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Concepts of the Divine in the Book of Job

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I. The Quest

The Book of Job presupposes a monotheistic concept of God and, therefore, includes that the concepts of the Divine are multi faced. Concepts of the Divine are in Elihu's interest in Job 32-37. For they form an inner part of the book, I would like to start giving a very brief introduction to the Book of Job (II.). This is followed by a systematic analysis of the Elihu speeches and their elaborated theology (III.). I aim to show that Elihu draws an image of God that is new within the book and intends to present God in the best possible light. For this new perception, Elihu combines five different subjects (III.1-III.5). In my conclusion, I will demonstrate that the Elihu speeches with their differentiated concepts of the Divine preserve the characteristics of monotheism elaborated by different theories (IV.).

II. The Monotheistic Concept in the Book of Job

The Book of Job presupposes a monotheistic concept of God that has started developing in the 6th century BC.[1] Though God is described as אֵל, אֱלוֹהַּ, אֱלֹהִים or שַׁדַּי[2] and is called אֶחָד[3]

[1] For the monotheistic concept of the Divine as a problem fundamental to the Book of Job, cf. SPIECKERMANN, Hiob, 1778; MÜLLER, Monotheismus, 1461; KÖHLMOOS, Auge, 355-366. Opposing this view, SITZLER, Vorwurf, 155-157, assumes that Job's accusation against God does not form a premise for monotheism. MÜLLER, Monotheismus, 1461 with reference to Is 45:7; Zach 3; Job 1:6-11; 2:1-7; I Chr 21:1 and STOLZ, Einführung, 187 argue that the monotheistic concept of the Divine was developed in late postexilic period.
TREVES, Book, 261-272 and SCHWIENHORST-SCHÖNBERGER, Ijob, 344 support the view that even the eldest traditions within the book are from postexilic time. Though discussing the different concepts explaining the origin and the formation of the book of Job, VAN OORSCHOT, Entstehung, 166-184 does not pay attention to the time period when these eldest parts of the book came into existence.
Talking about a monotheistic concept of God includes a definition on monotheism. The term 'monotheism' is an artificial word that was introduced by Henry Moore in 1660. Cf. LANG, Monotheismus, 150; PETRY, Entgrenzung, 8. Monotheism is understood as the belief in one God, cf. LANG, Monotheismus, 148. For a detailed discussion of the term cf. MACDONALD, Deuteronomy, 1-58. As SCHMID, Differenzierungen, 17-18

in the dialogues, while the tetragram is used primarily in the narrative frame,[4] these different labels of God are identified with JHWH, the one God.[5] This God has become extremely problematic in the narrative frame of the book, for he collaborates with Satan in the heavenly scenes and is responsible for Job's suffering though Job is pious, upright and a God-fearer.[6] In the dialogical speeches, Job turns to God in plaintive cry and complaint. Job considers God to be his enemy and he claims his own righteousness in face of God. God answers Job in the storm by presenting his power over his creation so that Job submits under God. In the end, God makes a restitution of Job.[7]

III. The Elihu Speeches

Within this plot demonstrating that God has become extremely problematic, the young but wise man Elihu shows up on the scene. He gives his answer in Job 32-37. These chapters form in my point of view an interpolation to the book of Job.[8] Elihu speaks in four didactic monologues and his sole purpose is to depict God in the best possible light.[9] By quoting Job,

