

The Commentary of Thomas Aquinas in the History of Medieval Exegesis on Job: *Intentio et Materia*

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THE BOOK OF JOB is certainly one of the most remarkable in the Bible: set in a surprising narrative framework (must it be taken at face value?), a series of dialogues or rather monologues ask a number of fundamental questions. If the replies of Job's friends seem correct by religious standards, they are swept aside by God during his final discourse, whereas Job's speeches, though theologically unpalatable, receive divine approbation. Without going into the problems related to the book's composition² or structure—especially with the speech of the “intruder” Elihu³—Job has elicited a number of diverse readings throughout history.⁴ For our contemporaries, Job seems like a man in revolt and certain thinkers are left wondering even more intensely about the silence of God in the wake of the catastrophes of the twentieth century: the themes of the suffering of the

¹ The original French text of this study has been published as “Le commentaire de Thomas d'Aquin dans l'histoire medievale de l'exegese de Job,” *Revue thomiste* 119, no. 1 (2019) : 31–54.

² Jean Leveque, *Job: Le livre et le message* (Paris: Cerf, 1985), 5–6, speaks of four “strata” of composition: 1) narrative framework (from the ninth or tenth century BC); 2) the monologues, the dialogues, and the final theophany (first half of the fifth century); 3) Elihu's discourse (middle of the fifth century); 4) the poem on Wisdom in ch. 28 (fourth or third century). This is debatable. See also Leveque's important study *Job et son Dieu*, 2 vols. (Paris: J. Gabalda, 1970). Unless otherwise noted, all English translation in this article is my own.

³ See Robert Gordis, “Elihu the Intruder: A Study of the Authenticity of Job (chapters 32–33),” in *Biblical and Other Studies*, ed. Alexander Altmann (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1963), 60–78.

⁴ See especially the introduction of David J. A. Clines, *Job 1–20* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1989), xlvii–lvi.

just, of God's mysterious ways, of the presence of evil in the world (has the world been delivered over into the power of a criminal, as Job suggests in 9:24?), stand at the heart of present-day reflections.⁵ It has not always been thus: ancient exegesis saw Job as a saint (a figure of Christ, even) who was accordingly extolled as a model of patience.⁶ Significantly, certain ancient re-writings even clung to the book's narrative framework while simultaneously omitting its very heart.

Now, it might seem that it is Thomas Aquinas's commentary that has modified in profound ways the perception that one can have of the Book of Job. Ancient exegesis, strongly influenced by Gregory the Great's *Moralia in Iob*, endeavored to erase all the text's harsh aspects and to bring back into a reassuring perspective all the assertions that are difficult from a theological point of view. It is our aim here to situate St. Thomas's *Expositio super Iob ad litteram* within the history of the medieval exegesis of the book by asking why and how the change it provokes could have taken place. We will undertake this task, in the first place, by having recourse to some of the prologues of the commentators (on Job), and we will examine thereafter certain characteristics of the exegesis of St. Thomas, not from the point of view of exegetical methods,⁷ but from that of certain hermeneutical choices.

The Prologues

From the twelfth and thirteenth centuries on, the prologues of biblical commentaries acquire a relatively well-defined form, whether they be *accessus* or prologues answering to the four "Aristotelian causes."⁸ In both cases (and equally in prologues that have a free form), two rubrics facilitate our present approach: those that are concerned with its *materia*, that is, the book's subject matter, and those that are concerned with its *intentio*, that is, its purpose, its intention. We will discuss certain other rubrics as well,

⁵ From the abundant literature, the following should be mentioned: Carl G. Jung, *Antwort auf Hiob* (Zurich: Rascher, 1953); Roland de Pury, *Job ou l'homme révolté* (Geneva: Labor et fides, 1955); André Neher, *L'existence juive: Solitude et affrontements* (Paris: Seuil, 1962), 60–72; Paul Ricœur, *Finitude et culpabilité, II. La symbolique du mal* (Paris: Aubier, 1960), 295–99.

⁶ See Jean Danielou, *Les saints païens de l'Ancien Testament* (Paris: Seuil, 1956).

⁷ See Piotr Roszak, "Principes et pratiques exégétiques dans l'*Expositio super Iob* de Thomas d'Aquin," *Revue thomiste* 119 (2019): 5–30.

⁸ See Gilbert Dahan, "Les prologues des commentaires bibliques (xiie–xive s.)," in *Les Prologues médiévaux*, ed. Jacqueline Hamesse (Turnhout: Brepols, 2000), 427–70 (also included in Dahan, *Lire la Bible au moyen âge: Essais d'herméneutique médiévale* [Geneva: Droz, 2009], 57–101).

but these two will chiefly answer our interrogations, since our aim will be to determine what constitutes the foundation of the Book of Job. We will examine successively the commentaries prior to the thirteenth century, the commentaries of the thirteenth century prior to Thomas Aquinas, and then a few later commentators—placing of course Aquinas's commentary at the center of our study.⁹

We will not dwell on the patristic commentaries:¹⁰ Ambrose,¹¹ Augustine,¹² Julian of Eclanum,¹³ and Philip the Priest¹⁴ devoted annotations or commentaries to Job. Isidore of Seville sums up the principal ideas concerning Job in his prologue: he is a figure of Christ; his wife represents carnal humanity; his friends are heretics; Elihu is a figure of the proud. Despite all this, Isidore does not provide us with an overall perspective on the book.¹⁵ Isidore has read Gregory the Great's *Moralia in Iob*,¹⁶ whose perspective prevails throughout the whole first part of the Middle Ages.

Apart from the reading of the *Moralia* itself, either directly or by means of anthologies, Gregory's influence makes itself felt by means of the *Glossa*, later called *ordinaria*, developed at Laon and Auxerre in the first part of the twelfth century. The *Glossa ordinaria* becomes the basic biblical tool for several centuries to come. Most of the marginal glosses come from the *Moralia*, often with re-writing or restructuring. The Gloss on Job is preceded by a kind of prologue (*prothemata* in the Strasbourg printing, 1480–1481) made up of extracts taken from the prologue to the *Moralia*.¹⁷

⁹ A list of commentaries can be found in David J. A. Clines, *Job 38–42* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2011), 1270–74. Obviously, we will only be making use of certain of these. See also the summary of my lectures in *Annuaire de l'École pratique des hautes études* 109 (2000–2001): 381–82.

¹⁰ See: *Le Livre de Job chez les Pères*, Cahiers de Biblia Patristica 5, ed. R. Gounelle (Strasbourg: Centre d'Analyse et de Documentation Patristiques, 1996); Pierre Cazier, "Lectures du livre de Job chez Ambroise, Augustin et Grégoire le Grand," *Graphe* 6 (1997): 81–111.

¹¹ Ambrose, *De interpellatione Iob et de hominis infirmitate* (sect. 1 of *De interpellatione Iob et David*), ed. Carl Schenkl, in *Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latino-rum* [CSEL], 32/2:211–47).

¹² Augustine, *Adnotationes in Iob*, ed. Joseph Zycha (CSEL, 28/2:509–628).

¹³ Julian of Eclanum, *Expositio libri Iob*, ed. Lucas de Coninck, in *Corpus Christianorum: Series Latina* [CCSL] 88).

¹⁴ Philip the Priest, *Commentarii in librum Iob* (PL, 26:619–802).

¹⁵ Isidore of Seville, *In libros Veteris ac Novi Testamenti proemia* (PL, 83:163). See also *De ortu et obitu patrum* 24 (PL, 83:136; concerning only the narrative).

¹⁶ The *Moralia* are dedicated to Isidore's brother, Leander, who was bishop of Seville before him.

