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Does God's Providence Know Particulars?

How Thomas Aquinas's *Commentary on Job*
Engages Jewish and Islamic Debates

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Abstract

This study examines the historical originality of Thomas Aquinas's (c. 1225–1274) *Expositio in Iob ad litteram*, revealing that it is a self-claimed literal exegesis of Scripture that breaks with the tradition of interpretation of the book of Job initiated by Gregory's *Moralia* and carried forward by the Carolingians. Following Maimonides, Thomas mobilizes the biblical text of Job for addressing concerns that emerged from philosophical currents beyond the Latin Christian West.

At stake is the Jewish and Islamic question of whether God may possess knowledge of particulars, and more broadly, the problem of God's interaction with singulars within the Peripatetic depiction of reality that Thomas partly adopts. In the *Super Iob*, Thomas constructs a distinct paradigm in which divine providence and divine knowledge are articulated, allowing scriptural milestones to chart the course of his reflection. This paradigm is based upon the depiction of God's relationship to the world not primarily as a creator but as a governor and judge, whose providence extends to the most particular details of reality, including singular evils to judge them.

Keywords

Thomas Aquinas,
Maimonides,
Super Iob,
medieval
exegesis, divine
knowledge,
particulars

‘Thankfully, Job does not explain his cries too much [...]’
One should never insist too much on what rises from our depths.’¹

Completed around 595, the *Moralia in Job* of Gregory the Great (c. 540–604) set the tone for the commentary on the book of Job for the subsequent centuries, through an approach that was resolutely allegorical.² The *Expositio super Iob ad litteram* of Thomas Aquinas marks a deliberate departure from Gregory, to whom Thomas explicitly refers only twice. One of which is when Thomas justifies his commitment to the literal sense by asserting that there is nothing further to add to Gregory’s treatment of the mystical sense of Job.³ In this sense, the reading of Thomas’s assertion as a mere precaution ‘to justify his supplementation of this highly respected patristic authority’⁴ seems incorrect. Medieval authors did not ask permission to gloss on the *Moralia*; rather, Thomas’s reference functions as a precaution to justify the divergent angle on the book of Job he chose to adopt, precisely in contrast to that of an eminent patristic authority. This does not imply that Thomas’s *Commentary of Job* initiates this renewed sense of the literality of Scriptures, as was once assumed,⁵ now that earlier figures, known to Aquinas, are more documented: most notably Andrew of Saint Victor (d. 1175) and William of Auvergne (d. 1249).⁶

In this respect, Thomas represents the early development of the *exegeses litterales*, which would spread throughout the thirteenth century and, through his growing hegemony, mark an inflection in medieval biblical commentary. Reading

¹ ‘Heureusement que Job n’explique pas trop ses cris [...]. Il ne faut jamais trop insister sur ce qui surgit de nos profondeurs.’ Emil Cioran, *Cahiers 1957–1972*, Blanche, Paris 1997, pp. 686–87.

² See, for example, Robert Louis Wilken, “Interpreting Job Allegorically: The *Moralia* of Gregory the Great”, *Pro Ecclesia* 10, no. 2 (2001), pp. 213–226.

³ ‘The mystical sense has been explained for us both accurately and eloquently by the blessed Pope Gregory so that nothing further need be added to this sort of commentary.’ [...] *eius enim mysteria tam subtiliter et disertè beatus Papa Gregorius nobis aperuit ut his nihil ultra addendum videatur.* Thomas Aquinas, *Super Iob*, Prologue, §6, in *Expositio super Iob ad litteram*, vol. 26 of *Opera omnia*, ed. Leonine, Rome 1965, p. 4, lines [l.] 99–102. [The English translation of *Super Iob* referenced in this study is that of Brian Thomas Becket Mullady (Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Book of Job*, trans. Brian Thomas Becket Mullady, Lander 2016.) All other translations from non-English sources are my own, unless stated otherwise.] The other explicit reference to Gregory in Thomas’s commentary is in Aquinas, *Super Iob*, chapter [c.] 17, lectio [lect.] 1, §271 (Leonine, vol. 26), p. 107, l. 107–109. For a list of the parallels with Gregory’s *Moralia*, see Aquinas, *Super Iob* (Leonine, vol. 26), p. 327.

