의 비슷한 사례를 통해 닥스의 주장에 관련하여 전통적이고 규범적인 생명윤리를 다루었다. 그와 달리, 논자는 닥스의 사례와 같은 난해한 의학 윤리 문제를 철저한 성경 주석적 접근으로 분석해야 함을 주장한다. 논자는 닥스와 옉의 고통을 신학-윤리적 근거에서 분석함으로써 인간 실존의 본질에 있어서 옉과 닥스의 유사성을 공감적으로 분석한다. 더 나아가, 논자는 고통에 대한 태도에 있어서 옉과 닥스의 차이점을 비판적으로 부각하여, 닥스와 같은 영적 위기에 빠진 그리스도인들에게 옉이 성취한 신앙의 성장과 세계관의 확장에서 교훈을 얻도록 독려한다.