¹⁷ This prologue is not a later addition; it appears in manuscripts of the twelfth century (for example, Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS lat. 188).

Of course, the choice is significant. The first extract broaches the difficulties of the book: certain passages cannot be taken according to the literal sense; they would then appear as erroneous, impossible, or even contradictory. But Gregory also insists on the fact that it is necessary not to neglect the literal sense: "Sometimes, neglecting the literal sense hides the light of truth." In this passage also appears the famous phrase according to which the divine word exercises the wise and comforts the simple, "for it [the divine word] is like a river that is both shallow and deep, in which a lamb may walk about and an elephant swim."¹⁸ Even if Thomas Aquinas seems to confine the *Moralia* to spiritual exegesis, Gregory's work contains precious notations that helped advance the exegesis of Job. But let us now proceed to the authors of the twelfth century.

As we have said, the schema of *accessus* is introduced in the prologues of the commentaries: this schema invites its reader to reflect on the book's subject matter and intention, which is what uniquely interests us here, even if what is said about Job's authorship is often interesting (although most of the time this is taken directly from the *Moralia*). This procedure, like many other products of the cathedral schools, is rapidly integrated into monastic exegesis. If Bruno of Segni's commentary does not have a prologue, Rupert of Deutz's describes the *intentio* of Job in his prologue. Rupert's prologue sets forth the problem addressed by the book: the fact of the suffering of the righteous and the prosperity of the wicked must eliminate the rash opinion of those who evaluate merits by the measure of happiness or misfortune. The book is thus useful to all the citizens of heaven who suffer in this world, and who must not measure the gravity of sin by the intensity of suffering.¹⁹ With Peter the Chanter († 1197), we have a representative of the exegesis of the schools of the last third of the twelfth century; his commentary on Job is inspired by Gregory the Great, while registering the exegetical progress of his time. Peter's prologue²⁰ follows the *accessus* schema (*auctor, intentio, modus agendi, materia*). The intention of the book is "to instruct the Jews, who have the Law but are not living according to the Law, whereas a Gentile, who does not have the Law lives according to it." Job provides a lesson in patience and the book shows that Christ is

¹⁸ Gregory the Great, *Moralia in Iob*, the dedicatory letter to Leander, no. 4.

¹⁹ Rupert of Deutz, commentary on Job (*PL*, 168:963–64).

²⁰ It has a scriptural theme, Isaiah 23:4, "erubescere, Sydon, ait mare," used by Gregory the Great (*Mor. Iob*, praef. 5), with the interpretation in which Sidon represents those who are under the Law, while the sea represents the pagans. The same prologue is at the head of the commentary on Job in Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France

, MS lat. 384, fol. 139ra, among the works of Stephen Langton.

going to come.²¹ The subject matter concerns Job's struggle, from which he emerged victorious; Peter then gives a kind of summary. In accord with his custom, he notes that the book is written *intus et foris*, "interiorly and exteriorly"; but it is necessary to observe that its exterior sense contains some *tropica* elements, employing figurative language and some similitudes.²²

Hugh of Saint-Cher's commentaries provide the transition between the exegesis of the cathedral schools and that of the university: they are the work of a series of teams laboring at Saint-Jacques (Paris) under Hugh's direction.²³ The prologue of the commentary on Job begins with a scriptural theme (Hos 11:4: "In funiculis Adam traham eos, in vinculis charitatis"); the first part is a kind of "sermon" that takes this theme as its point of departure: the cords to which Hosea refers are taken to be the tribulations by which God draws (*trahit*) sinners to himself. Job, a pagan who has not received the Law, gives us a lesson so that our wickedness might be confounded. The Book of Job is therefore written "so that we might imitate his patience and consider the outcome of his patience." The prologue's second part develops a complex schema of *accessus*, with a long treatment about the book's author. Let us simply keep to a few points. The subject matter (*materia*) of the book is twofold: general (the misery of the human condition) and specific (the misery of Job). The book's intention is to invite us to patience: just as Job's property was restored to him twofold, thanks to his patience, so too, if we have patience, we will be doubly clothed—like many authors, Hugh cites Romans 15:4. Let us also note that the book is considered to pertain to theology, but it is useful to the practical intellect.²⁴

The commentary of Roland of Cremona († 1259), one of the first Dominican masters (in Paris, then in Toulouse circa 1230), is interesting on account of the use it makes of philosophers;²⁵ but its exegesis is chiefly

²¹ Peter the Chanter, prologue to commentary on Job (Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS lat. 15565, fol. 4ra).

²² Peter the Chanter, prologue to commentary on Job (BnF lat. 15565, fol. 4ra).

²³ See *Hugues de Saint-Cher († 1263): bibliste et théologien*, ed. Louis-Jacques Bataillon, Gilbert Dahan, and Pierre-Marie Gy (Turnhout: Brepols, 2004).

²⁴ Hugh of Saint-Cher, commentary on Job, Lyon edition (1645), vol. 1, fols. 395vb–396rb.

²⁵ See the excellent study of Antoine Dondaine, "Un commentaire scripturaire de Roland de Crémone, 'Le livre de Job,'" *Archivum fratrum praedicatorum* 11 (1941): 109–37 (on the use of philosophers, see 127–31). See also the study of Marie-Humbert Vicaire, "Roland de Crémone ou la position de la théologie à l'université de Toulouse," in *Les Universités en Languedoc au xiii^e siècle* (Toulouse: 1970), 145–78. The commentary on Job is provided by Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS lat. 405.

spiritual, often Christic. The commentary is preceded by an important passage, which is not really a prologue, but instead is more of a general reflection on the immortality of the soul, on the problem of the eternity of the world, and on a few dogmas;²⁶ we are far from the main theme of the Book of Job, but the latter can only be understood by beginning from these more general presuppositions. Another passage seems to be playing the role of prologue;²⁷ it has a scriptural theme, Judges 5:20—"Stelle manentes in ordine et cursu suo aduersus Sisaram pugnaverunt"—which immediately receives a spiritual interpretation: these stars are the fathers of the Old Testament, who shine during the night, before the dawn of the era of grace, and Sisera is a figure of the devil. Job is one of these stars that shines in the East, as is indicated in the text (Job 1:3).²⁸ There is no schema of *accessus*, but it seems that we can draw from this passage the idea that the Book of Job is going to establish a number of truths of the Christian faith.

With William of Melitona, a disciple of Alexander of Hales and a master in theology first in Paris (1248–1253) and then in Cambridge, we have at last entered into the sphere of university exegesis, as is clear from the methods employed in the commentary. Nonetheless, the prologue of William's commentary on Job is not free from the earlier perspectives: the subject matter of the book is Job's torments and tribulations or else his remarkable patience;²⁹ the development proceeds wholly along these lines. The final cause is diverse, since it concerns Job himself, neighbor, and God. William's interpretation remains too dependent on the tradition: thus, with regard to Job, it is a matter on the one hand of the eradication of that which is fleshly, and on the other of the prosperity deriving from his merits. With regard to neighbor, William sets forth the positive effects of patience. Finally, with regard to God, he is glorified in his champion.

There is also the commentary of Albert the Great, which is probably later than Thomas's, but in any event still registers the traditional perspec-

²⁶ It begins: "Quoniam multi sunt qui credunt animam humanam esse corruptibilem et simul mori cum morte sui organi..." (BnF lat. 405, fols. 1ra–7rb). See Dondaine, "Un commentaire," 125–27 (who speaks of a "general preamble"). According to Dondaine, another prologue was added later on a supplementary sheet (Iv): it begins, "Prius ut arbitror filii Israel uasa aurea et argentea ab Egiptiis acceperunt quam in Syna legem Moysi accepissent..."; it seems to constitute a justification for the use made of profane authors in the commentary ("Un commentaire," 112–13).