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mentions, it is necessary to form further differentiations of the term so that the word 'monotheism' does not lack in content. Therefore, Schmid distinguishes between excluding and including concepts, evolutionary and revolutionary systems, implicit and explicit expressions, unity and uniqueness of God as well as monolatric and monotheistic concepts of the Divine. PETRY, Entgrenzung, 1-14; esp. 8-9, in his thesis on Deuteronomy, second Isaiah and Ezekiel, cautions us to understand a biblical text as monotheistic just because it refers to one God by leaving out other deities. If one intends to analyse texts in the Old Testament that convey a monotheistic concept of the Divine, one has to pay attention only to those texts that negate the existence of other deities. For those 'monotheistic' texts in Deuteronomy and second Isaiah see PETRY, Entgrenzung, 15-29; 93-103; 105-141; 188-240.
This kind of differentiation as described by Schmid and, as specified by Petry, is neither of importance nor of interest for the Book of Job. The Image of God in the book of Job is differentiated and specified by further attributes and characteristics within the monotheistic concept of the Divine.
It is remarkable that, in recent publications on monotheism, Wisdom Literature of the Old Testament is not mentioned. KÖCKERT, Wandlungen, 3-36 discusses only questions concerning the history of religion in the Ancient Near East. Though Köckert supports a variety of ways to talk about God in Old Testament, e.g. the image of God as God of the weather, like in Psalm 29 or Job 36-37, the book of Job is not mentioned in his further argument and discussion, cf. KÖCKERT, Wandlungen, 5. Other works on monotheism that refrain from discussing Wisdom Literature include: SÖDING, Glaube; KOCH, Gott; KÖCKERT, Gott, 137-175; OEMING/ SCHMID, Gott; ASSMANN, Unterscheidung, 19-47.

2 Cf. already DRIVER/ GRAY, ICC, xxxv-xxxvi; xlii-xliii.

3 Cf. Job 31:15. Job turns to God solely in the prologue (Job 1:21; 2:10) and in his complaints in his speeches (Job 7:16-21; 9:15-23; 10:2-22; 13:18-28; 16:19-21; 19:25-26; 30:19-23). Cf. VON RAD, Weisheit, 286.

4 It is used only once in Job's speech in Job 12:9.

5 Cf. KÖHLMOOS, Auge, 362.

6 Cf. VON RAD, Weisheit, 267-288.

7 Cf. aaO., 288-292.

8 For the question of literary integrity of the book of Job, see VAN OORSCHOT, Entstehung, 165-184; for the secondary interpolation of the Elihu's speeches, cf. DRIVER/ GRAY, ICC, xix-lxxviii; FOHRER, KAT, 29-42; POPE, AncB, 218; MENDE, Leiden, 139-143; 275-276; DELL, Job, 195-198; WAHL, Schöpfer, 172-181; KÖHLMOOS, Auge, 48-55; 71-73; BARTON, Criticism, 28. Against this view, HABEL, OTL, 35-42, argues for the literal integrity of the book.

9 Cf. „It is obvious that Job's misery has made little impression on Elihu, whose sole purpose is to depict God in the best possible light, even if that means accusing Job of serious misconduct." CRENSHAW, God, 127.

who assumes on the one hand his own uprightness and righteousness and on the other hand regards God to be unjust, Elihu disagrees to Job's assumption. Instead, the Elihu speeches aim to establish the concept of the Divine anew by referring to the other parts of the book of Job and by specifying God's attributes and characteristics.[10] Therefore, Elihu argues for a new perception of God within the book of Job.

I intend to demonstrate this new perception offered by Elihu in the next chapters and gain to categorize Elihu's perception of God into the following five subjects: According to Elihu, God educates humankind by means of dreams and suffering (III.1), God sends an angel as mediator between God and the suffering humankind for his redemption and restitution (III.2), God preserves and observes his right, justice and judgement instead of Job who assumes himself to be righteous (III.3), God is transcendent (III.4) and last he is mighty as the creator, who creates the earth and human beings (III.5). Therefore, Elihu maintains the difference between God as creator and humankind as creature. The special theological profile of Elihu is shown by references and comparisons to other parts of the Book of Job.

III.1 God's Education by Means of Dreams and Suffering

According to Elihu in Job 33:15-18, God reveals himself in dreams and visions at night (33:15).

Job 33:15-18

15 בַּחֲלוֹם חֶזְיוֹן לַיְלָה בִּנְפֹל תַּרְדֵּמָה עַל־אֲנָשִׁים ׀ בִּתְנוּמוֹת עֲלֵי מִשְׁכָּב׃
16 אָז יְגַלֶּה אׇזֶן אֲנָשִׁים וּבְמוּסָרָם יַחְתֹּם׃
17 לְהָסִיר אָדָם מַעֲשֵׂהוּ וּגְוָה מִגֶּבֶר יְכַסֶּה׃
18 יַחְשֹׂךְ נַפְשׁוֹ מִנִּי־שָׁחַת ׀ וְחַיָּתוֹ מֵעֲבֹר בַּשָּׁלַח׃

15. In a dream, in a vision at night, when deep sleep falls on human beings, in slumber on bed,
16. then he opens the human's ear and he confirms [them] in their education
17. in order to turn away humans from their deeds and to cut away pride from humans.
18. He keeps his life away from the pit and [keeps] his life [away] from passing to the channel of death.

