

# The Sweetness (of the Law)

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**Abstract:** This essay undertakes an analysis of the logical and phenomenal relation between sweetness and law in order to argue for the universal ontological *illegality* of worry. Through a close reading and exegesis of the bitter waters of Marah (Exodus 15: 25) in light of medieval mystical ideas about the immanence of paradise, it demonstrates the essentially inversive and secretly intimate link between these terms. At the still point or moment of identity that forms the crux of the law/sweetness relation, one finds the highest analogical sense of law, the impossible yet inevitable taste of eternal justice.

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The perennial spring of imperishable sweetness is within everyone.

– Meher Baba, *Life at its Best*

This essay launches an intellectual attack upon everything in us that rises in revolt against this statement, against all that would dismiss out of hand the reality of its truth and confine its meaning to the realm of sentimental metaphysics. Likewise, it stands in defense of everything that already feels and knows this statement's correctness, not as concept, but as immanent fact: *the universal fact of essential sweetness*. I will pursue this two-fold aim by investigating the relation between sweetness and the law, because it is precisely via a stimulation and vexation of our sense of law that the statement of the universal fact of essential sweetness impresses us.

## UPSIDE DOWN SWEETNESS

The sense of law, which always bifurcates between the ethical and ontological poles of law's idea, between law as what ought to be and law as what is, is the intimate term of our simultaneous intuition of and resistance to this fact of sweetness, the substance of the taste of its inevitable impossibility. Consider how in hearing of it—if facile or reactive assent/dissent is evaded—one is legitimately caught in conundrums of thinking that such sweetness should be, yet is not and/or that such sweetness is, yet should not be.<sup>1</sup> The statement of this sweetness brings law into negative relief, shadowing law forth as the inversion or negative transposition of sweetness, a category at once depending upon and contradicting it in all respects. Because there is real sweetness, there is law—because there is law, there is no real sweetness. Like other

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<sup>1</sup> For example, thought may oscillate as follows. On the one hand, the very possibility of law as true, as something more than ideological fraud, and with it the possibility of a real ethics (of being/doing/becoming *right*), requires this sweetness, demands the existence of a universal and fathomless savory con-science, an immanent neither-subjective-nor-objective zone wherein will and reason are primordially reconciled. On the other hand, the actuality of law, both as archaic necessity and as ideological fraud, i.e. all the realities of law-in-the-world, indicates, if not the inexistence, at least the irreparable deficiency of this sweetness, the operative absence of a profound relation between reason and will wherein the possibility of being/doing *wrong*, the space of law's negation, infinitely persists.

transcendent/immanent dyads, sweetness and law appear as *joined* by an impossibility of being the same, oppositionally fastened together around an infinitesimal point—the still moment of inversion—where they are impossibly one (the gate to paradise).

This inersive relation between law and sweetness is generically intelligible in connection with the classical triad of truth, goodness, and beauty. Where law is all about regulating the distinctions between the true, the good, and the beautiful<sup>2</sup>—a regulation that modernity pursues to the point of aporia, consigning these principles to separate domains—sweetness occupies their indistinction, the place of affective yet absolutely real movement wherein truth, goodness, and beauty are synthesized in delight. Sweetness in this ancient sense is rooted in the intuition of the immanence of perfection, in our idea of an existent and realizable truth wherein law *is* without persuasion or restraint, that is, without law as such, an eternally free enclosure where law is escaped through itself.<sup>3</sup> In the context of modern philosophy, such intuition is exemplified by Schopenhauer's non-dualist theory of eternal justice, according to which, owing to "the unity and identity of will in all its phenomena," law is meta-temporally and always already accomplished both generally and individually: "in all that befalls [every being], indeed can ever befall it, justice is always done to it . . . the world itself is the court of justice."<sup>4</sup> And in the mystical tradition that especially informs my

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<sup>2</sup> See K. N. Llewellyn, "On the Good, the True, the Beautiful, in Law," *Chicago Law Review* 9 (1941/2): 224-65. Llewellyn formulates law's regulation of these three principles in terms of a functional "knitting" wherein, for instance, "determination of the True becomes . . . an inherent part of search for the Beautiful" and law is produced generally as a "field in which the three great ultimates . . . clearly merge" (247). The 'sweetness' of law, as the synthetic effect of such knitting, is touched upon by Llewellyn in connection with the aesthetics of the rule: "Consider the single legal rule. Its esthetics are functional, in the strictest sense. It has room for not one jot of ornament; and the measure of its beauty is the measure of its sweetness of effect . . . That is the rule of law. In it, a waste word is not waste only; it is peril" (249).

<sup>3</sup> "The sweetness of the law [*dharmā*] exceeds all sweetness; the delight in the law exceeds all delights" (*Dhammapada*, ed. Max Müller [Oxford: Clarendon, 1881], XXIV.354). "I am also the sweet [*punya*] fragrance in the earth; I am the brilliance in the fire, and the life in all beings" (*Bhagavad Gita, with the Commentary of Sankaracarya*, trans. Swami Gambhirananda [Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1991], 7.9). "O taste and see that the lord is sweet" (Psalms 33:9, Vulgate). "[T]he ordinances of the Lord are true, and righteous altogether . . . sweeter also than honey and drippings of the honeycomb" (Psalms 19:9-10). Biblical citations, unless otherwise noted, are from *The New Oxford Annotated Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977). The essential idea to be emphasized here is that of sweetness as a fundamental and first property of things and thus a primary term for the sensing of the divine beyond which pervades and encloses them: "He is Sweetness, and of this Sweetness the infinitude of creatures are enjoying but an atom. Who would have moved, who would have breathed, if this Sweetness had not pervaded all space?" (Mohini M. Chatterji, *The Bhagavad Gita or The Lord's Lay with Reference to the Christian Scriptures* [New York: Causeway, 1960], 6). To this may be compared the Islamic concept of Breath of the All-Merciful (*nafas al-rahman*) as the divine Cloud which surrounds all being and forms the Barzakh or isthmus between God and creation, on which see William C. Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge: Ibn Al-'Arabi's Metaphysics of Imagination* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), 125-32. Cf. "My Mercy encompasses all things" (*The Koran*, trans. N. J. Dawood [New York: Penguin, 1988], 7:156).

<sup>4</sup> Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Presentation*, trans. Richard E. Aquila and David Carus, 2 vols. (New York: Pearson, 2008-11), I.409-415, §63-4. Cf. "The law of *Karma* is, in the world of values, the counterpart of the law of cause and effect . . . *The moral order of the universe is sustained through the systematic connection between cause and effect in the world of values*. If the law of *Karma* were subject to any relaxation, reversals or exceptions, and if not strictly applicable in the domain of values, there would be no moral order in the universe . . . *The law of Karma might be said to be an expression of justice or a reflection of the unity of life in the world of duality*" (Meher Baba, *Discourses*, 6<sup>th</sup> ed., 3 vols. [San Francisco: Sufism Reoriented, 1967], III.90-1). The coincidence of eternal justice with causality is succinctly expressed by Ibn Arabi: "He [God, Reality] directs it [the Cosmos] only by itself, or by its form" (*The Bezels of Wisdom*, trans. R. W. J. Austin [New York: Paulist 1980], 253). The traditional view of cosmic justice is no less theological than physical, as shown in Dante's vision of "l'amor che move il sole e l'altre stelle" [Love which moves the sun and the other stars] (*Divine Comedy*, trans. Charles S. Singleton, 3 vols. [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975], *Paradiso* 33.145). Jane Clark addresses Ibn Arabi's theory of causality in relation to modern science in "He Governs the World through Itself" – Ibn 'Arabi on Spiritual Causation" (<http://www.ibnarabisociety.org.uk/podcasts/archives/1008/clark.mp3>). On physics and Schopenhauer's theory of justice, see Raymond B. Marcin, *In Search of Schopenhauer's Cat: Arthur Schopenhauer's Quantum-Mystical Theory of Justice* (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 2006).

investigation, this state is exemplified by the “sweet country” described by Marguerite Porete as that in which “the Soul is above the Law / Not contrary to the law.”<sup>5</sup>

Not seeking to discursively produce or prove this perfect sweetness *from* or *for* something other than it, the method of what follows is instead to penetrate its truth as axiomatic and proceed *inside* the position that all counter-arguments only affirm it, to stay on *this side* of sweetness as the only one. Thus I follow the *inversely* logical method whereby Pierre Sogol discovers earth’s ultimate alp in René Daumal’s *Mt. Analogue*: “assuming the problem solved and deducing from this solution all the consequences that flow logically from it.”<sup>6</sup> Like the ur-mountain of this perfectly unfinished novel, a mountain that analogically *must* exist and be accessible precisely through the earthly “ring of curvature” whereby “everything takes place *as if* [it] did not exist” (54), the universal fact of essential sweetness represents an ultimate sweetness that is analogically evident and accessible exactly through its seeming inexistence, the essential form of which is the fact of law. That there is law is the general index, not of a deficiency, but of the invisible yet accessible supreme *excess* of sweetness in the world.<sup>7</sup> Correlatively, that there is sweetness is a property of the highest and profoundest law, a paradisaical or supremely enclosing sweetness-beyond-sweetness identical with love as the ultimate rule of things, the inexorable principle which binds and attracts the law-governed finite universe to its beyond, curving like inescapable gravity all laws around the whim of the lawless Infinite.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Marguerite Porete, *The Mirror of Simple Souls*, trans. Ellen L. Babinsky (New York: Paulist, 1993), 142, 196. Cf. “. . . the sweet country, in which country courtesy is Law, and Love moderates, and Goodness in the nourishment. The sweetness draws me, the beauty pleases me, the goodness fills me” (143); “for the Soul lives by the peace of the gifts given to her above the Virtues—not contrary to the Virtues, but above” (178). Cf. “When one escapes ‘law’, and merges in God who is beyond law, he becomes God. There is no binding . . . Law cannot touch him, but he touches law, grasps law, acts like an ordinary human being and uses power to make others free from law” (Meher Baba, *God to Man and Man to God: The Discourses of Meher Baba*, ed. C. B. Purdom [London: Gollancz, 1955], Chapter 33).

<sup>6</sup> René Daumal, *Mt. Analogue: A Tale of Non-Euclidean and Symbolically Authentic Mountaineering Adventures*, trans. Carol Cosman (New York: Overlook Press, 2004), 56.