²⁷ As Dondaine identifies it ("Un commentaire," 111). BnF lat. 405, fol. 7rb–va.

²⁸ The idea of stars probably comes from the *praefatio* (6.13) of Gregory the Great's *Moralia*.

²⁹ William of Melitona, commentary on Job (Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS lat. 14250, fols. 1ra–2rb).

tive. The prologue has a schema of *accessus* and a scriptural theme: the famous verse James 5:10–11, in which Job's suffering provides an example of patience; the whole prologue develops this idea, around the terms *labor et patientia*; the subject matter (*materia*) is Job's suffering, and its objective is to show the certainty of consolation after tribulations.³⁰ Despite some interesting notations, Albert's commentary is not very innovative.

It is the *Expositio super Iob ad litteram* of Thomas Aquinas that will revolutionize the exegesis of the book of Job: in what follows, we will try to explain the reasons for this and to show what makes his commentary extremely innovative. For the moment, let us keep to the prologue.³¹ Thomas's prologue is not constructed on an *accessus* schema and, in lieu of a scriptural theme, it begins with the affirmation of progress in the history of human thought.³² The subject matter of the book is the role of providence in this world, and Thomas begins by examining the gradual discovery of this principle by philosophers: not only the first thinkers posit that the world was made by chance, but their successors, such as Democritus or Empedocles, attribute most things to chance. Afterward, however, thinkers arrived at the idea of providence. But does providence also direct the acts of human beings? Many philosophers express doubts on this subject and, based on the observation of the prosperity of the wicked and of the misfortunes endured by the just, they come to reject the entire role of providence in human affairs. If we start from the presupposition that the things of nature are governed by divine providence, Job's afflictions seem to show that providence does not concern itself with human beings. Now, whatever difficulties there may be, and Thomas highlights these, he is going to demonstrate that Providence extends to human beings, by placing the whole book in the framework of *disputatio*, a pedagogical form utilized by the thirteenth-century masters.³³ For the time being, we are not

³⁰ Albert the Great, commentary on Job, ed. M. Weiss (Freiburg im Breisgau, 1904), cols. 1–4.

³¹ Aquinas, *Super Iob*, prol. (Leonine ed., 26:3–4). See Carmelo Pandolfi, "Il prologo al commento a Giobbe di San Tommaso d'Aquino," *Aquinas* 37 (1994): 597–620.

³² See Gilbert Dahan, "*Ex imperfecto ad perfectum*: le progrès de la pensée humaine chez les théologiens du xiii^e siècle," in *Progrès, réaction, décadence dans l'Occident médiéval*, ed. Emmanuèle Baumgartner and Laurence Harf-Lancner (Geneva: Droz, 2003), 171–84 (reprinted in *Lire la Bible au moyen âge*, 409–425).

³³ The references to the *disputatio* in the commentary are numerous. The initial narrative is considered as the starting point of the *disputatio* (Leonine ed., 26:5); Elihu intervenes as *determinans* once the discussion is over; but this *determinatio* is not satisfactory and God himself is going to play the role of the master who draws the definitive conclusions (Leonine ed., 26:199, on Job 38:1).

going to go further into the analysis of the commentary. But we will keep in mind these guiding lines of the prologue, since they will themselves give rise to a number of questions.

The Franciscan from the South of France, Peter John Olivi (Olivi [†1298]), even if he could be described as an adversary of St. Thomas,³⁴ stands under his influence in his commentary on Job. From Peter's prologue, we can see that it is St. Thomas's perspective that is going to dominate from now on. Indeed, this prologue has a scriptural theme—but it is taken from the Book of Job itself, from God's discourse "out of the whirlwind" (Job 38:1, RSV). Significantly, the theme is the question posed to Job: "Do you know the ordinances of the heavens? Can you establish their rule on the earth?" (Job 38:33, RSV). The prologue keeps to an *accessus* schema in the form of six quite detailed questions.³⁵ But the most important thing to note is that, from the outset, the accent is placed on divine providence. Olivi tells us that the book treats of the following aspects of providence: the institution and natural course of things, the prosperity and woes of human beings on a material level, merit and demerit on a spiritual level, and final retribution and reward. This is an extension of the exegesis of Thomas Aquinas. Observe what Olivi says about the book's purpose (its ultimate utility, *finalis utilitas*):

As is clear from what has been said, it is useful in the first place as a reflection on the order of divine providence, specifically as it pertains to human affairs and, more precisely yet, to his elect; in the second place, it lends itself to reflection upon and imitation of the model of perfection presented by Job, a perfection which he preserved both in prosperity and adversity; in the third place, we can include in this book's purpose all instruction and teaching, and all any ardor and contemplation, that can be drawn from the truth of this book, on a literal as well as on a spiritual level.³⁶

³⁴ See Marie-Thérèse d'Alverny, "Un adversaire de saint Thomas: Petrus Iohannis Olivi," in *St. Thomas Aquinas, 1274–1974: Commemorative Studies* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1974), 2:179–218. On the author, see *Pierre de Jean Olivi (1248–1298): Pensée scolastique, dissidence spirituelle et société*, ed. Alain Boureau and Sylvain Piron (Paris: J. Vrin, 1999).

³⁵ These six questions are: the book's author, whether it is a question of a literal history or of a parable, the nation of Job, its place in the Old Testament, its form (*modus agendi*), and its ultimate utility.

³⁶ Peter John Olivi, *Postilla super Iob*, ed. Alain Boureau, *Corpus Christianorum, Continuatio Mediaevalis* [CCCM], 275:6.

In fact, Olivi will place providence squarely at the center of his concerns in his commentary; but we should note that he does not renounce the older idea that sees Job as a model of perfection.

Thomas's influence is again quite present in the *Postilla* of Nicholas of Lyra on Job, even if the prologue's theme makes one think of the older approach, since it is concerned with the statement of Matthew 18:29: "Have patience with me, and I will pay you" (RSV). In a first part, Nicholas does indeed develop this idea. But the second part, which treats of the author's intention, interests us in particular, since it is a discussion of Aquinas's thesis. Like Thomas, Nicholas recalls the positions of the ancient philosophers who denied divine providence; he mentions Democritus and Epicurus (which is quite significant), and then, without giving names, he refers to those who affirmed that only incorruptible and superior realities are ruled by divine providence; lastly, he mentions others, Cicero among them, who recognize that natural realities are governed by providence but who exclude human acts, since they proceed from free will—these thinkers support their thesis by adverting to the prosperity of the wicked and the suffering of the good. Nicholas then cites Thomas Aquinas:

This is why Thomas Aquinas, who explained this book in an elegant manner, says that the effort of the holy doctors, who had received this science either by infusion or acquisition, was to remove this error from the hearts of men; among the first to do so was St. Job, and in this Thomas is right. Thomas says further that Job's intention in this book, given the supposition that natural things are governed by divine providence, is above all to show that even human acts are governed by divine providence. However, subject to a better judgment, it does not seem that this was Job's intention.³⁷

The book, so Nicholas tells us, "proceeds in the manner of a dispute between Job and his friends." Now a dispute implies an initial disagreement. What is its object? The friends agree with Job that human acts