God opens the human's ear in order to educate him and to lead him to abandon his pride and bad deeds (33:16-17). God's purpose of his revelation in dreams is to turn away humankind from pride and bad deeds so that humankind is kept away from death (33:18).

In this respect he differs from Eliphas, who, in Job 4:12-21, reports on his nightly vision which comprises an audition (4:12-13). In terror and trembling (4:14-16), Eliphas receives

[10] Elihu argues with Job and reacts towards his speeches. Therefore, he addresses Job with and without name, he talks about Job in 3rd person and he quotes him at the beginning of his arguments in the first three of his four speeches. For the address by name cf. Job 33:1.31-33; 37:14-19; the address without name, cf. Job 33:8.12; 34:16; 35:2-8; 36:2-4.16-21.24-26. In Job 34:5.7; 35:16 Elihu talks about Job in 3rd person, in Job 34:9 as well, although without naming him. Elihu quotes Job in Job 33:9-11; 34:5-6.9; 35:2b.3. In his speeches, Job has never said what Elihu supposes to be quotations. Single phrases refer to Job's talking, but not the quotation as a whole.

God's revelation that implies, on the one hand, that only God is righteous and, as the creator, superior to human beings, and, on the other hand, humankind is described as human creature lacking righteousness before God (4:17).

In his reply, Job answers in Job 7:14 that God discourages him in dreams and frightens him in visions.

Elihu, however, though without reporting a detailed vision he has seen, concludes that dreams and visions at night are legitimate means for the revelation of God. Neither terror nor trembling as Eliphas pointed out, nor Job's fear of frightening dreams and visions, are retaken and reviewed in Elihu's argument. Instead, by dreams and visions, humankind's bad deeds are taken away for not letting humankind entering the pit.

Beside the motive of a vision, Eliphas also mentions the topic of God's education.

Job 5:17-18

17 הִנֵּה אַשְׁרֵי אֱנוֹשׁ יוֹכִחֶנּוּ אֱלוֹהַּ וּמוּסַר שַׁדַּי אַל־תִּמְאָס׃
18 כִּי הוּא יַכְאִיב וְיֶחְבָּשׁ יִמְחַץ וְיָדָיו תִּרְפֶּינָה׃

17. Consider, happy is the human being whom God educates
and who does not reject the Almighty's education.
18. For he may cause pain but he bandages wounds, he may smite but his hand heals.

In Job 5:17-18, Eliphas praises those who are educated by God and who do not reject God's education. In his view, God may cause suffering but may also bandage wounds.

Elihu also differs concerning his understanding on God's education: Eliphas merely suggests short formulated theses on God's education, while Elihu elaborates the intention of human suffering: Suffering aims to show that human beings leave their pride and bad deeds. God intends to educate human beings by letting them suffer. Within Job 33, the motive of God's education is combined on the one hand with his sending an angel as Divine mediator between God and suffering humankind and on the other hand with humankind's redemption by God (cf. III.2).

The idea of God's education is resumed in Elihu's final speech.

Job 36:8-11

8 וְאִם־אֲסוּרִים בַּזִּקִּים יִלָּכְדוּן בְּחַבְלֵי־עֹנִי׃
9 וַיַּגֶּד לָהֶם פָּעָלָם וּפִשְׁעֵיהֶם כִּי יִתְגַּבָּרוּ׃
10 וַיְגַל אָזְנָם לַמּוּסָר וַיֹּאמֶר כִּי־יָשֻׁבוּן מֵאָוֶן׃
11 אִם־יִשְׁמְעוּ וְיַעֲבֹדוּ יְכַלּוּ יְמֵיהֶם בַּטּוֹב וּשְׁנֵיהֶם בַּנְּעִימִים׃

8. If they are captured with fetters, and bound in misery
9. then he reports them their deeds and their transgressions because they have behaved arrogantly.
10. And he opens their ears for education and he says that they turn away from wrong.
11. If they listen and serve him, they complete their days in prosperity and their years in delight.