⁴ Christopher T. Baglow, “*Modus et Forma*”: A New Approach to the Exegesis of Saint Thomas Aquinas with an Application to the “*Lectura super Epistolam ad Ephesios*”, *Analecta Biblica*, Rome 2002, p. 28

⁵ As in Ceslas Spicq, *Esquisse d’une histoire de l’exégèse latine au moyen âge*, Bibliothèque Thomiste, Paris 1944; Beryl Smalley, *The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages*, Oxford 1952. On the change of opinion of Beryl Smalley, see Marcel Dubois, “Mystical and Realistic Elements in the Exegesis and Hermeneutics of Thomas Aquinas”, in: *Creative Biblical Exegesis: Christian and Jewish Hermeneutics through the Centuries*, ed. Benjamin Uffenheimer and Henning Graf Reventlow, Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series, Sheffield 1988, p. 42.

⁶ See on this, the analysis in Dubois, “Mystical and Realistic Elements”, pp. 41–43. For Hughes of saint Victor (d. 1141), Roger Baron already noted in the last century that if he may be said Antiochene for his attachment of the literal (historical) sense, he may also be said Alexandrine for his emphasis on allegories. Roger Baron, *Science et sagesse chez Hughes de Saint Victor*, Paris 1957, p. 117.

the comments of William of Tocco (c. 1240s–1323) on Thomas's *Commentary on Job*,⁷ the enthusiasm for what was perceived as a new approach to exegesis is palpable: the scholastics likely perceived themselves as forging a tone of exegesis of their own. One more closely aligned with their method in theology.

But what exactly is meant by the '*sensus literalis*'? For Thomas, as he explained in the *Summa theologia*, the literal sense carries a foundational meaning, 'for all the senses are founded on one—the literal,'⁸ as well as a rather expansive significance: this category encompasses not only what is meant historically or the literal narration of events, but it is, slightly more generally, 'the signification whereby words signify things'⁹ as well as 'that which the author intends,'¹⁰ allowing, moreover, for manifold meanings.¹¹ Therefore, Thomas asserts, 'from the literal sense alone can any argument be drawn.'¹²

Thomas's line-by-line commentary thus claims to center on the literal meaning and the articulation of arguments. While this approach will be even more pronounced in the *Super Iob* that Albert the Great (c. 1200–1280) composed about a decade later (c. 1272–1274),¹³ Thomas already interprets the exchanges between Job, the three friends, Eliphaz, Bildad, Zophar, the character named Elihu, in the manner of a scholastics *disputatio*, akin to those conducted at the University of Paris.¹⁴

⁷ William of Tocco, *The Life of St. Thomas Aquinas*, Saint Marys 2023, p. 78.

⁸ '[...] *cum omnes sensus fundentur super unum, scilicet litteralem* [...]' Aquinas, *Summa theologia* I, q. 1, a. 10, ad. 1 (vol. 4 of *Opera omnia*, ed. Leonine, Rome 1888), p. 25.

⁹ '[...] *quod ipsae res significatae per voces* [...]' Aquinas, *Summa theologia* I, q. 1, a. 10, resp. (Leonine, vol. 4), p. 25.

¹⁰ '[...] *quem auctor intendit* [...]' Aquinas, *Summa theologia* I, q. 1, a. 10, resp. (Leonine, vol. 4), p. 25.

¹¹ Aquinas, *Summa theologia* I, q. 1, a. 10, ad. 1 (Leonine, vol. 4), p. 25.

¹² '[...] *ex quo* [the literal sense] *solo potest trahi argumentum* [...]' Aquinas, *Summa theologia* I, q. 1, a. 10, ad. 1 (Leonine, vol. 4), p. 25. In this passage of the *Summa*, Thomas cites several authorities, namely, the Letter to the Hebrews, Augustine, and Hugh of Saint Victor, but this does not hide the fact, as Marcel Dubois acknowledges, that he is likely offering a new equilibrium. See Dubois, "Mystical and Realistic Elements", p. 41. Let us only point out that Augustine seems to assert that the literal sense should be abandoned if it is absurd. See Augustine, *De doctrina christiana*, III, §29 (ed. Klaus D. Daur and Josef Martin, Turnhout 1962 (CCSL, vol. 32)), p. 102, l. 37 and following.