³⁷ *Biblia sacra cum Glossa ordinaria . . . et Postilla Nicolai Lyrani*: "Propter quod dicit hic sanctus Thomas de Aquino, qui hunc librum exposuit eleganter, quod studium sanctorum doctorum, qui scientiam habuerant per infusionem vel acquisitionem, fuit hunc errorem a cordibus hominum remove, inter quos de primis fuit sanctus Iob, et in hoc bene dicit. Sed ulterius dicit quod intentio sancti Iob in hoc libro fuit, supposito quod res naturales regantur divina providentia, declarare ulterius etiam actus humanos divina providentia regi; sed, salvo meliori iudicio, non videntur haec fuisse eius intentio" (Venice, 1603, col. 5).

are governed by providence: since Job's friends think that he has been punished for his sins, it follows that they are in agreement on this point. The point of disagreement is the following:

[The friends think] that adversities in this world are only inflicted on someone on account of his past sins and that prosperity does not come to anyone save through preceding merits; which is erroneous. St. Job intends in this book to show the opposite, namely, that in this world sinners enjoy good things and the righteous suffer misfortunes, according to the order of divine providence, to which it belongs to punish wicked actions and to reward good ones, not in the present life only, but also in the future life.³⁸

Obviously, the whole difficulty of the book lies precisely in the fate of the wicked and the righteous; must we simply refer to the final reward in the future world? Nicholas of Lyra's response seems somewhat hasty, but his prologue testifies to a maturation in the study of the Book of Job, and the debate with Thomas Aquinas shows the rapid impact of his commentary as well as the divergences on the part of certain exegetes.

The same debate is ongoing a century later, in the prologue of Denis the Carthusian.³⁹ His commentary successively considers the literal interpretation of each chapter (*declaratio capituli*) and its spiritual exegesis (*de moralitate et mysteriis capituli*). It is preceded by important introductory material: a general prologue—the theme of which is Proverbs 3:11–12—is in the order of moral reflection, beginning from the idea that the “adversities, tribulations and pains of the present life have a medicinal function,” the benefits of which relate to the future life; it equally praises patience. We are therefore in the older perspective. The prologue then examines Job's person, epoch, and nation; the book's authorship; its subject matter (*materia*) and intention; and whether it is a true story or a parable. A chapter is dedicated to considerations drawn from Gregory the Great's *Moralia*

³⁸ *Biblia sacra cum Glossa ordinaria . . . et Postilla Nicolai Lyrani*: “Licet amici Iob tenerent actus humanos regi divinina providentia, tamen tenebant quod adversitates huius mundi non inferuntur alicui nisi propter mala praeterita et prosperitates non eveniunt alicui nisi propter praecedentia merita; quod erroneum est, propter quod sanctus Iob intendit in hoc libro declarare contrarium, scilicet quod aliquando in praesenti malis eveniunt bona et iustis adversa, secundum ordinem divinae providentiae; ad quam pertinet punire mala et praemiare bona, et non solum in vita praesenti sed etiam in futura” (Venice, 1603, col. 6).

³⁹ See Denis, *Enarratio in librum Iob*, in *Opera omnia*, vol. 4 (Montreuil-sur-Mer: Typis Cartusiae Sanctae Mariae de Pratis, 1897).

in Iob. We will focus on what is said about the *materia*. After a treatment of Job's identity, in which he cites Albert the Great (as he will do quite often in the commentary) and Thomas, Denis comes to the subject matter of the book and refers first to Albert, for whom it is about Job's suffering and patience—we are accordingly in the older perspective. The book's intention, however, is to show "how human acts are subject to divine providence and how human affairs are governed by God." It is at this point that he takes up the debate with Thomas:

On this subject, Thomas has the following to say: the whole intention of this book is to show by probable reasons that human affairs are governed by providence. However, these assertions of St. Thomas do not please a certain person,⁴⁰ because the book proceeds wholly in the manner of a disputation between Job and his friends. The intention of a person who is in a dispute with someone is not to prove or affirm that about which they are in agreement, but, that being presupposed, that about which there is disagreement between them. All those who were in a dispute with Job admitted that human acts are governed by divine Providence. Job's intention is not to affirm this, but rather to affirm that about which they are not in agreement, that human affairs are not governed by God as they conceive the matter.⁴¹

In fact, Denis will try to show that this objection concerns Thomas's words and not his thought: in his prologue, Thomas affirms that he does not want to prove that human affairs are governed by God, but rather *how* they are governed by him. It must therefore be understood that "the intention of the book is to show that human affairs are governed by divine providence, insofar as the truth itself would have it, and not in the manner that some, in error, have imagined." Thus, the friends say that adversities only befall a man on account of his demerits or past wicked deeds and good things only

⁴⁰ In whom we recognize Nicholas of Lyra, whose *Postilla* was then very widespread.

⁴¹ Denis, *Enarratio in librum Iob*: "Dicit autem circa hoc Thomas: Tota intentio libri istius circa hoc versatur, ut per rationes probabiles ostendatur res humanas a divina providentia regi. Sed istud dictum B. Thomae cuidam non placet, eo quod totus hic liber procedat per modum disputationis inter Iob et eius amicos: intentio autem contra alium disputantis non est probare aut declarare id in quo cum eo concordat, sed, illo pro vero posito, id in quo ab eo dissensit. Quum ergo omnes isti contra Iob disputantes concesserint actus hominum divina providentia regi, intentio Iob non est id declarare sed aliquid in quo ab eis dissensit, videlicet quod non sic reguntur a Deo ut illi putabant" (*Opera omnia*, 4:297).

on account of preceding good works, which is erroneous. At the end of this chapter, Denis takes up the idea of a progress of human thought in relation to providence and free will, which coexist with each other.

The discussion of Nicholas of Lyra and Denis the Carthusian shows the richness of Thomas Aquinas's approach in his commentary on Job. Nicholas does well to emphasize the error that would see in the Book of Job a simple proof that human acts are themselves also governed by God; the book in fact goes further by placing the suffering of the righteous at the center of the problem. However, it does seem that Thomas, as Denis says of him, has gone further, intending to show that the sufferings of the righteous and the happiness of the wicked are not linked to the conduct of the one or the other but result from considerations whose meaning must be recovered. Thomas therefore introduces a rupture in the history of the exegesis of the Book of Job, by seeing in its *intentio* less a moral meaning than an invitation to a profound theological meditation, going beyond appearances and posing the major problem of the coexistence of human free will and divine providence.

The Renewal Brought by Thomas Aquinas

The Analysis of Language

We will obviously not be able to study all the theological thought of the *Expositio super Iob*.⁴² We would like, however, to show how this renewal is carried out on two fronts: the analysis of language and what we shall call a scientific approach.

The analysis of language is always important in Thomas Aquinas. His work is inscribed in a long tradition grounded upon the identification of rhetorical figures in the biblical text, a procedure constantly applied in medieval exegesis, according to the model given by Cassiodorus in his commentary on the Psalms and formalized by diverse treatises, such as Bede the Venerable's *De schematibus et tropis* or several texts of the twelfth century.⁴³ With the *Expositio super Iob* of Thomas, we find ourselves situated in a slightly different perspective: here it is less a question of rhetorical analysis than of a study of the procedures of biblical language. This manner of proceeding makes it possible to overcome some of the difficulties

⁴² See Denis Chardonens, *L'homme sous le regard de la Providence: Providence de Dieu et condition humaine selon l'Exposition littérale sur le Livre de Job de Thomas d'Aquin* (Paris: J. Vrin, 1997).

⁴³ See Gilbert Dahan, *L'exégèse chrétienne de la Bible en Occident médiéval, xiiie-xive siècle* (Paris: Cerf, 1999), 253–62.

presented by the Book of Job and provides, I believe, an interpretive key of permanent value.