Job 36:22

22 הֵן־אֵל יַשְׂגִּיב בְּכֹחוֹ מִי כָמֹהוּ מוֹרֶה׃

22. Behold, God is great in his power, who is a teacher like him?

In Job 36:8-11 it is said, that if human being is captured in his misery, then God will announce him his deeds and transgressions. God opens the human's ears for education. His intention is to lead the suffering human being to turn away from wrong. If the human being listens to God by turning from wrong to right, then he may complete his days and years in prosperity and delight.[11] Divine education implies the potential to lead the suffering human to return by his own activity. In difference to Job 33:15-18, the human being has to react towards Divine education by listening and serving God. In Job 36:22 God is called a מוֹרֶה, a teacher. This expression is used only six times in the Hebrew Bible, only once God is called a מוֹרֶה, namely in Job 36:22.[12] The Septuagint translates δυνάστης, ruler.[13]

III.2 An Angel as Mediator between God and Humankind

Job 33:23-26.29-30 state that an angel may stand up for a human being who is threatened by death.[14]

Job 33:23-26

23 אִם־יֵשׁ עָלָיו מַלְאָךְ מֵלִיץ אֶחָד מִנִּי־אָלֶף לְהַגִּיד לְאָדָם יָשְׁרוֹ׃
24 וַיְחֻנֶּנּוּ וַיֹּאמֶר פְּדָעֵהוּ מֵרֶדֶת שָׁחַת מָצָאתִי כֹפֶר׃
25 רֻטַּפַשׁ בְּשָׂרוֹ מִנְּעַר יָשׁוּב לִימֵי עֲלוּמָיו׃
26 יֶעְתַּר אֶל־אֱלוֹהַּ וַיִּרְצֵהוּ וַיַּרְא פָּנָיו בִּתְרוּעָה וַיָּשֶׁב לֶאֱנוֹשׁ צִדְקָתוֹ׃

23. If there is an angel upon him, an advocate, one of the thousand
in order to report the human his uprightness.
24. Then he is merciful towards him and says:
Redeem him from descending into the pit, I have found a ransom.
25. His flesh becomes strong from youth on, he returns to the days of his youth.
26. He prays to God. And he [God] is friendly towards him, shows his face in joy
and gives back to human his righteousness.

Job 33:29-30

29 הֵן־כָּל־אֵלֶּה יִפְעַל־אֵל פַּעֲמַיִם שָׁלוֹשׁ עִם־גָּבֶר׃
30 לְהָשִׁיב נַפְשׁוֹ מִנִּי־שָׁחַת לֵאוֹר בְּאוֹר הַחַיִּים׃

29. Behold! All these does God, twice or three times with a human being,
30. in order to return his life from the pit to lighten [him] in the light of life.

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11 For translating Job 36:11 see HABEL, OTL, 495: „They complete their days in prosperity and their years amid delights.“ CLINES, WBC 18A, 806: "they complete their days in prosperity and their years in contentment." POPE, AncB, 230: "They end their days in prosperity, Their years in pleasure." DRIVER/ GRAY, ICC, 311: "They complete their days in prosperity and their years in pleasure."

12 It is used for teaching priests (II Reg 17:28; II Chr 15:3; Hab 2:18), for a prophet who teaches lies (Is 9:14) or for ordinary teachers (Prov 5:13).

13 Cf. LXX Gottingensis, 375.

14 Cf. MEIER, Angel, 86.

The angel is characterized as an advocate and as one of the thousand that present God's royal household. The angel reports to the suffering human the state of his uprightness (33:23) and afterwards shows mercy towards him (33:24). There is no need for humankind to accept and confirm his restored uprightness mentioned by the angel or even to repent from wrong as precondition for the angel's mercy towards him. Instead, the angel asks God to preserve the suffering man from descending into the pit, for the angel has found a ransom (33:24). The angel's recommendation is followed by the human being's restitution from youth on (33:25). Thereupon, the angel asks God once more; and as a result of the angel's quest, God is friendly towards humankind, shows his face and returns humankind's righteousness to him (33:26). The advocate angel aims to redeem and return the suffering human being to life.[15] There is no active participation of humankind needed within his redemption, it is just the angel's and God's actions that happen to humankind's life. In the end, the angel's actions are made subordinate to God's actions (33:29). It is stated that the suffering human being, who is threatened by death, is lead back to life (33:30). According to Job 33, God intends to redeem and to return the suffering man to life.