<sup>7</sup> This excess is shadowed in the forms of fundamental taboo, for example, in the legendary sweetness of human flesh (see Karl Steel, “How Delicious We Must Be,” in *How to Make a Human: Animals & Violence in the Middle Ages* [Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2011], 118-35) and in the idea of incest as excessive love, as Ovid says of Myrrha’s lust for her father: “he kisses her. She takes too much delight / in this; and when he asks what kind of man / she’ll have her husband be, she answers: ‘One / like you’” (Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, trans. Allen Mandelbaum [San Diego: Harcourt, 1993], 340). That Myrrha means ‘bitterness’ accentuates the sweetness/law in relation to the way the form of her desire exacerbates the law, its being a desire that both mysteriously knows its own wrongness and exposes the pure logical arbitrariness of law (339). The mystery of the taboo correlates with the impossibility of mystical desire. As Myrrha says, echoing the creature/Creator relation, “since / I’m his, he can’t be mine” (339). Or as David Williams observes of Tereus’s asking the whereabouts of the son he whose body he is consuming: “the answer he receives . . . is, significantly, the same as the mystic’s response to the search for God: he whom you seek is within you!” (*Deformed Discourse: The Function of the Monster in Mediaeval Thought and Literature* [Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1999], 149).

<sup>8</sup> In a similar fashion, Hegel identifies *attraction* as the summit of law, that which binds together and opposes all other law: “The unification of all laws in universal attraction expresses no further content than just the bare concept of the law itself . . . In contrast, then, with determinate law stands universal attraction, or the bare conception of law . . . the pure conception of law transcends not merely the law . . . but also transcends law as such” (G. W. F. Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Mind*, trans. J. B. Baillie [New York: Dover, 2003], 86). The overall vision I intend to evoke in this essay is of cosmos as an infinitely systematical order of laws within laws grounded in eternal spontaneous Reality: “The mystery of the universe is hierarchic in structure. There are graded orders, one supervening upon the other. The spiritual panorama of the universe reveals itself as a gradient with laws upon laws. Superimposition of one type of law over the other implies elasticity and resilience of lower laws for the working out of higher superseding laws. Instead of lawlessness, it means a regime of graded laws adjusted with each other in such a manner that they all subserve the supreme purpose of God” (Meher Baba, *Beams from Meher Baba on the Spiritual Panorama* [San Francisco: Sufism Reoriented, 1958], 33). My understanding of the identity of divinity and reality, which necessarily bears on the relation of freedom to necessity and the ultimate sweetness of law, is as follows: “Reality is divine. Let us call this the Thesis of Universal Betrayal. The truth of it needs no other means, no reason nor revelation. It is as obvious as it is beyond assertion and denial. It is true through its

From this perspective, as per Agamben's understanding of the inverse intimacy of the divine and the profane,<sup>9</sup> it is precisely the felt absence of justice in the world that shadows forth the fact of eternal or infinite justice—a fact hiding nowhere save in our ignorance of the nothingness of experience, of world as we know it: "all experience is in 'nothing'. There is no suffering. When I say this, you grouse. Since you do not know the law of nothingness, you think there is nothing like justice."<sup>10</sup> Just as the proverbially 'sweet' satisfaction we feel in seeing a causer of suffering proportionally suffer is, as Schopenhauer explains, really a material distortion of eternal justice, a sensing of its immanence "misunderstood and falsified" by separative identity or consciousness "caught up in the *principium individuationis*,"<sup>11</sup> so our general sense that there is no real justice, that things are not governed by the strictest and most supreme moral laws, is really a willfully unconscious twisting of the sense that they are, an identitarian or self-dramatizing sophistry that perverts an overwhelming universal truth into a wieldable albeit self-mangling personal weapon. The sense of injustice, inseparably bound to its own saccharine delight, is a photographic negative of the real, incomprehensible sweetness of eternal justice. As usual, our pattern of thinking, hypnotically curved within the confined interests of its finite *cogito*, confesses the inadmissible and radically immanent fact of the matter in inverse form.

The fraudulent correlational condition proceeds thus: inwardly I sense and intuit—via law of cause and effect, awareness that "every disorder of the soul is its own

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own principle, which is to *be* its own principle, to betray everything for its own truth by *being* true. The being-divine of reality and the being-real of the divine are a two-faced double-dealing expression of one unnamable *spontaneous univocal causality*. That which is its own principle is divinely real and really divine. Reality is divinity causing itself to be real. Divinity is reality causing itself to be divine. On one side, the real's being its own principle carries the sense of what truly is, of what is anywhere despite everything (necessity). What is necessary does not possess necessity – it *is* necessity. On the other side, divinity's being its own principal carries the sense of what is absolutely independent, of what is everywhere itself (freedom). What is free does not possess freedom – it *is* freedom. Reality is real in being divine (free, unconditioned, absolutely itself). Divinity is divine in being real (necessary, conditioning, absolutely existent). Divinity and reality define a doubly necessary freedom, a doubly free necessity. A vortexical entity for whom freedom *is* necessity and necessity *is* freedom. The mood of the vortex, of the divinely twisting real, is interest without concern: being not *in*, but *the* middle (inter-esse) of the truth of the real and the enjoyment of divinity" (Nicola Masciandaro, "Gourmandized in the Abattoir of Openness," in *Leper Creativity*, eds. Ed Keller, Nicola Masciandaro, and Eugene Thacker [Brooklyn, NY: punctum, 2012], 189-90). Such is the identity of divinity and reality, freedom and necessity, that is realized at the summit of existence: "Here there is no longer any way because for the just man there is no law, he is a law unto himself" (John of the Cross, *Collected Works*, trans. Kieran Kavanagh and Otilio Rodriguez [Washington: Institute of Carmelite Publications, 1991], 111, from the top of the drawing of Mt. Carmel).

<sup>9</sup> "The world—insofar as it is absolutely, irreparably profane—is God . . . The proposition that God is not revealed *in* the world could also be expressed by the following statement: What is properly divine is that the world does not reveal God. (Hence this is not the 'bitterest' proposition of the *Tractatus*)" (Giorgio Agamben, *The Coming Community*, trans. Michael Hardt [Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993], 89-90). Referring here to a response by Ingeborg Bachmann (see *Werke*, ed. Christine Koschel, Inge von Weidenbaum, and Clemens Münster, 4 vols. [Munich: Piper, 1978], 4.22), Agamben negatively opens the sweetness of the proposition by inversely formulating its negativity toward the apophatic, the production or bringing into presence of God via the negation of the not-God. Put directly, that God is not revealed in the world is a property of God, and that is sweet, both for world and for God. Or more bluntly, thank God the world is not God. The negative sweetness of the proposition is a unitary-dual sweetness, one that properly synthesizes God and world and also preserves each from the other. God is saved from containment by the world, remains sacred or true, and the world is saved from showing God in itself, remains profane or false—which is precisely the condition for their mystical or hidden unity: "Not *how* the world is, is the mystical, but *that* it is" (Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, tr. C.K. Ogden [Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 1998], 6.44. Speculative food-artist Edia Connoles similarly touches on sweetness as joint of identity between sacred and profane in relation to medieval confection: "Sugar is . . . the common substance conjoining the sacred and the profane, the singular locus of a precious, transcendent enjoyment. It is not surprising, then, that for victims of the ashy pest that swept through Europe in the 14th century, sweetmeats and sugar became the last taste of a sickly joy before death, perhaps even a foretaste of the sweetness of heaven" ("P.E.S.T. (Philiat Epidemic Strategy Tryst) II," *Mouth*, <http://mmmouth.wordpress.com/p-e-s-t-philiat-epidemic-strategy-tryst-ii/>).

<sup>10</sup> Meher Baba, *God to Man and Man to God*, Chapter 33.

<sup>11</sup> *World as Will and Presentation*, I.416, §64.

punishment,"<sup>12</sup> etc.—that there is justice . . . and *I am afraid*, for myself. A fear of which the only way out is instantly to install myself as arbiter, as judge of whether there is justice in the world or no. This fear, at its root, is not a calculative fear of anything, not a fear of any narratable, self-perpetuating implications of eternal justice. It is not a fear for me. Rather it is absolute auto-ontological fear, a fear that I *per se* am wrong, a direct perception of the wrongness that I am for which nothing, neither God nor base materiality, nothing other than myself itself, is to blame.<sup>13</sup> A fear identical to my fear of fear, a problem identical to my problem with problems. Analogous to the terrors of boredom and silence, wherein one faces the horror of being no one, the *putative* vacuum of not being oneself, this fear is of a piece with the direct perception that *you*—the so-and-so you 'know' yourself as—cannot survive (and has never properly existed within) the strict lawful order of the vast cosmos-machine. As the *Dies irae* tradition demonstrates, the infinitely systematic universe, the self-recording book "in quo totum continetur" [in which all is contained], is fundamentally terrifying to the 'self', which constitutively cannot face or afford the prospect of its absolute perforation by omniscience.<sup>14</sup> Vision of the totality in which everything is always already worked out impossibilizes *personal* free will. This is why, in order to be someone, one must: 1) worry, or negatively project thinking away from the present by means of concern for the inexistent past or future; and 2) consider oneself as a mysterious *mixture* of good and bad, an obscure combination of virtue and vice, truth and falsehood. Where the first keeps oneself a special kind of thing, a person, the second keeps oneself a special kind of authority, a criminal-judge or victim-avenger virtually capable making and breaking law. Enslaved to these two rules or strictures of selfhood, one enjoys the illusory freedom of an entity existing in the margin of law in its double sense, orbiting within an elliptical projection that is always at once in touch with and apart from what is and what should be. Such is the weird transgression lying at the core of the cry for justice, from the slightest critical remark to the most monumental collective wailing, the pure evil—a kind of inverse auto-murder—of refusing the sweetness of being "neither oneself nor someone else"<sup>15</sup> and choosing the bitterness of not permitting "the day's

<sup>12</sup> Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. F. J. Sheed (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2006), I.12.19.

<sup>13</sup> "Every individual discomfort leads back, ultimately, to a cosmogonic discomfort, each of our sensations expiating that crime of the primordial sensation, by which Being crept out of somewhere . . ." (E. M. Cioran, *The Trouble with Being Born*, trans. Richard Howard [New York: Ceaver, 1973], 16). The problem can also be put more bluntly, without reference to any vague primordial Being: "You cannot fear anything outside of yourself. Fear is a state in you, which you, in order to keep the whole life-delusion going, attribute to something in time, something outside of yourself, or to another human being. Very simply: when you are afraid, *who* is afraid?" (Vernon Howard, "I Don't Want You to be Afraid," *Titled Talks: Volume 3*, audio CD published by Mark Butler). Similarly, the physical sciences, in understanding the laws of things, can narrate human identity only via the fiction of a virtual 'we'. "What has to be explained," observes Thomas Nagel, "is not just the lacing of organic life with a tincture of qualia but the coming into existence of subjective individual points of view—a type of existence logically distinct from anything describable by the physical sciences alone" (*Mind and Cosmos* [New York: Oxford, 2012], 44). Meister Eckhart understands the necessity of overcoming the subject's apparent secondness or createdness according to its fundamental impossibility: "To preserve a place is to preserve distinction. Therefore I pray God to make me free of God, for my essential being is above God, taking God as the origin of creatures. For in that essence of God in which God is above being and distinction, there I was myself and knew myself so as to make this man. Therefore I am my own cause according to my essence, which is eternal, and not according to my becoming, which is temporal" (Meister Eckhart, *The Complete Mystical Works*, trans. Maurice O'C Walshe (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 2009), 424). On the inseparability of subject and cosmos, see Nicola Masciandaro, "Mysticism or Mystification?: Against Subject-Creationism," *English Language Notes* 50 (2012): 253-8.