Classical rhetorical analysis does not seem to be absent, but the first example will show the enrichment that Thomas brings to this approach. At the beginning of chapter 3, Thomas takes up what Jerome says in his prologue *Cogor per singulos*, namely that, from *Pereat dies . . .* (Job 3:3) to *Idcirco ipse me reprehendo* (Job 42:6), use has been made of Latin versification to render the poetry of the original; consequently, for Thomas: “[The] book is written in the manner of a poem. Hence, through this whole book the author uses the figures and styles which poets customarily use.”⁴⁴ Thus, in order to render an idea more vehemently, poets repeat it; this is what Job does. Immediately thereafter, however, Thomas comes up against the expression “let that day be darkness” (Job 3:4, RSV), which, if taken as such, may seem hollow and useless: for the day of Job’s birth is long past and cannot be changed. Job’s wish, however, expresses his present sentiment: “The day of my birth should have been dark to match the darkness of misfortune that I have endured.” Thomas points out that sadness in Scripture is signified by darkness, as can be seen in Ecclesiastes 5:16 [5:17 in the RSV]. Thomas, therefore, does not content himself with merely picking up on a rhetorical figure (the accumulation of misfortunes); rather, he emphasizes what can appear to be an incongruity, in order to discover there a particularity of biblical language.

Is the study of metaphors a part of classical rhetorical analysis? We know how important this figure is in Thomas.⁴⁵ He uses it a number of times in Job. Two such occurrences in close proximity to one another will show us two different types of analysis. In Job 38:2 [38:3 in the RSV], God tells Job to “Gird up your loins like a man” (RSV). Thomas sees a metaphor in this. God calls upon Job to prepare himself to hear what God is about to say to him, just as one girds one’s loins before going on a journey or undertaking an important action. With this, we are well within

⁴⁴ The English has been taken from Thomas Aquinas, *The Literal Exposition of Job*, trans. Anthony Damico (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1989), 102. For the Latin, see Leonine ed., 26:21: “Et sic patet quod liber iste exhinc per modum poematis conscriptus est, unde per totum hunc librum figuris et coloribus utitur quibus poetae uti consueverunt.”

⁴⁵ See: Gilbert Dahan, “Saint Thomas d’Aquin et la métaphore: Rhétorique et herméneutique,” *Medioevo* 18 (1992): 85–117 [reprinted in *Lire la Bible au moyen âge*, 249–82]; Olivier-Thomas Venard, “Metaphor in Aquinas: Between *necessitas* and *delectatio*,” in *Reading Sacred Scripture with Thomas Aquinas. Hermeneutical Tools, Theological Questions and New Perspectives*, ed. Piotr Roszak and Jörgen Vijgen (Turnhout: Brepols, 2015), 199–228.

the bounds of a rhetorical analysis of the classical type. However, in the preceding verse, Thomas uses metaphor in a very different way. There, it is a question of God speaking from “out of the whirlwind” (Job 38:1, RSV). We can understand this literally, the word of the Lord being accompanied by violent phenomena, as happened on Mount Sinai (Exod 20:18) or when the Father revealed the glory of his name (John 12:29). But we can also take the expression as metaphorical, in which case it would designate the interior inspiration Job receives, the whirlwind referring to the distress he undergoes as a result or even to the darkness that accompanies a divine revelation, which we cannot perceive clearly.⁴⁶ Significantly, Thomas here cites Pseudo-Denys, who constitutes a major source of his inspiration, especially in his thought on language.⁴⁷ What is interesting is the sheer scope that Thomas gives to the metaphor: beyond a rhetorical figure, we pass on to a particular conception of the language of Scripture.⁴⁸

We are not far from the symbolic language of Pseudo-Denys; Thomas even employs the very term “symbol” in his commentary on Job’s strongly anthropomorphic narrative introduction. Scripture is going to show us by means of this account that God is involved in human affairs; this is done, however, by means of symbols and enigmas (*symbolice et sub aenigmate*), as often happens in the sacred text; Thomas here cites the vision of the celestial throne in Isaiah (6:1) or the beginning of Ezekiel. He makes the following remark, which is of capital importance for his hermeneutic:

⁴⁶ Aquinas, *Super Job* on Job 38:1–12 (lec. 2; Leonine ed., 26:199). Cf. Denis on Job 38:1. At the end of his commentary on chapter 39, Job’s response to the Lord [Job 40:2–4 in the RSV], Thomas draws out the following teaching from Job’s observation: “Now one should consider that if the previously cited speech of the Lord was not uttered to Job through an external sound but internally inspired, Job is found to have spoken three ways in this book: first, of course, as representing the affection of the capacity for sensation in the first complaint when he said ‘Perish the day’ [3:3]; second, expressing the deliberation of human reason when he was debating against his friends; third, according to divine inspiration when he adduced words in the person of the Lord. And since human reason ought to be directed according to divine inspiration, after the Lord’s words he reproves the words which he had said according to human reason” (Aquinas, *Literal Exposition of Job*, 442).

⁴⁷ See Thierry-Dominique Humbrecht, *Théologie négative et noms divins chez saint Thomas d’Aquin* (Paris: J. Vrin, 2005).

⁴⁸ Another usage to be addressed is the description of *Behemoth*, applied *metaphorically* to Satan (in Job 40:10–14 [40:15–18 in the RSV]; Leonine ed., 26:217). Certainly, we are here more in the classical figure but we can observe that the identification of Behemoth with Satan is not done by means of an allegory proper to Christian exegesis, but rather through the kind of metaphor that does not imply a change in the level of the sense, but only a particular utilization of language.

Now although spiritual things are proposed under the figures of corporeal things, nevertheless the truths intended about spiritual things through sensible figures belong not to the mystical but to the literal sense, because the literal sense is that which is primarily intended by the words, whether they are used properly or figuratively.⁴⁹

We are well within the functioning of the metaphor and not that of allegory: the letter of the text demands a deepening, which operates on a different level than that of spiritual exegesis; the literal sense presents a richness that it is the exegete's task to bring to light, without going through the "hermeneutical leap" that leads to the spiritual sense.⁵⁰

Thomas stresses the singularity of the scriptural discourse a number of times; thus, Job's initial narrative is introduced by the expression *quadam die*, "there was a day" (Job 1:6, RSV). Now, it is a question in this passage of a meeting of God and the angels, an event which stands beyond our temporal criteria; Thomas observes that it is the practice of Scripture to apply designations drawn from the temporal world to facts that are extra-temporal (*supra tempus*); this is likewise the case at the beginning of Genesis.⁵¹ It is the same in Job 26:7. In this latter passage's description of the grandiose works of God, Thomas observes that the language is cast according to the perception of the common people, as is often the case in Scripture.⁵² Here, we are well within the hermeneutical perspective according to which the transcendent message given by God is conveyed in a language comprehensible to man.⁵³

It seems that this analysis of the language of Job brings a considerable renewal to the exegesis of this book and is one of the strengths of St. Thomas's commentary. While excluding spiritual exegesis, he does not allow

⁴⁹ Aquinas, *Literal Exposition of Job*, 76. For the Latin, see Leonine ed., 26:7: "Et quamvis spiritualia sub figuris rerum corporalium proponantur, non tamen ea quae circa spiritualia intenduntur per figuras sensibiles ad mysticum sensum [pertinent] sed litteralem, quia sensus litteralis est qui primo per verba intenditur, sive proprie dicta sive figurate."

⁵⁰ See Gilbert Dahan, "Thomas Aquinas: Exegesis and Hermeneutics," in Roszak and Vijgen, *Reading Sacred Scripture with Thomas Aquinas*, 45–70.

⁵¹ See Aquinas, *Super Iob* on Job 1:6 (Leonine ed., 26:8).