In the heavenly scenes of the Prologue (Job 1:6-12; 2:1-7), Satan appears as one of the sons of God. God makes a pact with Satan so that God, mediated by the deeds of Satan, is responsible for Job's suffering. Satan thus figures as a mediator between God and Job while having God's permission for his actions. Just as in the heavenly scenes, Elihu's argument in Job 33 likewise introduces the angel as an advocate and as a member of God's royal household. In contrast though, Job 33 describes humankind's redemption from suffering and death. Mediated by the merciful act of the angel, God returns the suffering human being to life. Both, the Satan in the Prologue as well as the angel in Job 33, show that God is thought as transcendent because he needs mediators for his actions on humankinds. While the heavenly scenes in the Prologue elaborate Satan's responsibility for Job's suffering, the reference to the angel as advocate for the human being's suffering in front of God in Job 33 implies human's redemption and restitution. God is responsible for humankind's redemption from suffering and his restitution to life.

[15] WAHL, Schöpfer, 65-67; 163-165 supports the view that Job 33:23-26 indicates an angelology, for an angel is introduced as advocate for the suffering man. In his opinion, the angelology is unique in the Old Testament and shows parallels to non biblical texts in the later, Hellenistic and Roman period.

III.3 God's Right, Justice and Judgement

Apart from this, the idea of God's justice and righteousness, including right and judgement, forms another main topic within the Elihu speeches. This subject is subdivided into God's right and righteousness on the one hand and God's Judgement on the other hand. The first attention is drawn to God's right and righteousness.

Job 34:10-12

10 לָכֵן אַנְשֵׁי לֵבָב שִׁמְעוּ לִי חָלִלָה לָאֵל מֵרֶשַׁע וְשַׁדַּי מֵעָוֶל׃
11 כִּי פֹעַל אָדָם יְשַׁלֶּם־לוֹ וְכְאֹרַח אִישׁ יַמְצִאֶנּוּ׃
12 אַף־אָמְנָם אֵל לֹא־יַרְשִׁיעַ וְשַׁדַּי לֹא־יְעַוֵּת מִשְׁפָּט׃

10. Therefore, men of understanding hear me:
It is far from God to do wickedness and from the Almighty to do wrong.
11. For he repays him the human's deed and brings upon him as he behaved.
12. Assuredly, God does not do wicked and the Almighty does not pervert right.

Job 34:17

17 הַאַף שׂוֹנֵא מִשְׁפָּט יַחֲבוֹשׁ וְאִם־צַדִּיק כַּבִּיר תַּרְשִׁיעַ׃
17. Does even a person, who reigns, hate right and do you call the righteous and mighty wicked?

In his introductory thesis of his second speech in Job 34:10, Elihu says that God is far from wicked and wrong. Neither can God be called wicked nor does he pervert right. Rather, God repays each human being according to his deeds (34:10-12). According to Elihu, Job himself is neither right nor righteous as he quoted in Job 34:5-6. Job is wrong in expressing his own innocence.[16] Only God is righteous. Furthermore, Job is not in a position to call the mighty, just and righteous God wicked (34:17).

The question about God's and Job's righteousness is resumed in the second speech of God:

Job 40:8

הַאַף תָּפֵר מִשְׁפָּטָי תַּרְשִׁיעֵנִי לְמַעַן תִּצְדָּק׃
Do you pervert my righteousness? Do you call me wicked in order that you are righteous?

Here, God asks Job whether he perverts right and calls God wicked in order that Job himself appears righteous and right. God refutes Job's claim of innocence and aims for Job's compliance and submission.[17] While Job 40:8 indicates the direct confrontation between God and Job, Elihu, from an outsider's perspective, reasons and reflects on God and Job. Like God, he asks Job whether he is able to call God wicked. This question demands for a negation. At the same time, Elihu declares that God is mighty and just. This was not mentioned in God's speech in Job 40. Elihu, therefore, agrees with God's message in Job 40:8, that Job is unable to insist on his righteousness in the face of God. Furthermore, Elihu claims God's righteousness by calling him mighty and just.