¹³ Thomas's commentary did not circulate widely throughout Europe in the first decades after its composition, so the uncertainty remains regarding whether Albert might have had direct access to it. Franklin T. Harkins does not think so and points out the insufficiencies of Dondaine's and Albert Fries's arguments in favor of Albert's awareness of Thomas's text. He adds that the question 'remains virtually unstudied...' See Franklin T. Harkins, introduction of Albert the Great, *On Job*, vol. 1, The Fathers of the Church, Mediaeval Continuation, Washington 2019, pp. 23–24. Ruth Meyer argues that Albert, inspired by Thomas's commentary, 'picks up this idea [of reading the book of Job as a disputation] and, for the first and only time in the history of exegesis, explicitly interprets the entire book of Job as a disputation.' Ruth Meyer, "A Passionate Dispute Over Divine Providence: Albert the Great's Commentary on the Book of Job", in *A Companion to Job in the Middle Ages*, ed. Franklin T. Harkins and Aaron Canty, Leiden 2016, p. 201. Ruth Meyer compared the two works in Ruth Meyer, "*Hanc autem disputationem solus Deus determinare potest*." Das Buch Hiob als *disputatio* bei Albertus Magnus und Thomas von Aquin", in *Via Alberti. Texte – Quellen – Interpretationen*, ed. Ludger Honnefelder, Hannes Möhle, and Susana Bullido del Barrio, Subsidia Albertina (Alberti Magni Opera Omnia), Münster 2009, pp. 325–83.

¹⁴ This appears for example in 'Now, a debate is between two persons: namely, the one making objections and the other one answering them. So, in entering a dispute with God, he gives the option to God of choosing which person he wants to be: the one making objections or the one answering?' '*Est autem*

If we are indeed in the presence of a sort of scholastic *disputatio*, what would be its unifying theme? This study contends that Thomas's commentary is shaped around an understanding of providence that frames the dialectic of universals and particulars, resolving it through Thomas's own account of providence as divine governance. Moreover, Thomas approaches this problem fully aware of the anterior debates in Jewish and Islamic thought. This makes Thomas's *Super Iob* an opportunity for setting up the foundational philosophical and theological tenets of his early writings. In this light, his commentary is resituated as not merely a book about 'sin,'¹⁵ probably not an exegesis of 'a traditional manner,'¹⁶ but rather a mobilization of a Biblical book for a theological-philosophical argument regarding universals and particulars within the framework of elaborating a model of divine providence.

Martin Yaffe, in 1979, observed that Thomas's *Commentary on Job* has been 'virtually unread [...] by modern scholars,'¹⁷ but since then the situation in Thomistic studies has slightly changed. Denis Chardonens published a significant close analysis of the text in 1997,¹⁸ followed by a growing number of studies up to the recent edited volume, *Reading Job with St. Thomas Aquinas*.¹⁹ As pointed out by the Dominican Antoine Dondaine (1898–1987)²⁰ in 1965 and later re-emphasized by Yaffe, scholars have recognized the existence of a certain connection between the approach of the third book of Moses Maimonides's (c. 1138–1204) *Guide of the Perplexed*—translated in Latin as the *Dux neutrorum*²¹—and Thomas's commentary. Yet, while this link is often mentioned *en passant*, its decisive role in delineating the salient interrogations of Thomas's argument remains to be clarified.

disputatio inter duas personas, scilicet opponentem et respondentem; ingrediens ergo disputationem cum Deo, dat ei optionem utramlibet personam eligendi vel opponentis vel respondentis, [...]' Aquinas, *Super Iob*, c. 13, lect. 2, §239 (Leonine, vol. 26), p. 87, lect. 307–310.

¹⁵ Harm Goris, "Sin and Human Suffering in Aquinas's *Commentary on Job*", in *Aquinas on Scripture: An Introduction to His Biblical Commentaries*, ed. Thomas G. Weinandy, Daniel A. Keating, and John P. Yocum, London 2005, p. 161.

