Terrence Malick’s recent film, *Tree of Life*, begins with a quotation from God’s speeches in the Book of Job—“Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? (38:4a)—which sets the context for what follows. In the film, a mother’s young son dies, and, when she, in anguish, cries out to God to tell her ‘why,’ the scene shifts to an extended montage of the origins of the world: lava erupting from volcanoes, bubbles skidding across the surface of a tidal pool, a dinosaur emerging from the undergrowth in a primeval forest. This montage does much to defamiliarize God’s whirlwind speeches, which, for the most part, present a natural world with which present-day readers can be comfortable. “Do you know . . .?” asks God. “Sure,” we answer, shrugging. “That’s easy. Ask me another one.” Malick’s film, however, strives to recapture the strange, wild, dangerous otherness of the world depicted in God’s speeches.

In this book, I have inquired into the world presented by Job and his friends, and by God, looking at what they have to say about relationships between individuals, the workings of time, and the configuration of space. I have argued that the world described as the world-as-it-ought-to-be by Job and his friends is a world organized around a central, influential figure, in which stability and stasis reign, and in which borders and boundaries perform the necessary work of separating what-ought-to-be from what-ought-not-to-be. God’s world, I have argued, is this world’s opposite: no central figure organizes its members’ attention, change is valued over stability, and ‘inside’ and ‘outside’ have no meaning, for the whole of the world is the recipient of God’s blessing and care. God’s world is a better world than that of Job and his friends. This assessment has, I think, been clear in chapters 2, 3, and 4 of this book, in which I have ended with descriptions of God’s world, letting that world have the last word, as the ‘straw world’ of Job and his friends is shown for what it is and struck down.

God’s world is wild and beautiful, whereas the world of Job and his friends is cramped and narrow. Job and his friends are hung up on hierarchies and overly dependent on economic agreements. They are

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1 Terrence Malick, dir., *Tree of Life* (Fox Searchlight Pictures/EuropaCorp, 2011).
overly concerned to differentiate the righteous from the wicked, and to make sure that each group gets what it deserves. God, though, is free with his blessings. He loves his creatures, be they ravens, lions, wild oxen, eagles, Behemoths, or Leviathans. God’s speeches, I have argued, provide a direct answer—or, rather, a direct retort—to the claims about the world made by Job and his friends. He shows them what his world is like, and what he shows them is so much better than what they have come up with on their own. “Here is where you really live,” God tells Job. “You do not live in that narrow world you thought you occupied. That’s not real. That’s something you made up. Come out here and be free, as you were meant to be.”

But Job doesn’t go there. Job chooses his own narrow world over God’s wild freedom. He may change this world in some ways, taking elements from God’s world, but it is still more his world than God’s. Those who insist that, because God must speak authoritatively, the epilogue world has to be God’s world, are selling the whirlwind world short, failing to attend to its wild otherness. Moreover, we have become so accustomed to thinking of the wild as something threatened, that it is counterintuitive to see it, instead, as threatening. Malick’s montage helps to remedy this, bringing home the wildness of the wild in a vivid, visceral way. Watching that world flicker across the screen, and seeing it as God’s answer to Job, I immediately understood why Job goes ‘back inside.’ Job cannot live out there. There is no place for him, and, consequently, it is no place for him. God does not speak of humans for a reason: they do not belong in the world as God has created it. Describing his world to Job, God may want Job to belong there, but Job must instinctively know that he does not belong.

“Look at Behemoth which I made just as I made you” (40:15), God says to Job, and, although it is possible to read this directive as intended to highlight both God’s power and the shared creatureliness of the human and the animal, it is possible to read it another way. It is possible to see in God’s desire for Job to look at Behemoth and recognize their shared origins, a deep bewilderment on the part of the creator. Perhaps the directive is not even directed primarily at Job. Perhaps God is speaking half to himself: “I made both of these creatures. How is it that I know one so completely, while the other is a mystery to me?” It is possible to see something similar going on in God’s depiction of Leviathan. As already discussed, many scholars read the Leviathan chapter as God’s demonstration of his power over ‘chaos,’ or, at least, over what is very wild, and insist that what God is saying is that, because Job cannot control Leviathan as God does,