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16 Cf. Job 9:2.15-22; 10:7; 13:18-23; 16:17; 23:10-12; 27:5-6; 31:6.13-21.23.30.

17 For Job 40:8 cf. SPIECKERMANN, Recht, 273, who points out an allusion to the phrase ‚so that you are righteous' in Ps 51:6.

Beside that, God's actions in his judgement are described in Job 34:23-25.

Job 34:23-25

23 כִּי לֹא עַל־אִישׁ יָשִׂים מוֹעד לַהֲלֹךְ אֶל־אֵל בַּמִּשְׁפָּט׃
24 יָרֹעַ כַּבִּירִים לֹא־חֵקֶר וַיַּעֲמֵד אֲחֵרִים תַּחְתָּם׃
25 לָכֵן יַכִּיר מַעַבְדֵיהֶם וְהָפַךְ לַיְלָה וְיִדַּכָּאוּ׃

23. For he sets the time for a man to go with God to the court.
24. He shatters those in power without inquiry and he sets others in their place.
25. Therefore, he knows their deeds and changes the night, so that they are shattered.

While Job declares his will to take God to court in Job 9; 14[18] and demands his judgement in Job 31:33-35, Elihu explains that God sets the time for judgement. The idea of God's judgement is described in Job 34:23-28 but is not explained elsewhere in the book of Job. In God's judgment, he shatters those in power without special inquiry (34:24-25) and listens to the cries of the poor and afflicted (34:27-28). Since the key words of Job 34 are מִשְׁפָּט, צֶדֶק and צָדַק, as well as רֶשַׁע and הִרְשִׁיעַ, the second speech of Elihu gives a summarized interpretation on God's right, justice and judgement in the book of Job.

III.4 God's Concealment and Transcendence

The appearance of the angel in Job 33:23 has already implied God's transcendence for the angel mediates between God and humankind, this characteristic is mentioned more detailed in Elihus second and third speech.

Job 34:29a

וְהוּא יַשְׁקִט וּמִי יַרְשִׁיעַ וַיַּסְתֵּר פָּנִים וּמִי יְשׁוּרֶנּוּ

And if he keeps quiet – who shall call wicked? And if he conceals his face – who shall see him?

Here, God upholds his concealment from humankind. This idea is retaken in the following speech:

Job 35:5-7

5 הַבֵּט שָׁמַיִם וּרְאֵה וְשׁוּר שְׁחָקִים גָּבְהוּ מִמֶּךָּ׃
6 אִם־חָטָאתָ מַה־תִּפְעָל־בּוֹ וְרַבּוּ פְשָׁעֶיךָ מַה־תַּעֲשֶׂה־לּוֹ׃
7 אִם־צָדַקְתָּ מַה־תִּתֶּן־לּוֹ אוֹ מַה־מִּיָּדְךָ יִקָּח׃

5. Look up to the sky and see, regard the clouds, they are higher than you.
6. If you have sinned, what may you do to him?
   And if your transgressions increase, what do you do him?
7. If you are righteous what may you give him or what may he take from your hand?

Elihu points out God's transcendence to Job in chapter 35:5-7. Job may see the sky and the clouds but they are above him and higher than he himself is. If Job has sinned and has increased his transgressions, what shall he do to God? If Job is righteous, what can he give to

[18] Cf. Job 9:19.32b; 14:3. Beside that, Eliphas says in Job 22:4 that God will take Job to the court.

God and what can God take from him? Rhetorical questions of this kind support the idea that there is a fundamental difference between God and human beings. Humankind is characterized as finite and limited in the face of God's greatness.

III.5 God's Greatness as Creator

While God's transcendence already implies that God is great, Elihu expresses the topic of God's greatness and power explicitly in several passages.