¹⁶ John P. Yocum, "Aquinas' *Literal Exposition on Job*", in *Aquinas on Scripture*, p. 41.

¹⁷ Martin D. Yaffe, "Providence in Medieval Aristotelianism: Moses Maimonides and Thomas Aquinas on the Book of Job", *Hebrew Studies* 20/21 (1979), pp. 62–74. This feeling of neglect concerned Thomas's commentary on Scriptures in general. For example, C. Clifton Black wrote, 'the biblical exegesis of Thomas Aquinas defines a field of inquiry whose richness is exceeded only by its relative neglect in contemporary scholarship.' C. Clifton Black, "St. Thomas' Commentary on the Johannine Prologue: Some Reflections on its Character and Implications", *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 48 (1986), p. 681.

¹⁸ 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*, Bibliothèque Thomiste, Paris 1997.

¹⁹ *Reading Job with St. Thomas Aquinas*, ed. Jörgen Vijgen, Piotr Roszak, and Matthew Levering, Thomistic Ressourcement, Washington 2020.

²⁰ Antoine Dondaine, introduction of Aquinas, *Super Iob* (Leonine, vol. 26), pp. 26–27.

²¹ Originally written in Arabic, the text was later translated in Hebrew in 1204 by Shmuel Ibn Tibbon (c. 1165–1232). It was then followed by a second translation produced by the poet Yehuda al-Harizi (d. c. 1225/622), which would serve as the primary basis for the anonymous Latin translator. Cf. introduction of Moses Maimonides, *Dux neutrorum vel dubiorum*, ed. Diana Di Segni, vol. 1, Leuven 2019. The text is presented in Jacob S. Levering, "Maimonides' Exegesis of the Book of Job", in *Creative Biblical Exegesis*, pp. 81–88.

Written between 1261 and 1264 during Thomas's sojourn in Orvieto as a conventual lector,²² the *Super Iob* provides an instrumental testimony of Thomas's considerations regarding Islamic and Jewish thought in the early phase of his writings. Three elements stand out in this context of composition. First, he was concurrently writing the *Summa contra gentiles*—begun in 1260—whose third book is dedicated to the question of providence.²³ Second, he was composing the *De rationibus fidei*,²⁴ which addresses Islam in ways not all present in the *Summa contra gentiles*. Third, during this period, Pope Urban IV (d. 1264) commissioned him to engage in a massive research project in Greek patristics that would yield the *Contra errores Graecorum* (c. 1263–1264) and the *Catena aurea* (1263–1268). Thus, there is no need to date the *Super Iob* to Thomas's Parisian years in order to justify its engagement with Averroist controversies: the Orvieto context alone suffices to explain how this commentary was shaped by his dialogue with Islamic thought and his demarcation from the Church Fathers.

Establishing the broader context of Thomas's text is central to my argument, and this task will occupy the outset of this study (sections I and II). Thereafter, I will examine his specific theory of divine knowledge of particulars and the theological implications this holds for understanding providence, divine order, and teleology within the world's order (sections III to V).

I. Job and non-Christians, from the Fathers to Thomas Aquinas

In many respects, Thomas's *Super Iob* inaugurates a new phase within the Christian tradition of biblical commentaries. This charting of a distinct exegetical path reflects deliberate selections and omissions within the long legacy of interpretative sensibilities inherited from the fathers.

Thomas regards Job as a Christian, following a classical understanding bequeathed through Ambrose and Gregory.²⁵ The latter interprets Job, morally, as a 'patient Christian saint,' and, allegorically, as a type of Christ²⁶—of these, Thomas retains

²² Denis Chardonnens has an account of the question of dating and examines the stances of Pierre Mandonnet, Palémon Glorieux, and Marie-Dominique Chenu on the matter. Chardonnens, *L'homme sous le regard de la providence*, p. 10.