⁵² Aquinas, *Super Iob* on Job 26:7: "Loquitur secundum estimationem vulgarium hominum, prout est moris in sacra Scriptura" (Leonine ed., 26:145).

⁵³ See also Aquinas, *Super Iob* on Job 2:3: "Loquitur hic Scriptura de Deo figuraliter more humano" (Leonine ed., 26:16). See Gilbert Dahan, *L'exégèse chrétienne*, 38–45.

himself to produce merely an explanatory paraphrase, but rather resolves with profundity a number of the problems posed by this difficult book.

The Scientific Approach

Another characteristic of Thomas's commentary proceeds along the same lines: this is what I shall designate perhaps somewhat too hastily as a scientific approach. I will not discuss the explanations that Thomas gives to the numerous natural phenomena that come up in the book of Job (and in connection to which he often makes appeal to Aristotle). Rather, I shall discuss the striking manner in which he considers the verses that make mention of these phenomena. The treatment of Job 9:5–10 seems to me to be very revealing in this regard. This passage of Job is sometimes called the hymn to the divine power. Job takes up a theme first raised by Eliphaz (5:9–10), although Job insists more on the divine power's destructive aspects. The fascinating thing when reading Thomas's commentary is that things that could be understood as the arbitrary action of a capricious sovereign are instead traced back to laws of nature. Certainly, there can be no question of denying God's power, his strength (*fortitudo*); and it can be no doubt said that these phenomena are due to a miraculous action of the divine power (*etsi miraculose virtute divina fieri possit*). But Thomas endeavors to bring these phenomena back within the framework of the functioning of the laws of nature. In his discourse, Job begins with inferior realities, and among these, he speaks of God moving mountains (*Qui transtulit montes*, Job 9:5). This can be explained by means of physical laws; Thomas proceeds from the Aristotelian principle of generation and corruption: everything that is naturally generated is corrupted in a given time. The generation of the mountains is natural; it is equally natural that they should be corrupted, and this is what Job is describing when he speaks of the moving of the mountains, even if, from our perspective, this corruption takes millions of years. But, do not forget, we are within a system of thought in which everything depends on God. "Now not unreasonably does he attribute to divine power the things which happen naturally"; for, in fact, "nature acts because of an end," even if it is not conscious of it, and this end is ordained by a superior intelligence, God.⁵⁴ Thomas illustrates this point with the help of the image of an arrow shot by an archer: the operation of nature stands in the same relationship to the divine power as the arrow to the archer. Job next alludes to the shaking of the earth: it would seem that the earth is the most solid and stable element, and yet God shakes the earth; this is, of course, a reference to earthquakes. But note that

⁵⁴ Aquinas, *Literal Exposition of Job*, 167.

Thomas supplements his explanation with a rather more linguistic consideration: if it is a matter of earthquakes, it is not as though the whole earth were shaken, but solely the region in which the observer is found, who as a result has the impression that it is the whole earth that is trembling. Next, Job affirms that God “commands the sun, and it does not rise” and hides the stars as though under a seal (Job 9:7, RSV).⁵⁵ The medieval commentators sometimes set this phenomenon in relation to the miracles recounted in Sacred Scripture, especially when the sun stood still for a whole day at the time of Joshua (Josh 10:13–14).⁵⁶ Thomas does not mention the latter event; instead, his explanation is that one can have the impression that the sun does not rise when the sky is completely overcast, something which is also true for the stars.⁵⁷

A similar analysis can be made in connection with several other passages. We note only very quickly the comparison made in Job 26:5–14,

⁵⁵ See Aquinas, *Super Iob* on Job 9:5–10 (Leonine ed., 26:59–61).

⁵⁶ Thus, Albert the Great, commentary on Job: “*Qui praecipit soli et non oritur*, hoc est per circulum suum non movetur, sicut Ios. x: *Sol contra Gabaon ne movearis et luna contra vallem Aialon* [Which commandeth the sun, and it riseth not, that is to say: it does not move according to its circle, as in Josh 10:12, *Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon; and thou, Moon, in the valley of Ajalon*]” (Weiss ed., col. 132). Note that Hugh of Saint-Cher admits only a spiritual explanation (in particular for *transtulit montes*, applied to the powerful of this world; the sun is taken to designate preachers (commentary on Job, Lyon ed., vol. 1, fol. 408va).

⁵⁷ Aquinas, *Super Iob* on Job 9:7: “Secundum apparentiam aliquando [sol] non oriri videtur, puta cum aer fuerit nubilosus intantum quod solis ortus habitantibus super terram in solita claritate apparere non possit. . . . Stellae quasi claudi videntur cum nubibus caelum obtegatur, ne stellae inspicere possint [According to the appearances, it seems sometimes that the sun is not born, for example when the air is so full of clouds that the birth of the sun cannot appear in its usual brightness to the inhabitants of the earth. . . . The stars seem to be hidden when the sky is covered by clouds so that the stars cannot be seen]” (Leonine ed., 26:60). Roland of Cremona gives precedence to a mystical explanation (the sun is the bishop who, like a sun, must illuminate the Church, the stars beings the clerics) of physical considerations (“Obscurato enim sole, necesse fuit ut omnes stelle obscurarentur, cum secundum astrologos lumen stellarum dependerat a lumine solis [When the sun is darkened, it is necessary that all the stars should be darkened, as, according to the astrologers, the ligh of the stars depends on the light of the sun]” [BnF lat. 405, fol. 40ba]). William of Melitona’s explanation resembles Thomas’s: “Lumen enim aliquando occultatur divino imperio, et hoc vel modo naturali, ut interpositione nubis vel noctis aut interpositione alterius luminaris, Eze. xxxii [7] *Solem nube tegam*, aut modo extrario ordini naturali [The light is sometimes hidden by divine order, and that either by a natural mode, as the interposition of clouds or night or another star, Ezek 32:7, *I will cover the sun with a cloud*, or by a mode which is outside natural law]”; (Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS lat. 15566, fol. 59vb).

which likens the sky to a tent and the earth to the floor thereof: this is how matters appear to us, since Job says that God “stretches out the north”—understood as the northern hemisphere—“over the void, and hangs the earth upon nothing” (Job 26:7, RSV). But here it is a matter, as we saw above, of the mode of perception of the common people; everything is governed by natural laws that proceed from the divine power.⁵⁸ It is the same with Job 38:6–10 and 38:3 1–38. We observe along the same lines the identification of Behemoth (*Vehemot* in Thomas) with the elephant, and Leviathan with the whale (Job 40:10, 20).⁵⁹

The universe is subjected to laws—the laws of physics, which are not the product of chance and do not function in a lawless manner. At the same time, this universe and these laws are ordained by God in view of an end. In this way, science is integrated into theology. This approach is remarkable, since Thomas rationally explains natural phenomena, by submitting them to an order. He differs from the materialist philosophers of antiquity by having this order arise from the divine will or providence (since this is the subject matter of Job). Believing thought is in this way able to integrate all the progress of scientific knowledge into a vision that places God at the summit of the hierarchy and that sees in the banal daily renewal of natural laws (the “rise” of the sun, the appearances of the stars, etc.) a constantly reiterated miracle.

The Role of Maimonides

What is the reason for this change? Certainly, we can speak of the evolution of Western thought in the thirteenth century, of its maturing, of its enrichment stimulated by the knowledge of Hellenic and Arabic philosophy. However, starting with William of Melitona, for example, or even with Roland of Cremona (who is aware of the newly translated texts), this evolution could have been brought about, but was in fact not accomplished.⁶⁰ Without doubt, the genius of St. Thomas counts for much, but one can equally ask to what extent the translation for Latin readers of

⁵⁸ Aquinas, *Super Iob* on Job 26:7 (Leonine ed., 26:145).