Job 34:13-15

13 מִי־פָקַד עָלָיו אָרְצָה וּמִי שָׂם תֵּבֵל כֻּלָּהּ׃
14 אִם־יָשִׂים אֵלָיו לִבּוֹ רוּחוֹ וְנִשְׁמָתוֹ אֵלָיו יֶאֱסֹף׃
15 יִגְוַע כָּל־בָּשָׂר יָחַד וְאָדָם עַל־עָפָר יָשׁוּב׃

13. Who has ordered upon the earth and who has set the entire world?
14. If he just paid attention to himself he would withdraw spirit and breath.
15. All flesh would pass away and humankind will return to dust.

God's greatness and his power are mainly mentioned regarding God's creation. In Job 34:13-15, God puts the earth into order. If he withdraws spirit and breath, all flesh will pass away and humankind will return to dust. God, therefore, has the might and power on earth and humankind.

In Elihu's final speech, God's greatness and might form the key words:

Job 36:5

הֵן־אֵל כַּבִּיר וְלֹא יִמְאָס כַּבִּיר כֹּחַ לֵב׃

Behold, God is mighty and does not reject, mighty in the power of his understanding.

Job 36:26

הֵן־אֵל שַׂגִּיא וְלֹא נֵדָע מִסְפַּר שָׁנָיו וְלֹא־חֵקֶר׃

Behold, God is exalted and we do not know the number of his years, without inquiry.

Job 37:5

יַרְעֵם אֵל בְּקוֹלוֹ נִפְלָאוֹת עֹשֶׂה גְּדֹלוֹת וְלֹא נֵדָע׃

God thunders with his voice – wonderful things. He does great things and we do not know.

Here, God's greatness and power are the key topics that are mentioned in each introductory thesis in Job 36:5.26. God, in his might and power, is said to be responsible for rain, the different kinds of clouds, the water cycle, snow, wind, light and thunder (cf. Job 36:27-33; 37:6-13). God works great, incredible wonders that human beings are not able to recognize (37:5). The Greek Book of Job in its eldest part of Elihu's final speech just elaborates God's might and power. It neither mentions God's education nor calls God a teacher but a

ruler, and therefore even emphasizes the subject on God's might at the end of Elihus monologues.[19]

Besides God's greatness on the one side, Elihu pays attention to humankind in face of God on the other side in his introductory speech:

Job 33:4

רוּחַ־אֵל עָשָׂתְנִי וְנִשְׁמַת שַׁדַּי תְּחַיֵּנִי׃

God's spirit made me and the breath of the Almighty revives me.

Job 32:8

אָכֵן רוּחַ־הִיא בֶּאֱנוֹשׁ וְנִשְׁמַת שַׁדַּי תְּבִינֵם׃

But surely, spirit is in a human being and the breath of the Almighty gives him understanding.

Elihu calls God the creator of an individual human being. According to Job 33:4, Elihu is filled with spirit by God and a breath revives him. Spirit is in every human being and it brings him to his senses as in Job 32:8. For this reason, Elihu refers to God as 'my creator' that is expressed with עֹשֵׂנִי in Job 32:22 and with פֹּעֲלִי in 36:3. Beside that, he mentions God as the creator of an individual in Job 35:10 by calling him עֹשָׂי.[20]

In God's speeches, God challenges Job by asking him questions on the creation and on animals. The questions addressed to Job intend to show God's power regarding his created world and they lead Job to realize his own powerlessness as well as to comply with God and submit himself to him.[21]

In Elihu's speeches, God's might and power carry positive connotations. God is mighty and powerful on the earth and on selected meteorological phenomena. Humankind is not submitted to God as a powerless human being, but qualified as God's creature that is alive through spirit and breath and is brought to reason and senses by them.

III.6 Summary: The Concept of the Divine in the Elihu speeches

I sum up the main aspects and specified attributes and characteristics that Elihu aims to integrate into his concept of God: God educates by means of dreams and suffering; God intends the suffering human's redemption, mediated by an angel as advocate; God is righteous, he is transcendent and conceals himself and only God, as the creator, is powerful and mighty.

With this differentiated concept of the Divine, Elihu argues for a new perception of God. Elihu supports the idea that God does not frighten, but reveals himself in dreams and visions. By dreams, visions and suffering God gains to educate human beings. Elihu disagrees with

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19 Cf. LXX Gottingensis, 371-383.