²³ Some scholars have attempted to elaborate an exact correspondence between the years of composition of the *Super Iob* and a specific book of the *Summa contra gentiles*. Even if one accepts 1263–1264 for the timeframe for *Summa contra gentiles*, book III, it is hard to be that precise for the *Super Iob* and, in fact, the reasoning is circular: the *Super Iob* is dated to the same two years as book III primarily because of their thematic proximity.

²⁴ *On the Reasons of the Faith against the Saracens, Greeks, and Armenians, to the Cantor of Antioch (De rationibus fidei contra Saracenos, Graecos et Armenos ad Cantorem Antiochenum)*.

²⁵ As an example, see Lawrence Besserman's discussion on how Augustine or Gregory read Job 19:25–27 to imply faith in the resurrection. Lawrence L. Besserman, *The Legend of Job in the Middle Ages*, Cambridge 1979, p. 29, and p. 29, n. 39.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 55.

only the former. When Job makes statements that seem to suggest he disbelieves in eternal life (e.g., Job 7:7), Thomas advances a unexpectedly persuasive argument, arguing that Job merely ‘speaks hypothetically, putting himself in the position of his adversaries,’²⁷ while not truly expressing his own conviction.

Yet, this view Thomas adopts is not historically uncontested. Since antiquity, the book of Job has always occupied a specific position in relation to non-Christian religions. Theodore of Mopsuestia (c. 350–428) considered it a Greek tragedy and, for this reason, excluded it from his Bible as a work of fiction. Among others, this stance led Theodore to be condemned at the fourth session of the Council of Constantinople in 553.²⁸ On that occasion, the council declared that Job, although ‘a barbarian and Edomite by race,’ nevertheless did not assent ‘to pagan fables.’²⁹ The reception of Job as a fiction was apparently also held by Maimonides, who likely understood it as a parable,³⁰ and invoked rabbinic traditions that argued that Job did not believe in resurrection.³¹

In England, the earliest known Latin interpreter of Job is said to be Aldhelm (c. 639–704), Abbot of Malmesbury and a follower of the allegorical reading.³² Bede the Venerable (c. 672–735) is also reported to have composed a commentary on Job, but no known copies remain. Many texts that may have been influential are now either lost or were difficult to interpret even in their own time. A remarkable example is the *Adnotationes in Iob*³³ of Augustine, a work whose obscurity the bishop of Hippo acknowledges himself.³⁴ Likewise, Licinianus of Cartagena (d. c. 604) wrote to Gregory the Great, mentioning that he possessed in his library a six-volume translation by Hilary of Poitiers (c. 310–367) of a Greek commentary on Job by Origen (c. 185–253) himself—a text now lost.³⁵

²⁷ ‘[...] loquitur ex hypothesi positionis adversariorum [...]’ Aquinas, *Super Iob*, c. 7, lect. 2, §129 (Leonine, vol. 26), p. 49, n. 237–238.

²⁸ *The Acts of the Council of Constantinople of 553*, ed. and trans. Richard Price, vol. 1, Liverpool 2009, §72 (LXIII), p. 262.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, §75 (LXVI), p. 263.

³⁰ For example, see Moses Maimonides, *The Guide of the Perplexed*, trans. Shlomo Pines, vol. 2, Chicago 1963, III, c. 22, p. 386; III, c. 23, p. 492; and so on. The translation of Lenn E. Goodman and Philipp I. Lieberman, has ‘story,’ but also ‘parable.’ See Moses Maimonides, *The Guide to the Perplexed: A New Translation*, trans. Lenn E. Goodman and Philipp I. Lieberman, Stanford 2024, III, c. 23, p. 403; III, c. 22, p. 397. In the following, when *The Guide of the Perplexed* is cited without any further details, we are referring to the most recent translation of Goodman and Lieberman.

³¹ Maimonides, *The Guide to the Perplexed*, III, c. 23, p. 403.

³² Choon-Leong Seow, “Gregorian Exegesis of Job in the Latin West from the Seventh to Twelfth Centuries”, in *The Many Faces of Job*, ed. Choon-Leong Seow, vol. 1: *The Premodern Period*, Handbooks of the Bible and Its Reception, Berlin 2023, pp. 352–353.