⁵⁹ Aquinas, *Super Iob* on Job 40:10, 20 (Leonine ed., 26:216, 219). Albert the Great says: “Sicut per Vehemoth sensualitas intelligitur in homine, quae est animalis vita... ita per Leviathan infectio primi serpentis intelligitur [As by Vehemoth the sensuality in the man is understood, which is the animal life, . . . so by Leviathan the infection of the first snake is understood]” (Weiss ed., col. 484).

⁶⁰ The few examples given above point to how this evolution begins to emerge: Roland of Cremona often makes reference to philosophers, but his purpose is principally spiritual. William of Melitona also provides scientific explanations, but he does not follow this process through to its logical conclusion.

Maimonides's *Guide for the Perplexed* does not in fact play a decisive role in this process.⁶¹ Allow me to offer some reflections on this point. First of all, I note that the translation was probably done in Paris around 1240.⁶² It is a peculiar translation,⁶³ which often sticks to a literalism that borders on mistranslation, and seems to lack mastery of the technical terms of Christian thought. The translator, who is not a good Hebraist, does not seem to be familiar with Christian exegesis;⁶⁴ it is therefore particularly difficult to identify his origin (Jewish? Christian?). In any event, he has rendered a great service, since from the second half of the thirteenth century onward the references to *Rabbi Moses* are numerous.⁶⁵ Meister Eckhart in his biblical commentaries later presents a particular case of such utilization of the *Guide*. Thomas Aquinas likewise knows Rabbi Moses and mentions him rather frequently: he manifests a certain respect

⁶¹ Maimonides's influence on Thomas's commentary, specifically the influence of the *Guide for the Perplexed*, is laid out well by Chardonnes, *L'homme sous le regard de la Providence*; see esp. 38–45, 82–85, as well as 293–94: "If Thomas knows the *Guide for the Perplexed* and is inspired by what pertains to the literary genre and the *intentio auctoris* of the Book of Job, he nonetheless freely distances himself from the *Guide*".

⁶² This is the thesis of Görg K. Hasselhoff, *Dicit Rabbi Moyses: Studien zum Bild von Moses Maimonides im lateinischen Westen vom 13 bis zum 15 Jahrhundert* (Würzburg: Königshausen und Neumann, 2004), who is opposed to current datings that situate this translation either in Sicily at the court of Frederick II, or in the South of France. It seems to me that the specific characteristics of this translation prohibit attributing it to these two centers, since they require a mastery of the Hebrew language as well as of the matters concerned in the work thus translated.

⁶³ It was translated from the Hebrew translation of Juda al-Harizi.

⁶⁴ See Gilbert Dahan, "Un transfert intellectuel: la traduction latine du *Guide des égarés* de Maïmonide," in *Passages. Déplacements des hommes, circulation des textes et identités dans l'Occident médiéval*, ed. Joëlle Ducos and Patrick Henriot (Toulouse: CNRS-Université de Toulouse-Le Mirail, 2013), 23–37 (pending a more fundamental study of this translation). We note, for example, that *cura* translates the notion of providence (*shemirah*) in al-Harizi's Hebrew translation from the original Arabic. The Latin translation of Maimonides's *Guide* is also known through the *florilegia*, of which the most important is the *Extractiones*, found in Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS lat. 16096 (see Gilbert Dahan, "Un florilège latin de Maïmonide au xiii^e siècle: les *Extractiones de Raby Moïse*," in *Écriture et réécriture des textes philosophiques médiévaux: Volume d'hommage offert à Colette Sirat*, ed. Jacqueline Hamesse and Olga Weijers [Turnhout: Brepols, 2006], 23–44).

⁶⁵ According to Alain de Libera, *Penser au Moyen Âge* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1991), 125–29, Maimonides's role is much bigger than might otherwise be suggested by the explicit mentions of his name in medieval texts.

for him, even when he does not agree with his theses.⁶⁶

Maimonides dedicates two chapters of the third part of the *Guide* to the Book of Job (chapters 22 and 23⁶⁷). He mainly studies the prologue; chapter 23 examines the opinions of Job and his friends on providence. But we must also take into account chapters 16 and 17 of part III, both of which are on providence; chapter 16 binds the problem of providence to that of the divine omniscience; chapter 17 sets forth five opinions on providence (the Atomists and Epicureans, Aristotle, the Asharites, the Mutazilites, the Jewish prophets and doctors).

However, Rabbi Moses is never named in the *Expositio super Iob* and the editors of the Leonine edition have found only four utilizations of the *Guide*: in the prologue and on Job 32:1, the idea that the story of Job does not recount actual facts but is a parable;⁶⁸ in the prologue, the observation of the lack of a determined order in human affairs;⁶⁹ and on Job 22:14, the opinion that, due to the multiple imperfections and disorders in this

⁶⁶ See, in particular, Avital Wohlman, *Thomas d'Aquin et Maïmonide: Un dialogue exemplaire* (Paris: Cerf, 1988), and Wohlman, *Maïmonide et Thomas d'Aquin: Un dialogue impossible* (Fribourg: Editions Universitaires Fribourg Suisse, 1995); see also *Studies in Maimonides and St. Thomas Aquinas*, ed. Jacob I. Dienstag (New York: KTAV, 1975).

⁶⁷ The medieval translation was printed in Paris in 1520 by Agostino Giustiniani: *Rabi Mossei Aegyptii Deum seu Director dubitantium aut perplexorum, in tres libros diuisus et summa accuratione Reuerendi patris Augustini Iustiniani ordinis praedicatorii . . .* (Paris, Josse Bade, 1520). For part III, there is a shift of one unit in the numbering of the chapters.

⁶⁸ Aquinas, *Super Iob*, prol.: "Fuerunt aliqui quibus visum est quod iste Iob non fuerit aliquid in rerum natura [There were some thinkers for whom it seemed that this Job was not something in the nature]" (Leonine ed., 26:4); *Super Iob* on Job 32:1: "Si non fuisset res gesta sed parabola conficta [If it was not an actual fact but an invented parable]" (Leonine ed., 26:171). See *Guide for the Perplexed* 3.22, Latin translation in Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS lat. 15973, fol. 166vb: "Ratio mirabilis de Iob attinet rationi in qua sumus, scilicet quod est parabola ad ostendendum opinioniones hominum in cura. Tu vero scis quod dixerunt quidam de sapientibus quod Iob non fuit ens, sed fuit exemplum [The astonishing explanation about Job is about our present subject: it is a parable which shows the opinions of men about providence (*cura*). You know that some of the sages said that Job was not a real creature but an example]" (fol. 84v in Giustiani's edition). See likewise the French translation (of the Arabic) of Salomon Munk, *Le Guide des égarés* (Paris: A. Franck, 1866 [new edition: Paris: Maisonneuve and Larose, 1970]). 3:159.