<sup>14</sup> See Eugene Thacker, "Day of Wrath," *Glossator* 6 (2012): 89-120.

<sup>15</sup> Pseudo-Dionysius, *The Complete Works*, trans. Colm Luibheid and Paul Rorem (New York: Paulist Press, 1987), 137. Traditional injunctions against worry, criticism, judgment and related forms of psychic negativity, unlike their modern counterparts, have far less to do with mood management than with metaphysical error, specifically, the mistake of adumbrating the unknowable whole

own trouble [to] be sufficient for the day" (Matthew 6:34). Such is the torment of a domain where nothing escapes personalization, i.e. hell: the sheer *identity* of not seeing God and being oneself forever.

That this is at once immense good news and precisely what *you* do not want to hear on this subject is exactly the point. As Porete warns her readers at the opening of the *Mirror*, "I pray you by love, says Love, that you hear me through great effort of the subtle intellect within you and through great diligence, for otherwise all those who hear it will grasp it badly."<sup>16</sup> Accordingly, just as it is the mystic's antinomian claim of the radical immanence of paradise that elicits her judicial execution for heresy—a murder that decides, in the name of law, the fallenness of this world—so will I directly rank all that refuses the universal fact of essential sweetness under the heading of the human *hatred of paradise*. This hatred, which by definition is hardly admissible as hatred, is what one shares with Milton's Satan and Dante's infernally sullen. It is simply the covert privative will of narrow self-love that lies within your desire *not* to exit ourselves—"Which way I fly is Hell; myself am Hell" (*Paradise Lost* IV.75)—and to remain "tristi . . . ne l'aere dolce che dal sol s'allegra" (*Inferno* VII.121-2) [sad . . . in the sweet air that is gladdened by the sun]. Among its main symptoms is the weird assumption that justice might be satisfied in a world that ought to be otherwise.

Loving to mask itself with nostalgia for Eden and/or hope for a better tomorrow, the hatred of paradise is marked by hypocritical fidelity to the law, a pseudo-faith which believes in and worships law as both cause and remedy of the world's non-paradisical nature. The hatred of paradise says that law has poisoned the world and will make it sweet again (whether by law's creation, preservation, or destruction), that the problem and the solution resides with law. Neither keeping nor abandoning the law, the hatred of paradise feeds on law as a dead power, a rotting lion-carcass out of which flows the false honey of its own bitterness, the insufficiency of its semi-sweet life.<sup>17</sup> The common, naturalized force of this hatred is evident in our too-easy sympathy with the speaker of William Blake's "Garden of Love" from the *Songs of Experience*:

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with self-centered or merely correlational reactions. As Stephen Hirtenstein notes with regard to Iban Arabi's teachings, "our mentioning of the negative goes against our real nature and the fundamental nature of things" ("O Marvel!: A Paradigm Shift Towards Integration," *Journal of the Muhyiddin Ibn 'Arabi Society* 46 [2009], <http://www.ibnarabisociety.org/articles/rosegarden-thorns.html>). Julian of Norwich states that looking at another's sin obfuscates reality by causing "as it were a thick mist afore the eye of the soule" (Julian of Norwich, *The Writings of Julian of Norwich*, ed. Nicholas Watson and Jacqueline Jenkins [University Park, Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006], 363). For Meister Eckhart, the annihilation of the will in God, which is conceived in terms of spiritual birth, is marked not only by the absence of grief, but the realization of a truth that rules even God: "cast out all grief so that perpetual joy reigns in your heart. Thus the child is born. And then, and if the child is born in me, the sight of my father and all my friends slain before my eyes would leave my heart untouched . . . It is a certain and necessary truth that he who resigns his will wholly to God will catch God and bind God, so that God can do nothing but what that man wills" (*Complete Mystical Works*, 75-92). Alternately, separative identity entirely depends upon something being *wrong*.

<sup>16</sup> Marguerite Porete, *Mirror of Simple Souls*, 80.

<sup>17</sup> The allusion to Samson's dead lion here serves well as a spontaneous figure for the fatal lack of spiritual courage that the sick love of law demonstrates. Diagnosing his own dis-ease, Nick Land sympathetically wrestles down the modern relation to law as dead power thus: "In its virtual truth, law has already disappeared from the Earth. What remains of 'law' is a dissolving complex of relics from political sociality, nostalgic media-driven theatre, and pre-automatised commodification protocols . . . The post-civilizational pragmatism of immanence to the market (anonymous resource distribution) reiterates its own juridical expression as an increasingly embarrassing archaism, preserving law only by functionalizing legality in terms that subvert its claim to authority" (Nick Land, "After the Law," in *Fanged Noumena: Collected Writings 1987-2007*, eds. Robin Mackay and Ray Brassier [London: Urbanomic/Sequence, 2011], 259-60).

And the gates of this Chapel were shut,  
And Thou shalt not. writ over the door;  
So I turn'd to the Garden of Love,  
That so many sweet flowers bore.<sup>18</sup>

This moment of reversion is emblematic of the operative opposition between law and sweetness in the world, an environment wherein the negativity of proscription is inevitably experienced as precluding the positivity of enjoyment and freedom, and vice-versa. The law-inscribed institution, rather than preserving and securing the site of ordinary pleasure, the garden "where I used to play on the green," not only occupies it, but turns the very garden into the infected space of law's *outside*:

And I saw it was filled with graves,  
And tomb-stones where flowers should be:  
And Priests in black gowns, were walking their rounds,  
And binding with briars, my joys & desires.

Whence the deeper meaning of the final line, namely, that not only is delight restricted, externally governed by legal bindings, but that joy and desire are themselves bound, restricted in their very form. This is a world where sweetness lacks itself, is without true savor, being delimited from within by having become the intimate exterior of proscription, the *thou shalt not*, irrespective of what is negated. Sweetness in such a world is unsavory because the good to which it is proper, in being translated into law and consequently confused via the negativity of proscription with the evil it exempts, has been made the subject of *justification*, from which goodness is essentially or naturally free and has no need of whatsoever. Only evil needs to justify and explain itself, first to itself and secondarily to everything else. Justification is in fact evil's principal preoccupation and anxiety, its chief *business*.<sup>19</sup> So the last thing one ought to do is sympathize with the 'innocent' speaker of Blake's poem in a manner that justifies his disappointment as our own, that feels *sorry* for him as fellow dissatisfied subject and voluptuous victim of the law. To do so is paradisiacally *illegal*. Note how the verses rather hint against the error of falling for such a fallen identity of desire. Sweetness in this realm is only referenced as a former property of the garden, properly attracting us to understand it as synthesized *per se* by the structure of Edenic nostalgia, as if the decalogic door of the chapel is the actual ground from which the "sweet flowers" inexistently grow. No, this all-too-experienced poem is not a true account of the way things really are, but a playing out of the bitter experiential self-deception inherent to

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<sup>18</sup> William Blake, *Complete Poetry & Prose*, ed. David V. Erdman (New York: Doubleday, 1988), 26.

<sup>19</sup> Here the precise evil of worry is also revealed, namely, that worry always operates as a *justification* for not being happy. Worry says, 'I am your right to be unhappy'. It is the generic form of evil in the world and the essential act of hypocrisy or lying to oneself. This is why a person will often claim a 'right' to worry, wanting to remain blind to the internal and external harm they cause by worrying. But on what grounds is such a right present? Is there a right to be miserable? I do not think so. Cf. Matthew 6:25-7:5. Francis rebukes a gloomy companion thus: "Why do you outwardly show your sadness and sorrow over your offenses? This sadness is a matter between you and God" (*Francis of Assisi: Early Documents*, eds. Regis J. Armstrong, J. A. Wayne Hellmann, and William J. Short, 3 vols. [New York: New City Press, 1999], III.342-3).

all attempts to return to a garden that *was* (or will be), to find delight in what *is not*, in the place "Where I used to play on the green." The truth of the Garden of Love is one that Blake realized and knows very clearly, namely, that the source of sweetness resides within, in the sheer spiritual freedom of the one who elects *not* to bind itself to desire, "he who kisses a joy as it flies."<sup>20</sup>

Overcoming or renouncing the hatred of paradise demands abandoning belief in and becoming heretic to sweetness in this failed, self-lacking sense, cleansing the tongue of this too-familiar, diurnal taste of the impossibility of authentic, unitary enjoyment, the sugary aftertaste of our assumed fall into or away from law. It means openness to the horror of all that this hatred fears: the finding of a real source of imperishable sweetness immanent to everything that infinitely exceeds *me*, namely, the so-and-so who lives according to the illusory right of telling Reality what it should be like and do. The opportunity of tasting real sweetness asks that one pass through exposure to the perfect *terror of paradise* or sweetness-in-the-last-instance whose ordinary ethical form is the enactment of the absolute illegitimacy of worry, one's intellectual slavery to the pernicious pseudo-intuition that something (else) is always wrong with things. Correlatively, the current cultural form of the hatred of paradise, as Max Weber's famous analysis shows, is capitalism (*business*, from Old English *bisignes*: anxiety, concern, uneasiness, worry). Similarly, every ideological or identitarian process of law necessarily operates within, as its very condition, the obfuscation, falsification, and elision of this ultimate fact of the sweetness. For this reason, erasure of the hatred of paradise is not ordered per se toward sweetness-production, though it may (or may not) release sweetness. The erasure is not to be realized in the style of founding external sources or institutions of sweetness, such as socially produced affective spectacles of sweetness-affirmation or returns to religion or philosophy or humanism as earthly gardens of spiritual law. To abandon the hatred of paradise means simply to live one's own life spontaneously in the *docle stil nuovo* [sweet new style] of discriminating the infinite difference between true and false sweetness. Bataille is most right—"Woe to those who, to the very end, insist on regulating the movement that exceeds them with the narrow mind of the mechanic who changes a tire"<sup>21</sup>—because there are *higher* laws. And this is exactly what the common evocation of love as the highest law—"Quis legem det amantibus? Maior lex amor est sibi" [Who can give law to lovers? A greater law is love to itself]<sup>22</sup>—sentimentally forgets, that love is *law*. "Woe unto them that put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter!"(Isaiah 5:20).

The form of law necessitated by the universal fact of essential sweetness is *ordinary* law in François Laruelle's sense of ethics returned "from the heavens and the earth back towards its real base which is man's immanence."<sup>23</sup> Ordinary law is paradisaical law in the sense of law in touch with and grounded in law's own interior

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<sup>20</sup> Blake, *Complete Poetry & Prose*, "Eternity," 470.