³³ Though largely neglected in scholarship, this text has nonetheless been edited once: in Augustine, *Adnotationum in Iob liber unus*, ed. Iosephus Zycha, in *Corpus scriptorum ecclesiasticorum latinorum*, Prague 1895.

³⁴ Augustine, *Retractations*, in Augustine, *The Retractations*, trans. Mary Inez Bogan, Washington 1968, II, c. 39, p. 143.

³⁵ Licinianus of Cartagena, *Epistola* 54, in Gregory the Great, *Opera omnia*, vol. 3, Paris 1849 (PL, vol. 77), col. 602B.

Thereafter, during the Carolingian era, the book of Job became associated with the controversy on predestination. Hincmar of Reims (c. 806–882) recounts how the advocates of predestination invoked Job 23:13,³⁶ and Gottschalk of Orbais (c. 808–868) indeed referred to Job in support of his position.³⁷ In the ninth century, the monk Christian of Stavelot (d. after 880) seems to consider Job a pagan alongside Jethro and Achior.³⁸ However, most Carolingians still considered Job a saint, such as Florus of Lyons (d. c. 869)³⁹ and Heiric of Auxerre (c. 841–876).⁴⁰ The spiritual and moral meanings continued to be developed. Rabanus Maurus (c. 780–856), following Bede the Venerable, depicts Job as an example of conjugal life through his patience.⁴¹ Despite lingering uncertainties regarding Job's actual origins, the Carolingian mind integrated him, alongside David and Noah, into a trinomial paradigm characterized by Rabanus, echoing Gregory the Great, as a trinome 'in which preachers, continents, and married persons are signified.'⁴²

³⁶ 'The Predestinarians nonetheless claim for themselves a passage from the book of blessed Job, so that they may make their falsehood appear plausible, where it is said: "His [God's] soul has done whatever it willed" (Job 23:13). Commenting on this passage in the *Moralia*, blessed Gregory says (Book XVI, Chapter 18): "Thus, then, his [God's] soul has done whatever it willed, in such a way that he even fulfills his [God's] will through that which seemed to oppose his [God's] will." 'Praesumunt nihilominus Praedestinatiani sibi beati Job libri sententiam, ut verisimile suum possint ostentare mendacium, qua dicitur: Anima ejus quodcumque voluit hoc fecit (Job XXIII, 13). Quam exponens in *Moralibus* beatus Gregorius dicit (lib. XVI, cap. 18): 'Sic itaque ejus anima quodcumque voluit hoc fecit, ut inde quoque voluntatem suam impleat, unde voluntati illius repugnari videbatur.' Hincmar of Reims, *De praedestinatione dissertatio posterior*, Paris 1852 (PL, vol. 125), c. 26, col. 274a.

³⁷ See, for example, Gottschalk of Orbais, *Writings of Gottschalk*, in *Gottschalk and a Medieval Predestination Controversy: Texts Translated from The Latin*, ed. Victor Genke, Francis Gumerlock, Milwaukee 2010, p. 127.

³⁸ Christian of Stavelot, *Expositio super librum generationis*, ed. Robert Burchard Constantijn Huygens, Turnhout 2008 (CCCM, vol. 224), c. 22, pp. 403, l. 86–404, l. 89.

³⁹ For example, '[...] nam et Iob sanctus sic probatus est: [...] since even the blessed Job was tested.' Florus of Lyon, *In Epistolam Secundam ad Corinthios*, in *Expositio in Epistolam beati Pauli ex operibus sancti Augustini*, vol. 3, ed. Paul-Irénéé Fransen, Luc De Coninck, Bertrand Coppieters 't Wallant, and Roland Demeulenaere, Turnhout 2011 (CCCM, vol. 220B), p. 174, l. 30–31 (§197, 'Ex tractatu psalmi CXXX'; on II Cor 12, 7).

⁴⁰ 'Denique econtra inuenimus non quemlibet reproborum, sed ipsum diabolum malorum omnium causam petisse aliquid et impetrasse: petiit enim beatum Iob ad temptandum et accepit.' Finally, on the contrary, we find that not any of the reprobates, but the devil himself, the cause of all evils, sought something and obtained it: for he asked to tempt the blessed Job and received permission.' Heiric of Auxerre, *Homiliae per circulum anni II*, ed. Riccardo Quadri and Roland Demeulenaere, Turnhout 1994 (CCCM, vol. 116B), *Homilia II*, 11, p. 88, l. 39–42 ('*Dominica V post Pascha*').