⁶⁹ Aquinas, *Super Iob*, prol.: "In eventibus humanis nullus certus ordo apparet [In human affairs, no determined order appears]" (Leonine ed., 26:3). See *Guide* 3.16 (at the beginning) (Munk ed., 3:109; Giustiniani ed., fol. 79v).

world, it is not governed by divine providence.⁷⁰

In reality, the influence of the *Guide* is more important than these few mentions would lead us to believe. We do not have space to make an exhaustive case here and hope that the following few examples will suffice to convince. In the first place, it seems that the general inspiration of St. Thomas's prologue can be traced back to the *Guide*: in both cases, we have a kind of history of thought in relation to the problem of providence. The statement of the various opinions is reminiscent of chapter 17 in Maimonides, even if Thomas does not mention any Muslim thinkers. Thomas recalls the opinion of Democritus and Empedocles where Maimonides spoke of Epicurus. But the sequence of presentation is parallel and leads in both cases to the thought furnished by the books written under the dictation of the Holy Spirit.⁷¹ There does, however, seem to be a major difference insofar as Maimonides inquires whether providence extends to individuals or is only concerned with species, whereas Thomas posits the case of human affairs from the outset. In fact, man plays a major role in Maimonides's own thought (concerning which he himself notes deviations from the traditional perspective of the doctors of the Law): for Maimonides, providence uniquely concerns species, with the exception of man, since it extends to individual human beings.⁷² The objection might also be raised that, for Maimonides, the story of Job aims to set forth the opinions of human beings on providence, whereas, for Thomas, the book's whole *intentio* "turns on showing through plausible arguments that human affairs are ruled by divine providence."⁷³ But in fact, the subject matter as

⁷⁰ Aquinas, *Super Iob* on Job 22:14: "Ponebant quod, quia ea quae in terris sunt multis defectibus et inordinationibus subiacent, divina providentia non reguntur [Some thinkers stated that, as the beings which are in the world are subject to many imperfections and disorders, they are not governed by divine providence]" (Leonine ed., 26:130). See *Guide* 3.17 (at the beginning) (Munk ed., 3:115–16; Giustiniani ed., fol. 80).

⁷¹ In Maimonides, *Guide*: "Quinta opinio ipsa est sententia credentium legem nostram aut faciam te scire illud quod dixerunt in hoc libro prophetarum nostrorum et quod credunt universaliter sapientes nostril [The fifth opinion is that of those who believe in our law, and I am showing to you what they said in the books of our Prophets and what all our sages believe]" (Giustiniani ed., , fol. 81r); in Thomas, *Super Iob*: "Et ideo post Legem datam et Prophetas, in numero hagiographorum . . . primus ponitur liber Iob [And after the Law which has been given and the Prophets, among the Hagiographs, . . . the book of Job is the first]" (Leonine ed., 26:3).

⁷² See the end of *Guide* 3.17 (Munk ed., 3:129–33).

⁷³ In the summary by which he introduces his commentary. Cited from Thomas Aquinas, *Literal Exposition of Job*, 68 (see Leonine ed., 26:5: "Intentio huius libri

stated by Thomas is also the one Maimonides treats, even if the latter gives more space to the description of different opinions.

It seems to me that Maimonides's influence is also detectable in the treatment of the two first chapters of Job, which are the object of chapter 22 of part III of the *Guide*. I will briefly highlight a few points. In the first place, the role assigned to good angels and evil angels recalls what Maimonides says when he assimilates the one and the other to the good and evil inclination in man: "Each class of spirits, therefore, moves men to certain actions, the good spirits indeed to good actions but the evil spirits to evil."⁷⁴ Similarly, the status of Satan, who cannot move about among the heavenly creatures, is comparable in the two texts.⁷⁵ The gradation of the torments inflicted on Job is the subject of similar remarks in Maimonides and in Thomas⁷⁶—but this is perhaps less significant. On the other hand, we can compare the comments on certain words: thus, concerning "ut assisterent [angeli] coram Domino," the same expression is not used for Satan, who does not have the same role as the good angels.⁷⁷ I will last of all take up what Thomas says of the verb *dicere*, in connection with Job 1:7, "Cui dixit Dominus": aside from the generation of the Son, this recalls Maimonides's treatment of the

tota ordinatur ad ostendendum qualiter res humanae providentia divina regantur").

⁷⁴ Aquinas, *Literal Exposition of Job*, 76 (Leonine ed., 26:8; cf. *Guide* 3.22[23]: "Scitum est etiam ex verbis sapientum qui dixerunt quod cuilibet homini coniunguntur duo angeli, unus a dextris et alter a sinistris, et isti sunt creatura bona et creatura mala [It is known also from the words of sages who said that two angels are committed to every man, one at his right and one at his left, and they are the good and the evil creature]" (BnF lat. 15973, fol. 168vb; cf. Giustiniani ed., fol. 85r, and Munk ed., 3170). Note that this passage was selected from the *Extractio-nes* of BnF lat. 16096, fol. 133va]).

⁷⁵ Aquinas, *Super Iob* on Job 1:6–12 (ch. 1, lec. 2; Leonine ed., 26:9). Cf. *Guide* 3.22[23] (BnF lat. 15973, fol. 167rb–va; cf. Giustiniani ed., fol. 84v, and Munk ed., 3.162),

⁷⁶ Leonine ed., 26:12. Cf. *Guide* 3.22[23], (BnF lat. 15793, fol. 167va–b; Giustiniani ed, fol. 85r; Munk ed., 3:163–64).

⁷⁷ Leonine ed., 26:8: "et ideo non dicitur de Satan quod venit ut assisteret coram Domino sed solum quod *affuit inter eos*." Cf. *Guide* 3.22[23]: "*Venerunt filii angelorum ut starent coram Domino et venit etiam Sathan inter eos* [the text is slightly different from the Vulgate]. Hoc autem non est ita dictum nisi quia venit ex intentione sue substantie nec requisitus propter substantiam suam, sed quia fuit ens propter intentionem essendi tantummodo" (BnF lat. 15793, fol. 167rb; Giustiniani ed., fol. 84v; Munk ed., 3:162); we have here an example of the blunders of the Latin translation.

different senses of the verb *'amar*, "to say," in the first part of the *Guide*.⁷⁸

St. Thomas's approach to Job is very remarkable and it seems to me that contemporary exegetes should draw profit from it, beyond even the specific qualities that we now recognize as "pre-critical" exegesis. We truly have an in-depth study that does not neglect any detail of the text. Above all, it is one that has taken into account all of the issues of a troubling and often disturbing book. Without denying the contribution of his predecessors, Thomas breaks with a certain interpretive tradition and poses the fundamental problems in their raw nakedness. What leads him to do this is, first of all, the extraordinary attention he gives to the language of Scripture—which certainly constitutes one of the major traits of his hermeneutic.⁷⁹ Likewise, he wants to provide solutions that are acceptable to readers who are familiar with the work of Aristotle and who are no longer content with ready-made answers. The way in which Thomas explains the phenomena described in Job by means of natural laws is extremely convincing. It also seems that the mediation of Maimonides, itself stimulated by the apparent contradictions between Scripture and philosophy and equally quite attentive to the language of Scripture (which constitutes the real subject of the *Guide*), has helped Thomas, who therefore occupies a major place in the history of the exegesis of the Book of Job. N·V

⁷⁸ Aquinas, *Super Iob* on Job 1:7: "Sciendum est quod *dicere* dupliciter accipitur, nam quandoque refertur ad conceptum cordis, quandoque ad significationem quae huiusmodi conceptus alteri exprimitur. Secundum igitur primum modum dicere Dei est aeternum et nihil est aliud quam generare Filium, qui est verbum ipsius. Secundo autem modo temporaliter Deus aliqua dicit, diversimode tamen secundum quod congruit eis quibus dicit [It must be known that the verb *dicere* (to say) has two significations; sometimes it refers to the conception of the heart, sometimes to the signification by which a conception of this sort is expressed to other. According to the first mode the saying of God is eternal and it is nothing else but to beget the Son, who is his Word. According to the second, God said something in the time, in diverse modalities according to those to whom he spoke]" (Leonine ed., 26:9). Cf. *Guide* 1.65[64] (Giustiniani ed., fol. 26r–v; Munk ed., 1:291–93).

⁷⁹ See Dahan, "Thomas Aquinas: Exegesis and Hermeneutics."