<sup>21</sup> Georges Bataille, *The Accursed Share*, trans. Robert Hurley, 2 vols. (Brooklyn, NY: Zone, 1991), I.26.

<sup>22</sup> Boethius, *Consolation of Philosophy*, trans. S. J. Tester (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973), III.m12.47-8.

<sup>23</sup> François Laruelle, "The Concept of an Ordinary Ethics Founded in Man," trans. Taylor Adkins (<http://www.univocalpublishing.com/blog/108-the-concept-of-an-ordinary-ethics-or-ethics-founded-in-man>).



beyondness or universality, law on the cosmic continuum of laws. Ordinary law is real law in the sense of the tightest possible binding together of law's two senses (what is and what should be), a binding that paradoxically intensifies and immanentizes the gap between them, opening it as the narrowest gate of paradise. Ordinary law is the sweetest law—"my yoke is easy [*chrestos; suave*] and my burden is light" (Matthew 11:30)—because it is the law you think the most bitter, the one whose perennial sign is in one stroke to hit you where you live and demand from you the courage to really have, without the alienation of ascribing to it, a moral code that is truly one's own. The law of ordinary law is nothing less or more than rigorously personal impersonal responsibility for guarding with one's life the secret beyond-within of law itself, the sweet pure sense of infinitesimal difference according to which it has been written that "between Nirvana and the world there is not the slightest difference," that in Paradise—the good thief's *today* (Luke 23:43)—"everything will be as it is now, just a little different."<sup>24</sup> With this purposeless end in mind, the remainder of this essay attempts to extract exegetically a maximum sweetness (of the law) from one of law's more bitter founding moments.

#### THE TASTE OF LAW

The disjunctive relation between sweetness and law is evident in the general discursive separation of these categories.<sup>25</sup> That this is a significant rather than accidental separation is suggested by the general concept of the 'bitterness' of the law,<sup>26</sup> which implies preclusion against thinking law as sweet. Yet that is exactly what understanding the concept of law's bitterness will demand. The trope may be traced back to the waters of Marah (lit. *bitterness*) which Moses sweetens by the addition of a tree shown to him by the Lord (Exodus 15: 25). Christian commentators on the text emphasized the law's bitterness by interpreting the waters in fulfillment of the parallel distinctions governing their figural exegesis: Old Law/New Law, letter/spirit, fear/love, judgment/grace. As Henri de Lubac observes,

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<sup>24</sup> Agamben, *The Coming Community*, 52, citing Nagarjuna and Ernst Bloch (citing Walter Benjamin citing Gershom Scholem citing a well-known Hasidic parable), respectively.

<sup>25</sup> For example: a book on law and the senses that does not mention sweetness (*Law and the Senses: Sensational Jurisprudence*, eds. Lionel Bently and Leo Flynn [London: Pluto, 1996]); a history of the concept of sweetness that does not mention law (Mary Carruthers, "Sweetness," *Speculum* 81 [2006]: 999-1013); a study of the collusions between sugar and power in the modern world that does not directly address the affinity between its title terms (Sidney W. Mintz, *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History* [New York: Penguin, 1986]). The most my cursory research gleans from such relevant scholarship regarding the connection between sweetness and law is: 1) that sweetness is a medium of power on the basis of its semantic openness and polysemy: "sugar . . . was symbolically powerful, for its use could be endowed with many subsidiary meanings. No wonder the rich and powerful liked it so much, and no wonder the poor learned to love it" (Mintz, *Sweetness and Power*, 186); 2) that sweetness, which is both essentially good and conspicuously qualified by good and bad senses of itself, is a unitive register of paradise, its loss, and its restoration: "'Dulce lignum dulce clavo dulce pondus sustinens' [Sweet tree sustaining a sweet burden with a sweet nail] (Venantius Fortunatis). The single, noble tree recalls the trees of Eden whose fruits were wholesome and sweet to eat—all save the one whose fruit proved both sweetest and bitterest of all . . . This sweetness has killed twice over, first when Eve and Adam tasted/knew the sweet apple, and then when the sweet nails fastened the sweet body to the sweet wood" (Carruthers, "Sweetness," 1012); and 3) that law may be functionally blind to the gustatory in general insofar as it views it as merely functional, following the classic epistemological hierarchy of the senses: "IP [Intellectual Property] law treats tactile, gustatory, and olfactory pleasures as functional and visual and aural pleasures as nonfunctional" (Christopher Buccafusco, "Making Sense of Intellectual Property Law," *Cornell Law Review* 97 (2011): 542.

<sup>26</sup> For example: "We have strict statutes and most biting laws" (William Shakespeare, *Measure for Measure*, 1.3.19).

the waters of Marah . . . lend themselves to signifying the ancient books of Scripture . . . Through the spiritual sense that is communicated to the books by the wood of the cross, they become the very sweetness of the Gospel: "let the bitterness of the law be overcome by the sweetness of the cross." From the time of Tertullian and Origen onward, this image is repeated indefinitely.<sup>27</sup>

For this tradition, sweetness is a kind of essential supplement to law, a potentiality of law that yet subsists in being different from law itself. Sweetness both characterizes the essence of law, its inner spiritual truth, and is a secondary property, a sweetener and more than sweetener that makes law palatable and livable, "so that the people may drink."<sup>28</sup> Being an addition to law that transforms it without alteration into its real substance or truth, sweetness is like the *spice* of the law,<sup>29</sup> the deep quality of its immanent life, and precisely for that reason something that must not be confusedly identified with law itself. Sweetness is not law's essential face or appearance, not its *species*, yet there is a sweetness that has to do with it and can make it like itself. Law and sweetness represent different orders of being, especially if sweetness is conceived in light of the anomian aspect of charity as law beyond law.<sup>30</sup> Yet they are interdependent. Law depends upon sweetness for its fulfillment, and sweetness depends, for its intelligibility and operation, upon law. The difficulty of the sweetness/law disjunction, the necessity of connecting and separating these terms, asks that we look further into the story, behind and beyond the doctrinal gloss.

The bitter waters of Marah must be understood in the context of the events immediately preceding and following their sweetening, on which their connection to law is founded. Given the lack of drinkable—and the presence of undrinkable—water, the people became restive, an anxious condition of great moral consequence which is later equated to tempting the Lord (Exodus 17:2): "they went three days in the wilderness and found no water. When they came to Marah, they could not drink the water of Marah because it was bitter; therefore it was named Marah. And the people murmured against Moses, saying 'What shall we drink?'" (Exodus 15:22-4).<sup>31</sup> In a creative reversal of this situation, the sweetening of the water, the making wholesome of what did not satisfy, is the pretext for the establishment of life-sweetening law: "There the Lord made for them a statute and an ordinance and there he proved them, saying, 'If you will diligently hearken to the voice of the Lord your God, and do that which is right in

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<sup>27</sup> Henri de Lubac, *Medieval Exegesis*, trans. E. M. Macierowski, 4 vols. (Grand Rapids, MI: Erdmans, 1998), 3.256. Origen, whose commentary was included in the *Glossa Ordinaria*, uses the example of the circumcision to emphasize the bitterness of the literal law and the necessity for its spiritual translation: "the Law, if it be undertaken according to the letter, is sufficiently bitter and is itself Mara. For what is so bitter as for a child to receive the wound of circumcision on the eighth day and tender infancy suffer the hardness of iron? . . . If, therefore, the tree of the wisdom of Christ has been thrown into the Law and has shown how circumcision ought to be understood [i.e. of the heart] . . . the bitterness of the letter of the Law is changed into the sweetness of spiritual understanding" (Origen, *Homilies on Genesis and Exodus*, trans. Ronald E. Heine [Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1962], 301).

<sup>28</sup> Origen, *Homilies*, 302.

<sup>29</sup> On spice as "generational integrity of spirit and letter," see Nicola Masciandaro, "Becoming-Spice: Commentary as Geophilosophy," *Collapse* 6 (2010): 21-56.

<sup>30</sup> "[T]he law is not laid down for the just but for the lawless and disobedient" (1 Timothy 1:9). "Love and do what you will [*Dilige et fac quod vis*]" (Augustine, *Tractates on the First Epistle of John*, trans. John W. Retting [Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1995], 7.8).

<sup>31</sup> Cf. "And which of you by being anxious can add one cubit to his span of life . . . Therefore do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?'" (Matthew 6:27-31).

his eyes, and give heed to his commandments and keep all his statutes, I will put none of the diseases upon you which I put upon the Egyptians; for I am the Lord, your healer” (Exodus 15: 25-6). The waters are both the place of the giving of law, which as object is paralleled in the tree or wood revealed to Moses,<sup>32</sup> and, in light of the affinity between sweetness and health,<sup>33</sup> an analog of the law itself whose keeping heals and protects from disease. On the one hand, sweetness, as the property of what ensures health, belongs to the law. The law is wholesome, a sweet source of well-being.<sup>34</sup> On the other hand, sweetness figures not the law itself, but the secondary effect or benefit of keeping it, a superadded law of the law or necessary quality of its realization or fulfillment. As the bitter waters are sweetened by the addition of the tree, the life of the people will be sweetened in keeping the law. Within this analogy, the waters beautifully flow between being the problem law addresses and the sweetness of its solution. Significantly, the nature of the sweetening itself is left open, or hidden.

The analogical form of the story establishes a four-fold intersection and separation of law and sweetness. On one side, law and sweetness are disjoined in the life of the unrighteous and analogously in the bitter water. On the other side, law and sweetness fuse in the life of the righteous and analogously in the sweet water. The story does not merely illustrate that there is an analogical relation between law and sweetness, but *establishes sweetness itself as the perfect form of law’s governing of the real analogy between life and the living*,<sup>35</sup> as figured by the implicit vital homology between tree and human, which points back to their common origin in paradise. The governing analogy of the story, between the sweetening of the waters and the giving of law, is not merely figural or expressive, but holds the essence of the story as a statement about the nature of law itself. As follows:<sup>36</sup>

LIFE	TRUTH	LIVING
water	<i>bitter</i>	unrighteous
<i>object</i>	LAW	<i>subject</i>
water+wood	<i>sweet</i>	Righteous

<sup>32</sup> “*Targum Pseudo-Jonathan* to Exodus 15.25 interprets the tree as the Law (often compared to the tree of life in Jewish tradition) and the branch as a commandment of the Law, which God gave to Moses at Marah” (Richard Bauckham, “Paradise in Pseudo-Philo’s *Biblical Antiquities*,” in *Paradise in Antiquity: Jewish and Christian Views*, eds. Markus Bockmuehl and Guy G. Stroumsa [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010], 52).