20 There are only few passages in the Old Testament that name God as my, your or his creator by using the verbum עשׂה: in Job 31:15 (עֹשִׂנִי); Is 44:2; 51:13 (עֹשֶׂךָ); Job 40:19 (הָעֹשׂוֹ); Is 17:7; 27:11; Hos 8:14; Prov 14:31; 17:5 (עֹשֵׂהוּ). The term 'my creator' is only mentioned in the book of Job. Furthermore, JHWH is called Jacob's creator as בֹּרְאֶךָ in Is 43:1; in Eccl 12:1 the reader is addressed to remember בּוֹרְאֶיךָ.

21 Cf. KÖHLMOOS, Auge, 321-331; 337.

God who according to the heavenly scenes makes a pact with Satan and as a result of it the pious and upright Job has to suffer. Elihu introduces an angel as a Divine mediator for the restitution of the suffering man. Elihu depicts God as having the intention to redeem the human being who is threatened by death. In contrast to Job who regards God to be unjust and insists in his own innocence, Elihu emphasizes God's right and justice and claims his righteousness. Furthermore, God's judgement is his interest. Apart from this, Elihu disagrees with the idea of God as a mighty creator, mentioned in God's speeches. There, God demands Job's compliance, submission and his powerlessness. Instead, Elihu develops God's greatness and power that maintain the difference between God and humankind. God is the transcendent, mighty and great creator while humankind is able to receive knowledge and reason by spirit and breath, that is, as long as he accepts that humankind as a creature, is finite and limited.

IV. Conclusion

As mentioned in the beginning of this article, the Book of Job presupposes a monotheistic concept of god. My analysis has shown that Elihu differs in his perception on God from the image of God in the heavenly scenes and from God's image in the God's speeches as well as from Job's and Eliphas' views on God. Elihu's perception on God though categorized in the five mentioned subjects still belongs to a monotheistic perception of God. Even more, the just elaborated characteristics of God drawn by Elihu adapt those aspects that are crucial for monotheism as it is understood in different theories.

The characteristics of a monotheistic concept of God consist in the distinction between God and world on the one hand, and between God and humankind on the other. It implies that one thinks of God as being transcendent. Concepts of the Divine and of the world, therefore, differ one from the other and are strictly not identified with each other.[22] It is argued that the definition of monotheism is marked by the fundamental difference between God and world as well as God and humankind. By mediators, such as angels, Satan or demons, God's relationship to the world and to humankind is ensured.[23] The main difficulty within monotheistic religions is to cope with the contingency of life and to integrate those contingencies within the concept of the Divine.[24]

As mentioned in the beginning, the whole plot in the Book of Job deals with contingencies in the life of the upright God-fearer Job whose belief in God is shattered to the upmost because this God has become extremely problematic. Within this context, Elihu elaborates his perception on God and gives his answer to that problem. He argues for differentiating between world and God (34:13; 35:5-7; 36:27–37:13) as well as between God and humankind

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22 Cf. STOLZ, Einführung, 189; 197-98

23 Cf. LANG, Monotheismus, 154-55; WELLHAUSEN, Geschichte, 289-90; STOLZ, Einführung, 197-98; KOCH, Monotheismus, 565.

24 Cf. LANG, Monotheismus, 155. Cf. also KRATZ/ SPIECKERMANN, Einleitung, XVIII.

(34:14-15; 36:26; 37:5). Concepts of the world are less in his interest. Instead, he emphasizes and preserves the crucial and fundamental difference between God and humankind on the one hand, and qualifies it in theological means on the other hand: While God is in his might and power the creator of earth and human beings (34:13-15; 36:23.27-33; 37:1-13), humankind is God's creature (32:22; 33:4; 36:3). Furthermore, God redeems suffering humankind by sending an angel from his royal household as advocate who mediates between humankind and God aiming the human's restitution (33:19-30). Beside that, topics on God's right and justice, his might and power as well as his transcendence are subjects within the monotheistic concept of God that Elihu draws.[25] Therefore, within the monotheistic concept of God, Elihu argues for a new perception of God and a differentiated monotheism.

[25] For details concerning different aspects within concepts of the Divine and within images of God cf. GLADIGOW, Art. Gottesvorstellungen, 33-49.

V. Bibliography

Abbreviations used in the notes and in the bibliography follow:

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