<sup>33</sup> “Sweetness is medicinal; it heals and restores . . . To be sweet is to be wholesome, without excess of bitterness and salt: thus water and wine both are called ‘sweet’ when they are pure, whether or not they are sugared. Things are also ‘sweet’ when they are fresh—Plautus can speak of a *suavis piscis*” (Carruthers, “Sweetness,” 1100-1).

<sup>34</sup> Steven Wilf highlights the figural equation of law and water in the context of how the episode narrates the social fashioning of the people “into *nomian* beings”: “According to the *Mekhilta*, the Israelites had become ‘rebellious because they had been without Torah for three days. Torah is likened to water—necessary for life on a nearly constant basis” (*The Law Before the Law* [Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2008], 137, 149-50).

<sup>35</sup> On the analogical (as opposed to univocal or equivocal) relation between life and the living, see Eugene Thacker, *After Life* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 108-13, 126-9.

<sup>36</sup> These terms of the table may be glossed as follows. The sweet subject of the law (righteous) is the one sweetened or kept wholesome by keeping the law and the one for whom the law itself is sweet, a source of delight. The bitter subject of the law (unrighteous) is the unwholesome one who does not keep the law and for whom the law itself is bitter, a source of suffering. The bitter object of the law (water) is the condition of bitterness (unwholesomeness, suffering) that law remedies. The sweet object of law (water+wood) is the condition of sweetness (wholesomeness, delight) that law provides.

The *analogy* says: law is truth. In what sense? Not as what is otherwise simply decidable as true or false, good or bad, but in the immanent sense of the living or spontaneously historical analogy between life and the living whose perfected mode of consciousness is *remembrance of the present*, i.e. that attention to things which sees them *as they are* in the context of past and future, as opposed to reducing the present—like mistaking the frame for the picture—to a mere correlate of past and/or future. The natural sweetness of truth in this sense is that which is proper to life understood as *a life*, the “impersonal yet singular life” which Deleuze illustrates via Dickens’s character Riderhood at the moment when, “in his deepest coma, this wicked man himself senses something soft and sweet penetrating him.”<sup>37</sup> Truth is the non-difference between the life of the living and the living of life, the *necessity* according to which the “Infinite . . . has to discover its unlimited life in and through the finite without getting limited by this process.”<sup>38</sup> The divine purpose of law is to realize and fulfill the infinity of this non-difference, to *wake life* to the endlessness of its immanent reality by consciously laying to sweet sleep all the purposes that bind it, above all to itself.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>37</sup> Gilles Deleuze, *Pure Immanence: Essays on A Life*, trans. Anne Boyman (New York: Zone, 2001), 28.

<sup>38</sup> Meher Baba, *Discourses*, I.120.

<sup>39</sup> As figured in Nietzsche’s “heaviest weight,” the absolutely binding-liberating principle of the eternal return of the same (*Gay Science*, trans. Josefine Nauckhoff [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001], 194) and in Meister Eckhart’s formulation of the divine whylessness of life: “it lives without *Why*, because it lives for itself. And so, if you were to ask a genuine man who acted from his own ground, ‘Why do you act?’ if he were to answer properly he would simply say, ‘I act because I act’” (*Complete Mystical Works*, 110). In other words, the only purpose of life, which itself properly belongs only to what lives without principle—“Hoc enim proprie vivit quod est sine principio” (Eckhart)—is to arrive at the purposeless Reality: “Reality is Existence infinite and eternal. Existence has no purpose by virtue of its being real, infinite and eternal . . . Everything—the things and the beings—in Existence has a purpose . . . Their very being in existence proves their purpose; and their *sole purpose* in existing is to become shed of purpose, i.e. to become purposeless. Purposelessness is of Reality; to have a purpose is to be lost in falseness . . . Love alone is devoid of purpose and a spark of Divine Love sets fire to all purposes. The Goal of Life in Creation is to arrive at purposelessness, which is the state of Reality” (Meher Baba, *The Everything and the Nothing* [Beacon Hill, Australia: Meher House Publications, 1963], 62). In these terms, the purpose of law or the law of law, is to bring to end all the purposes that separate life and living. Purpose exists in the separation of ends and means, in the empty space between law’s two senses. Purposelessness lives in the inescapable free binding of life to itself, wherein what is and what should be are forever reconciled beyond reconciliation, where the dialectical circle of law is paradoxically shrunk to an infinite point. The connection between this shrinking and sleep is articulated by Meister Eckhart: “If a person were really asleep for a hundred years, he would not know any creature and he would not know of time or images. [Only if you so sleep,] then can you hear what God is bringing about in you. This is why the soul says in the Book of Love: ‘I sleep and my heart is awake’ (Sg 5:2)” (*Teacher and Preacher*, trans. Bernard McGinn [New York: Paulist, 1986], 293). The proverbial sweetness of sleep, an absolute law of life whose intimacy therewith is shown in sleep’s suspension of everything save breath, is sister to the wakeful captivation of contemplation: “For by a wondrous sweetness was she [Mary] held; a sweetness of the mind which is doubtless greater than that of the senses” (Augustine, *Sermons on the New Testament*, 54.1 (<http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/160354.htm>)). And as anxiety is the enemy of sleep, so is sleep a reflection of the irreconcilability of worry and justice: “At peace with God and neighbor, thus good sleep demands. And at peace too with the neighbor’s devil! Otherwise he will be at your house at night” (Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, trans. Adrian de Caro [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006], 18). The gravity of sleep indexes the sweet immanence of eternal justice, precisely because ‘justice never sleeps’: “suppose you feel tired and fed up and that you go to sleep. What is it that you are trying to do? It is nothing but to try to take refuge in God—your natural and inherent state. The whole Creation therefore has this conscious or unconscious tendency to take shelter in God the Over-Soul . . . by entering the state of sound sleep” (Meher Baba, *God Speaks: The Theme of Creation and Its Purpose* [New York: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1973], 101). Augustine similarly correlates the sense of divine justice and feeling for the inner abyss in commenting on Psalm 41:8: “*Deep calls to deep* [abyssus abyssum invocat] *at the sound of your cataracts* . . . This is how wisdom is imparted, and faith is learned, when one deep invokes another. Holy preachers of God’s word call to a deep abyss. But are they not a deep abyss themselves? They surely are, as you know. The apostle says, *It matters very little to me that I am judged by you or by any human day of reckoning*. What a deep abyss he is! But he goes further: *Neither do I judge myself*” (*Expositions of the Psalms*, trans. Maria Boulding, 6 vols. [New York: New City Press, 2000], II.251-2). In other words, the apparent virtuality of abysically resonant communication is a real sign of the hidden reality of eternal justice as well as a real medium of worrylessness. Beautifully enacting this principle, Augustine opens the commentary on this line addressing the (invisible) reader as a visible presence by means of whose interest his own commentarial effort proceeds without anxiety: “I may be able to get through this whole psalm if you help me by your concentration, for I can see how eager you are. I am not too worried about any fatigue you may feel as you listen, for you can see how I am sweating in the effort that speaking costs me. And as you watch me laboring, you will certainly help me, for you know I am laboring not for my own benefit, but yours. Go on listening, then; I can see you want to” (*Expositions*, II.251). This points significantly back to questions of relation between media

Accordingly, the practice of law must live or flow within the proportional analogy between law and laws, namely, in the space where law is not itself the truth, or, the taking-place of things is not reduced to a fact like others.<sup>40</sup> Ontologically, law is what is *proven* in life and in the living. Ethically, law is how life is made worth living and the living make themselves *worthy* of life. On this point it is essential that *what* laws were given at Marah is not given in the text, only *that* laws were given. For only an open idea of law, similar to the unqualified wood, can fulfill law as truth and sweeten the waters of life. Which also means that the fact of law equally needs *mere* law, simple unmixed, non-allegorical wood for its truth. Indeed the story demonstrates such an idea of immanent truth in its own structure, wherein law is provided to people within the cause-and-effect logic of its own event, around the waters of Marah.<sup>41</sup> This situational relation of law's event to causality raises a bitter question: Would the Lord have given laws at Marah had the people not murmured? And a sweet answer: No.<sup>42</sup>

Meister Eckhart says, "In truth, unless you flee first from yourself, then wherever you flee to, you will find obstacles and restlessness no matter where it is."<sup>43</sup> That the Marah episode is legitimately read as ordered towards this principle, that is, that the failure of people to flee from themselves while finding the bitter waters is the condition for the provision of law, is legible not only in light of the broad Judeo-Christian

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and sweetness, virtuality and justice. Is not the theory of communication that Augustine here finds and dramatizes a form of 'post-human' justice predicated upon the *as not* [*h□s m□*] structure of apostolic identity? Is not the *as not*—as opposed to the hope-structure of the *as if*, which is actually only a mechanism for 'having one's own way' in a bad way upon the faulty foundation of assumption that the hoped-for always already *is not*—precisely the hopeless 'hope' of the virtual as mode of relation that calls from the depths to release identity into sweet wayless abysses of *a life*? See Eugene Thacker, "The Wayless Abyss: Mysticism and Mediation," *Postmedieval* 3 [2012]: 80-96. Is not eternal justice thus coterminal with arts of *wayless media*, above all the taste of one's own tongue, whose aimless aim empties world of the correlational, fake-it-till-you-make-it structure of capitalist life (our hell-creating virtual performance of salvation) in f(l)avor of the fullness of the cephalophoric paradise where law both is *as if it were not* decapitated and is decapitated *as if it were not*? "Justice without law is not the negation of the law, but the realization and fulfillment, the *pl□r□ma*, of the law" (Giorgio Agamben, *The Time That Remains: A Commentary on the Letter to the Romans*, trans. Patricia Dailey [Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005]107). Affirming these questions, Scott Wilson provides a proper figure for such media, one whose beauty lies precisely in the abyssic alreadyness or radical immanence of its 'perhaps': "Perhaps some time in the future, some hard-bodied, hard-wired assemblage self-designed to survive the lifeless expanses of time and space will sense the sense the soft sweetness of *a*-life penetrating it" (*The Order of Joy: Beyond the Cultural Politics of Enjoyment* [New York: State University of New York, 2008], 173).

<sup>40</sup> "Evil . . . is the reduction of the taking-place of things to a fact like others" (Agamben, *Coming Community*, 14).

<sup>41</sup> As Meher Baba explains, the universal law of cause and effect is the ground of ethics and responsibility within life: "There cannot be any serious pursuit of values if there is no assured connection between means and ends and if the law of Karma can be set aside. The inflexibility of the law of Karma is a condition for significant human action which would be utterly impossible if the law of Karma could be safely ignored or flouted. In its inviolability the law of Karma is like the other laws of nature. However, the rigorousness of the operation of Karmic laws does not come to the soul as the oppressiveness of some external and blind power, but as something involved in the rationality of the scheme of life. Karmic determination is the condition of true responsibility. It means that a man will reap as he sows. What a person gathers by way of experience is invariably connected with what he does" (*Discourses*, III.90).

<sup>42</sup> Fulfilling a similar logic of human-divine relation, God would not have destroyed the world with the Flood had Noah not 'taken thought for the morrow', according to the commentary in the *Zohar*, which Daniel Colucciello Barber explicates, via Eckhart and Laruelle, as follows: "The *Zohar's* commentary . . . points out that depending on this basis, grounding one's survival by mirroring its command—build an ark and save yourself—is precisely to fail ethically. Even God was waiting for Noah to refuse God's command. In other words, even God asks Man to unground God; God waits for Man to turn baselessness against God. Yet Noah does no such thing, he attaches himself to God so that God will provide a why, a basis for Noah's survival" ("Whylessness: The Universe is Deaf and Blind," in *Dark Nights of the Universe*, eds. Barber, Galloway, Masciandaro, Mett , and Thacker [Miami: NAME, 2013], 41).

<sup>43</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Complete Mystical Works*, 488. Correlatively, it is in the nature of sweetness to displace its savorer: "the sweetness-in-me experience casts the enjoying subject out of the center and places it, for a few precarious yet welcome moments, on the fringe of an autocratic taste sphere" (Peter Sloterdijk, *Bubbles: Spheres I*, trans. Wieland Hoban [Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2011], 93)—with thanks to the anonymous reviewer who brought this passage to my attention.

proscription of the “bitterness of murmuring [*amartudine murmurationis*]”<sup>44</sup> as a lapse in faith and blindness to eternal justice—“Do all things without grumbling or questioning” (Philippians 2:14); “Why should a living man complain, a man, about the punishment of his sins?” (Lamentations 3:39)—but more significantly in terms of the spiritual ‘mechanics’ of sweetness and bitterness, both in the story and its interpretations, which point back to their inner source. As the people’s superimposition of psychic bitterness upon the waters of Marah is the pretext for their being given laws, so are the laws received a means of ordering people towards the true source of sweetness within themselves, toward realizing the profound relation between wisdom and taste, *sapientia* and *sapor*, according to which truth is always a matter of discriminating for and through oneself the difference between good and bad, a process of tasting or proving its *right flavor*.<sup>45</sup> This means that the laws cannot at all be means in the spiritually escapist or religiously legal (i.e. hypocritical) sense of a guarantee that supplants the paradisaical imperative of sweetness with rules for sweetness. Rather the laws are simply *another chance* to discover sweetness’s inner source, another bitterness with which to find paradise, a chance that is itself *directly* produced from the preceding failure via the cosmic logics of experience. Law is the chance that the refusal of sweetness *deserves*.<sup>46</sup> It is a chance to stop worrying, not because keeping the law promises removal of the object of worry (health), so that now one’s need only worry about keeping the law, but because keeping the law *instructs* in the needlessness and evil of worry in the first place. The lesson of law’s event is exactly *not* ‘I have law so now I need not worry’, but ‘I worry so now I need law’. To the one who exits (the possibility of) paradise, who misses paradise by deciding that *this is not it*, who refuses disobedience of the self’s bitter command to remain a servant of oneself, who demonstrates too humanly a sheer inability to *be* in paradise, to this one is given law.<sup>47</sup> Law is the sweet and truthful reflection of the negation of sweetness, an inescapable symptom of the hatred of paradise.

To understand the Marah episode in this way, at the touch point between the ‘external’ binding of people to law and their ‘internal’ attraction of law unto themselves,

<sup>44</sup> Augustine, *Enarationes in Psalmos*, 99.14.2, PL 37:1280.

<sup>45</sup> “Perhaps *sapientia*, that is wisdom, is derived from *sapor*, that is taste, because, when it is added to virtue, like some seasoning, it adds taste to something which by itself is tasteless and bitter . . . For in nothing is the victory of wisdom over malice more evident than when the taste for evil—which is what malice is—is purged away, and the mind’s inmost task senses that it is deeply filled with sweetness” (Bernard of Clairvaux, *On the Song of Songs*, trans. Irene Edmonds, 4 vols. [Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1980], 85:8-9, IV.204-5). The deep logical connection between the gustatory and the elective is shown in the IE root *geus*: to taste, chose (origin of both *choose* and *gustus*). As knowledge proceeds via discrimination, so is pleasure or disgust also a choice. The horizon of knowledge is governed by the ethics of taste.

<sup>46</sup> This corresponds to how the laws given at Marah are also a test or proof of the people: “and there he proved them” (Exodus 15:25).

<sup>47</sup> “Certain it is that *work, worry, labor and trouble*, form the lot of almost all men their whole life long. But if all wishes were fulfilled as soon as they arose, how would men occupy their lives? what would they do with their time? . . . men would either die of boredom or hang themselves; or there would be wars, massacres, and murders, so that in the end mankind would inflict more suffering on itself than it has now to accept at the hands of Nature” (Arthur Schopenhauer, *Studies in Pessimism*, trans. T. Bailey Saunders [London: Swan Sonnenschein & Co., 1891], 13). The genius of this hypothetical passage, of course, is that it only reproduces the world as it is and thus begs the question of natural vs. self-created suffering so as to ironically open the speculative possibility that this in fact is paradise. Indeed the essay heads directly into an ecstatically pessimist vision of that equally certain possibility: “There is nothing more certain than the general truth that it is the grievous *sin of the world* which has produced the grievous *suffering of the world* (24). Cf. “Most of man’s suffering is self-created through his ungoverned desires and impossible demands. All this is unnecessary for self-fulfillment” (Meher Baba, *Discourses*, III.168).

requires by its own principle (the priority of self-fleeing) that one *neither blame nor excuse* the Israelites for the laws at Marah. Likewise, it requires a correlative neutralization of the concept of law, so that we see law neither as punishment nor revelation, but as the pure working out of the necessity of law itself, the *actus purus* of the law of law whose universal form is the unity of cause-and-effect or the preservation of oneness in duality. To think otherwise would be to interpretively commit the same transgression our reading would redress and embitter the text with doctrinal law. Indeed the story seems conspicuously fashioned to promote or even enforce this neutrality. There is no question that the people's desire for water is right. Nor is there any question that their murmuring is wrong.<sup>48</sup> The rightness of one does not legitimize or justify the wrongness of the other. Rather the opposite: the wrongness is *all the more wrong* in relation to the rightness of its pretext. The waters are bitter, but something even bitterer, a hostile *exacerbation*, has been added to them, an element of *pure evil*.<sup>49</sup> This evil, fulfilled in the murmuring, is what is already present in the *naming* of the waters—"When they came to Marah, they could not drink the water of Marah because it was bitter; therefore it was named Marah" (Exodus 15:23)—insofar as the name is permitted to step beyond its own truth as (mere) name and veil reality, insofar as bitterness is permitted to pass from the waters through the word to the spirit. In failing to preserve and protect paradise with the living word or flaming sword of the tongue,<sup>50</sup> one instead imitatively follows language outside of paradise, literally murmuring like the bitter water beyond its bounds,<sup>51</sup> missing once again the garden's narrow gate: "For the gate is narrow and the way is hard, that leads to life, and those who find it are few" (Matthew 7:14). This tiny, momentary gate to paradise, which St. Francis perfectly illustrates via the experience of being locked out,<sup>52</sup> is the infinitesimal opening or point passed over in the transition from the rightness of needing water to the wrongness of murmuring, from the good bitterness of the waters (in their own right) to the evil bitterness of demanding that the world be otherwise (according to one's own desire). The bitter conjunction of the unquestionably right and the unquestionably wrong marks a misprision or mis-sensing of law itself, a failure to

<sup>48</sup> On the semantic parameters of murmuring (Hebrew *lîn*) and its connection to rebellion against God, see *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament, Volume 7*, eds. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry [Grand Rapids, MI: Erdmans, 1995], 509-12). *Lîn* is associated with the growling of dogs, which underscores both the loss of human dignity and the failure of understanding involved in murmuring, the sense in which murmuring equals irrational misapprehension. This is perfectly illustrated in the Islamic anecdote about Jesus and the dog carcass, in which the disciples are corrected without correction for identifying with the stench: "Mâlik, son of Dînâr, said; Jesus (Goodwill be upon him) and the disciples with him passed by the carcass of a dog. The disciples said, 'What a stench this dog makes!' The he (Blessing and Goodwill be upon him!) said, 'How white are its teeth!'" (*The Islamic Jesus: The Portrait of Jesus in Islamic Literature*, ed. and trans. Daniel Deleanu and J. Robson [Lincoln, NE: iUniverse, 2002], 13).

<sup>49</sup> This may be understood as a corollary to Augustine's perverse delight in stealing pears that were "not particularly tempting either to look at or to taste [*nec forma nec sapore inlecebrosi*]" (*Confessions*, 2.4.9), a formulation that intentionally inverts, like the crime, the delicious fruit of Genesis 3:6.

<sup>50</sup> "[T]he problem of knowledge is a problem of possession, and every problem of possession is a problem of enjoyment, that is, of language" (Giorgio Agamben, *Stanzas: Word and Phantasm in Western Culture*, trans. Ronald L. Martinez [Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993], xvii).

<sup>51</sup> Cf. "Black Melancholy sits . . . Her gloomy presence saddens all the scene, / Shades every flower, and darkens every green, / Deepens the murmur of the falling floods" (Alexander Pope, "Eloisa to Abelard," lines 165-9).

<sup>52</sup> "I return from Perugia and arrive here in the dead of night. It's winter time, muddy, and so cold that icicles have formed on the edges of my habit and keep striking my legs and blood flows from such wounds. Freezing, covered with mud and ice, I come to the gate . . . 'For the love of God, take me in tonight!' And he replies: 'I will not!' . . . I tell you this: If I had patience and did not become upset, true joy, as well as true virtue and the salvation of my soul, would consist in this" (*Francis of Assisi: Early Documents*, I.166-7).

discriminate between what is and what should be that ruins the chance of translating between them.<sup>53</sup> What the murmuring at Marah figures is precisely the *false synthesis* of the two senses, the failure to synthesize world and will for which Nietzsche offers the unconquerably sweet antidote of *amor fati*: “seeing what is necessary in things as what is beautiful in them—thus I will be one of those who make things beautiful.”<sup>54</sup> True synthesis of law’s two senses, what is and what should be, is sweetness. Marah is not the place of law because law is bitter. Instead, Marah is the bitterness showing that law is the form of sweetness, the necessary water, which man’s bitterness *warrants*.

The exegetical tradition accords with this reading insofar as it locates the ultimate source of sweetness within the divinity of the individual soul and not in the objects and events that human beings name bitter or sweet. For Philo, the bitterness of the law is only an apparent bitterness, like the Aristotelian difficulty of virtue, a correlate of the disordered love of the good that evaporates as that love is ethically perfected and the ignorance of desire is dissolved.<sup>55</sup> Origen, commenting on *exacerbation* in Ezekiel 17:12, similarly derives bitterness from sin and underscores the human capacity to sweeten, via life’s essential sweetness, even “the most sweet words of God.”<sup>56</sup> Continuing and clarifying this line of thinking, Emmanuel Swedenborg directly interprets the bitterness of Marah as the state and quality of temptation away from “genuine affection for truth,” a negative distortion of reality caused by the curvature of perception around self-love.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Such failure of discrimination is the same as that which inhabits the one who wants vengeance, who “demands from the phenomenon what only pertains to the thing in itself [and] does not see to what extent the injuring and the injured parties are in themselves one” (Schopenhauer, *World as Will and Presentation*, I.426, §64). Whatever the water of Marah are in themselves, they expose the bitterness of those who find them bitter.

<sup>54</sup> *Gay Science*, 157.

<sup>55</sup> “[M]en in general look upon the fact of being prevented from swelling and boiling over with their appetites, but being forced to contract and restrain them as a grievous thing, thinking it a bitter thing to unlearn indulgence of their passions . . . It is for this reason that the law, as it appears to men, was given at a place which is called Bitterness; for to do wrong is pleasant, but to act justly is laborious . . . But others . . . pass through the contest of life, keeping their life safe from overthrow and from destruction . . . And the cause of this is not merely labour, but also the sweetness with which it is combined; for the scripture says, ‘And the water was made sweet.’ But sweet and pleasant labour is called by another name, fondness for labour; for that which is sweet in labour is the love of, and desire for . . . what is honourable” (Philo, *Works*, trans. C.D. Yonge [Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1993], 818-9). Wilf reprises Philo: “Law simply *seems* constricting. When it becomes the object of desire, it may be transformed into something beloved” (*Law Before the Law*, 149). However, this interpretation both misunderstands Philo and commits the error of glossing love of the good as an eros of law. Law is good, but it is not the good. The goodness of law is tied precisely to its constriction, its operation of binding beings to the good, as well as, via love, binding the good itself to its own beyond, to what is beyond being. If there is something in law to be loved, it is just this binding. As a condition of responsibility, law is ordered toward freedom and for that reason can never be the space of freedom itself, which “can be manifested only in the void of beliefs, in the absence of axioms, and only where the laws have no more authority than a hypothesis” (E. M. Cioran, *History and Utopia*, trans. Richard Howard [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987], 11).

<sup>56</sup> “When the faithful take in these naturally sweet things, they are either living well or doing truly the contrary. If they are walking according to the divine standard, the words of God retain the sweetness with which they were first uttered. But I am inclined to think that through the goodness of their life they even increase the sweetness of God’s words, by mingling the sweetness of life with the sweet savor of speech . . . But if someone sins and ‘walks perversely’ [Lev 26:23], outside of the precepts of God he . . . turns all the sweetness into a bitter taste . . . The more I sin, the more bitterness I put into the sweetness of God’s words. If the transgressions I commit become great, I convert the entire sweetness of the honey into a bitter savor” (Origen, *Homilies 1-17 on Ezekiel*, trans. Thomas P. Scheck [Mahwah, NJ: Newman Press, 2010], 147-148).

<sup>57</sup> “The source of this temptation is, that communication with the good is intercepted as soon as man comes into his own proprium, for then he falls into the evil of self-love or love of the world. When he emerges from that state, truths become enjoyable. This is meant in what follows by the bitter waters being made sweet by the wood cast into them, for by wood is signified good” (Emmanuel Swedenborg, *Works, Volume 14* [Cambridge: Riverside Press, 1907], 201).



Exegesis explaining the nature of the sweetening of the waters, even if literally projecting the origin of sweetness outward into natural or supernatural external sources, is also easily savored as confirmation of the more mystical sense I am insisting on, a sense ideally articulated by Eckhart via the ancient metaphor of the sick man's tongue.<sup>58</sup> The tree by which the waters of Marah are sweetened has generally been interpreted as also being bitter, so that the sweetening might carry the sense of a wondrously positive double negation of bitterness, a "miracle within a miracle."<sup>59</sup> At the level of spiritual acts, this is to be understood as the marvelous nullification of bitterness or affective negativity that occurs when bitterness is no longer negated or embittered, the suicide-from-without of bitterness when it is entered into itself and permitted to be beyond relation in positive non-determining resignation to whatever it is.<sup>60</sup> See what happens to fear when the fear of fear is renounced—it dies to itself. In the form the Marah episode, this means putting the bitterness of the water back into water, or in Quentin Meillassoux's philosophic terms, undoing correlational identity by "transform[ing] our perspective on unreason . . . and turn[ing] it into the veridical content of the world as such."<sup>61</sup> If there is indeed bitterness, let it not be *my* bitterness. "I do not want to accuse; I do not even want to accuse the accusers. Let *looking away* be my only negation!"<sup>62</sup> If there is a problem with life, that is, if *I* have a problem with it, let life itself *be* the problem. Hell is only destroyed by entering it, by staying in it. Here one must understand the identity of turning away from bitterness and embracing it (like the Turin horse), which fulfills the *imperative to be* as figured by Miguel de Unamuno in terms of enduring the passion of the mystery (rather than trying to solve it) or allowing oneself to be swallowed by the Sphinx.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> "Whoever seeks or aims at *something*, is seeking and aiming at nothing, and he who prays for something will get nothing . . . If a sick man does not relish food and wine, is that surprising? For he does not get the true taste of the wine or the food. The tongue has a coating and a cover with which it tastes, and that is bitter through the disorder of the disease . . . Unless this hindrance is removed, it cannot taste according to its proper flavor. As long as that which intervenes has not been removed in us, we will never get the proper flavor of God, and our life will often be harsh and bitter" (*Complete Mystical Works*, 350). I would highlight here the principle of intervention or interruption, the sense in which the error of bitterness takes the form of a stoppage of the flow of life and insertion of self as a barrier *between* consciousness and the world. A real version of this analogy is the way in which a person may love their own sickness insofar as it serves as a way of keeping the world 'about' them. The sense of murmuring as intervention or interruption in the Marah episode is paralleled in the way is necessitates Moses's intervening with the Lord and thence the intervention of law itself, which is now placed in covenantal fashion *between* the people and their health. The goodness of the law thus lies precisely in creatively displacing the selfhood that was bringing life down.

<sup>59</sup> "He puts something injurious inside something injurious in order to produce a miracle inside a miracle" (*Tanhuma Beshallah* 24), as cited in Eliezer Segal, *From Sermon to Commentary: Expounding the Bible in Talmudic Babylonia* [Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2005], 92). Hopefully I am correct in taking this to mean that God does not only turn something bitter to its opposite, but all the more miraculously does so by adding bitterness to bitterness, so that there are two miracles, one positive and one privative: 1) turning the bitter to sweet; 2) preventing the bitter (of the wood) from embittering the bitter (of the water).

<sup>60</sup> Commentary on the name *Mary*, cognate with *Marah*, offered another context for articulating this principle: "Now, someone complains that she cannot experience any sweetness from God, nor sweetness within. Let her not wonder at all if she is not Mary, for she must buy it with bitterness from without—not with every bitterness, for some, such as every worldly grief which does not serve for the health of the soul, turn one away from God" (*Anchoritic Spirituality: Ancrene Wisse and Associated Works*, trans. Anne Savage and Nicholas Watson [New York: Paulist, 1991], 186). Samuel Zinner identifies the Virgin's name as denoting "the world's bitterness which her own reality of celestial sweetness cancels" and connects Mary archetypally and phonetically with the divine names *ar-Rahman* and *ar-Rahim* of the Koran's beginning (*Christianity and Islam: Essays on Ontology and Archetype* [London: Matheson Trust, 2010], 211).

<sup>61</sup> Quentin Meillassoux, *After Finitude: An Essay on the Necessity of Contingency*, trans. Ray Brassier [London: Continuum, 2008], 82.

<sup>62</sup> Nietzsche, *Gay Science*, 157.

<sup>63</sup> "Do not take opium, but put salt and vinegar in the soul's wound, for when you sleep and no longer feel the suffering, you are not. And to be, that is imperative. Do not then close your eyes to the agonizing Sphinx, but look her in the face, and let her seize you in her mouth, and crunch you with her hundred thousand poisonous teeth, and swallow you. And when she has swallowed you,

Crucially, the tree was also figurally and even literally equated with the most sweet Tree of Life (Genesis 2:9).<sup>64</sup> Complementing the sense of a miraculously surplus auto-negation of bitterness, the sweetening of the water thus carries the sense of an overpowering of bitterness by a marvelous and original sweetness, not merely sweetness strong enough to compensate for and mask bitterness, but a sweetness that eliminates it all together within the infinitely superior quality of itself. Sweetening in this sense indicates return to the non-dual primacy of the good, its being beyond the opposition of good and evil.<sup>65</sup> This is the truly *spicy* paradisaical sweetness that makes bitterness to be nothing, in keeping with the idea of spice as not merely a condiment or addition to substance, but that which fulfills substance itself. So Philo interprets the tree added to the waters of Marah as the perfect good by connecting it at once to spice and the Tree of Life.<sup>66</sup> Ethically, such sweetening pertains to escaping the prison of the good, that is, overcoming morality as such, the *identification* with the good that binds both the good and oneself into opposition with evil.<sup>67</sup> The sweetness of this escape belongs to the fact of its being materially easier than escaping evil. For where evil is an evident and concrete prison that really must be escaped via the difficult binding of ethos or virtuous habit, the good, like those force fields that typically surround the false paradises of science fiction stories, is an obscure or invisible prison which disappears soon after its existence is discerned and its mechanism seen through.<sup>68</sup> Theologically, such sweetening pertains to the instantaneous and seemingly impossible absolute erasure of evil in divine justice, the eternal moment of all things being made new and well in the revelation that they were never otherwise, that “nothing is ever written on the soul.”<sup>69</sup> For Julian of Norwich, this is the sweet analogy of her intuition that *all shall be well . . .*—a Now found within her vision of the crucifixion at the moment when Christ turns to her in good cheer from the cross.<sup>70</sup> In this light, the sweetening of the

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you will know the sweetness of the taste of suffering” (Miguel de Unamuno, *The Tragic Sense of Life*, tr. Crawford Fritch [New York: Dover, 1954], 283).

<sup>64</sup> Pseudo-Philo’s *Biblical Antiquities* relocates Exodus 15.25 to the period of forty days on Sinai (Exodus 24:18) in order to make the link: “And there [on Mount Sinai] he [God] commanded him [Moses] many things, and showed him the tree of life, from which he cut off [a piece] and took [it] and threw [it] into Marah, and the water of Marah became sweet. And it [the water] followed them in the wilderness forty years and went up onto the mountain with them and down into the plains” (cited in Bauckham, “Paradise,” 52). Origen connects the tree to the cross via comparison to wisdom as “tree of life” in Proverbs 3:18 (*Homilies*, 301-2).

<sup>65</sup> “Evil is not a being; for if it were, it would not be totally evil. Nor is it a nonbeing; for nothing is completely a nonbeing, unless it is said to be the Good in the sense of beyond-being. For the Good is established far beyond and before simple being and nonbeing” (Pseudo-Dionysius, *Complete Works*, 85).

<sup>66</sup> “[T]he perfect good, the nature of which is to change and sweeten the bitterness of the soul, the most beautiful additional seasoning, full of all kinds of sweetnesses, by the addition of which, even those things which are not nutritious become salutary food; for it is said, ‘that the Lord showed him (Moses) a tree, and he cast it into the water,’ that is to say, into the mind dissolved, and relaxed, and full of bitterness, that it might become sweetened and serviceable. But this tree promises not only food but likewise immortality; for Moses tells us, that the tree of life was planted in the midst of paradise, being, in fact, goodness surrounded as by a body-guard by all the particular virtues” (Philo, *Works*, 256).

<sup>67</sup> “When a person looks upon himself as being good and not bad, he is engaged in self-affirmation through identification with this conviction, which is a continuation of separative existence in a new form . . . Identification with the bad is easier to deal with because, as soon as the bad is perceived as being bad, its grip on consciousness becomes less firm. The loosening of the grip of the good presents a more difficult problem, since *the good carries a semblance of self-justification through favourable contrast with the bad*” (Meher Baba, *Discourses*, I.98).

<sup>68</sup> “The difficulty concerning the abode of evil is not so much of perceiving that it is a limitation but in actually dismantling it after arriving at such perception. The difficulty concerning the abode of the good is not so much in dismantling it as of perceiving that it is, in fact, a limitation” (Meher Baba, *Discourses*, I.98).

<sup>69</sup> Meher Baba, *Discourses*, I.99.

<sup>70</sup> “[S]odenly, I beholding in the same crosse, he changed in blisseful chere. The changing of his blisseful chere changed mine, and I was as glad and mery as it was possible . . . I understood that we be now . . . in his crosse with him in our paines and in our passion, dying. And we, wilfully abiding in the same crosse, with his helpe and his grace, into the last point, sodeynly he shall

waters of Marah evokes the principle of a first-and-last sweetness that is intelligible as the perfective detonation of law itself, a manifest explosion of law's subject-determining negation (*thou shalt not*) into an impossibly positive and hyper-objective *shall be* that speaks beyond hope, rendering consolation ridiculous and even its own assurance senseless. Not coincidentally, the opposed senses of the wood as sweet or bitter were synthesized and suspended in the *coincidentia oppositorum* of the Cross.<sup>71</sup> And by means of medieval wood-of-the-cross legends, the figural relation between the cross and the tree shown to Moses at Marah was also literalized, its wood derived from a paradise-planting grown in its waters.<sup>72</sup>

The figural reading of the Marah tree as Tree of Life and/or Cross manifests a significant but otherwise inobvious formal aspect of the episode, namely, that the sweetening of the waters by means of the tree signifies a *paradisical inversion* of the normal flow of life into a higher and other kind of life. Where life in its regular flourishing would be imaged in the watering of a tree, the inverse 'treering of the water' at Marah suggests the principle of a spiritual inversion that realizes the natural sweetness of life[*zoē*]<sup>73</sup> at a level of reality or being wherein the human is no longer simply dependent, like tree upon water, upon the seeming sweetness of external sustenance and becomes instead the very principle of an independent and world-sweetening sweetness. The arboreal reversal figures transition from recipient to source. In Porete's self-annihilated and intoxicated terms, such a human is the one who not only gets drunk whether there is wine or no, but who can drink from the impossible itself: "And she is inebriated not only from what she has drunk, but very intoxicated and more than intoxicated from what she never drinks nor will ever drink."<sup>74</sup> Achieving her own nature as paradisaical tree, this soul makes even the bitter waters of Marah intoxicated. For as the human body is inversely homomorphic to the tree, an upside down tree,<sup>75</sup> so must one spiritually invert oneself vis-à-vis life in the world, that is, turn right side up all that refuses to stand upright and be in paradise today, in order to really live: "his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water, that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither" (Psalms 1:2-3). But to know this real sweetness of a life in direct and practical terms, to taste and see its reality rather than fall into theoretical imagination of it, it is

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change his chere to us, and we shal be with him in heven. Betwene the one and that other shalle alle be one time [i.e. no time], and than shall alle be brought into joy" (Julian of Norwich, *Writings*, 193).

<sup>71</sup> "Moses sweetened the water in Marah with a bitter wood, / and the Nation drank and satisfied their thirst. / Likewise the cross of Jesus sweetened the bitter Nations, / and gave them the sweet taste of the name of the Creator" (*Narsai Homiliae et Carmina*, II.124-5, as cited in Cyril Aphrem Karim, *Symbols of the Cross in the Writings of the Early Syriac Fathers* [Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2004], 70-1)

<sup>72</sup> Wood-of-the-cross legends derived the Cross's wood from Tree of Life. In the Slavonic branches of the tradition, the waters of Marah serve as the growing place for the tree from which the Cross is made. See Nicole Fallon, *The Cross as Tree: The Wood-of-the-Cross Legends in Middle English and Latin Texts in Medieval England* (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Toronto, 2009).

<sup>73</sup> "And we all see that men cling to life even at the cost of enduring great misfortune, seeming to find in life a natural sweetness [*γλυκύτης φυσικής*] and happiness" (Aristotle, *Politics*, III.6, in *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, ed. Richard McKeon [New York: Random House, 1941]).

<sup>74</sup> Marguerite Porete, *Mirror of Simple Souls*, 105.

<sup>75</sup> "God gave the sovereign part of human soul to be the divinity of each one, being that part with, as we say, dwells at the top of the body, and inasmuch as we are a plant not of an earthly but of a heavenly growth, raises us from earth to our kindred who are in heaven" (Plato, *Timaeus*, 90a, in *The Collected Dialogues of Plato*, eds. Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963], 1209).

necessary to sense the sweetness (of law) in the most literal terms, to find the actual point of contact between sweetness and the law.

#### THE SWEETEST LAW

That law ought to be understood as essentially bound to the inversion of sweetness is evident from the logical relation between the terms. Where law signifies what coerces and binds, sweetness signifies what attracts and delights. The inversive relation is immediately suggested by the continuity between coercion and *persuasion* along the spectrum composed of the opposites of force and attraction. And if we recognize that delight is fundamentally linked with freedom, with the potential to do as one pleases (*quodlibet*), then a proportional oppositional continuity between delight and binding is also clear. The inverse logical relation between sweetness and law is also indicated by the fact that the pejorative sense of sweetness as cloying (via Middle English *cloyen*, to bind, hinder movement, fasten with a nail) is connected with the principle of binding. So Aquinas defines the essence of law thus: "Law is a rule and measure of acts, whereby man is induced to act or is restrained from acting: for *lex* (law) is derived from *ligare* (to bind), because it binds one to act."<sup>76</sup> In other words, law encodes and transposes sweetness in a negatively volitional manner, enclosing the freedom of what one wants to do within the necessity of what one must. This relation may be summarized with a simple table:

ATTRACTION	SWEETNESS	FREEDOM
<i>persuasion, coercion</i>	↓	<i>delight, cloying</i>
FORCE	LAW	BINDING

Following this logic, law is simply the actualization of the inversion of sweetness. Law is sweetness upside down. As the negation of sweetness deserves law, the justice of law resides in its serving as an affirmation of sweetness. The distinction and conceptual inseparability of the terms is correlative to the "inclusive exclusion" that obtains between *zoē* and *bios*, bare life and political life, as per Agamben's analysis.<sup>77</sup> The implication of this close correlation is that the imminent task given to the biopolitical body is that of a constitution and installation of a law that is wholly exhausted in sweetness, a law that is only its own sweetness.<sup>78</sup>

The answer to the question of the identity of this law, this new sweet law, could not be more simple or clear. The writing is on the wall—a writing that immediately numbers, weighs, and divides the very person, your so-called 'self': *thou shalt not worry*. Not-worrying is at once how to "'politicize' the 'natural sweetness' of *zoē*" and is itself the "politics already contained in *zoē* as its most precious center."<sup>79</sup> Any resistance to this law is the ineradicable sign of its truth. To require justification of this law, for

<sup>76</sup> *Summa Theologica*, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province [New York: Benzinger Brothers, 1947-8], I-II.Q90.Art1.

<sup>77</sup> Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998)8.

<sup>78</sup> See Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, 188.

<sup>79</sup> Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, 11.

instance to bother about 'what the world would be like' if it were kept, or to deny any materiality or substance to it, is already to evade its immanent task and pervert its proper good. The proscription of worry is *pure law*, sweetest law, in the strictest sense. It is fully and simultaneously a law of freedom and the freedom of the law. It lays down no precept or rule, places no categorical restriction on what one can or cannot do. At the same time, this law absolutely binds, ties one's neck in the noose of one's own logic, so that one must either reside in rebellion towards it (a rebellion that perforce only manifests its own futility: I worry in order to keep worrying) or necessarily begin to escape worry's total evil, the fact that to worry is to bind oneself and others in a terrible way. Likewise, *thou shalt not worry* is simultaneously a law of attraction and an attraction of law. The authentically and purely negative work of not-worrying, a negativity free from its own *against*, does nothing but open and invite other potentiality and impotentiality, the unknown plenitude of powers otherwise eclipsed by preoccupation. At the same time, being without worrying is the bare promise of law itself, its own attraction, which not-worrying simply realizes directly, without binding itself to a ground or reason. "Do everything, but don't worry. Worrying binds."<sup>80</sup>

The supreme legitimacy of *thou shalt not worry* is proven and intensified by the seeming impossibility of its not being kept, by the terror of following it a topsy-turvy world that willfully mistakes pain for sincerity, anxiety for responsibility, concern for understanding, and thinking for knowledge. All the more reason, then, to implement not-worrying as a protocol that one need not worry about, a perfectly unprogrammable rule whose following passes freely within and without the imprisoning walls of false power, above all the narrow circle of demands upon reality that keep one a self-hypnotized human, a someone at the expense of remaining elsewhere than in paradise. As much a law as not a law: the real principle of universal synthesis and sweetness (of the law), a sweet new style that is always invented by the few who are concerned only with what they *must* do, the "great man . . . who in the midst of the crowd keeps with perfect sweetness the independence of solitude."<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Meher Baba, quoted in *The Awakener* 3:2 (1956), 12.

<sup>81</sup> Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Self-Reliance and Other Essays* (New York: Dover, 1993), 23.