⁴¹ '[...] Job, who placed in conjugal life, offered to all a wondrous example of patience, showed the life of good married people.' '[...] Job qui in conjugali vita positus mirandum cunctis exemplar patientiae praebuit, bonorum vitam conjugatorum ostendit.' Rabanus Maurus, *Commentaria in Exodum*, in *Opera omnia*, Paris 1864 (PL, vol. 108), III, c. 12, col. 151b. See a parallel in Bede the Venerable, *De tabernaculo*, ed. David Hurst, in *Opera exegetica*, vol. 2 of *Opera*, Turnhout 1969 (CCSL, vol. 119a), I, p. 32, l. 1054–1056. By contrast, Aquinas does not speak very positively about Job and marriage: he discusses adultery and argues that the devil spared Job's wife only because he wanted to deceive Job through her, just as he deceived Adam through Eve. In Aquinas, *Super Iob*, c. 31, lect. 1, §414 (Leonine, vol. 26), p. 166, l. 120 and following; and *ibid.*, c. 2, lect. 2, §45 (Leonine, vol. 26), p. 18; l. 150–153).

⁴² 'Unde et idem propheta in superiori parte tres viros liberatos uidit: noe, daniel et iob in quibus uidelicet tribus praedicatores, continentes atque coniugati signati sunt.' Gregory the Great, *Homiliae in Hiezechielem prophetam*, ed. Marcus Adriaen, Turnhout 1971 (CCSL, vol. 142) II, *homilia 4*, p. 261, l. 168 to

Closer to Thomas, Peter Abelard (c. 1079–1142), in his *Theologia 'Summi boni'*, considered Job a pagan and a follower of natural law, aligning him with Socrates or Diogenes. At the same time, Abelard maintains that Job still believed in the resurrection of bodies and the immortality of the soul, as did non-Christian philosophers.⁴³ I contend that this portrayal of Job as a pagan may have been transmitted through Isidore of Seville (c. 560–636) up to Abelard.⁴⁴

As we approach Thomas's time, the Dominicans Roland of Cremona (c. 1178–1259) and Hugh of Saint-Cher (c. 1200–1263) were already placing greater emphasis on the literal sense, but they remained closely tied to this enduring tradition stemming from Gregory's *Moralia*.⁴⁵

In the face of these various interpretative approaches of commenting on Job, Thomas operates a double rupture: he distances himself both from the allegorical reading and from the classical theme of Job as an exemplar of patience,⁴⁶ as well as the less conventional themes of Job illustrating a pagan seeking for truth or Job as a married layman. I contend that this rupture was partly inspired by Thomas's reading of Maimonides on Job.⁴⁷ This influence is fundamental, as it positions Thomas to argue with Islamic thinkers on the questions of particulars that Maimonides reads, transmits, and criticizes—notably in (Abū 'Alī al-Ḥusayn ibn 'Abd Allāh) Ibn Sinā (c. 980/370–1037/428).

p. 262, l. 170. The same quote is also in Rabanus Maurus, *Commentaria in Ezechielem*, Paris 1864 (PL, vol. 110), XIV, c. 40, col. 902a.

⁴³ Peter Abelard, *Theologia 'Summi boni'*, ed. Éloi Marie Buytaert and Constant J. Mews, in vol. 3 of *Opera Theologica*, Turnhout 1987 (CCCM, vol. 13), I, §65, p. 110, l. 691; I, §69, p. 112, l. 729–735. On Job as a follower of the natural law, see Peter Abelard, *Expositio in epistolam ad Romanos*, ed. Rolf Peppermüller, vol. 2, Freiburg 2000, p. 326, l. 21–25 (on Rom 4:11). It is most remarkable that Abelard seems to have exchanged the designation of 'gentilis' for that of 'beato' in reference to Job in the corresponding passages of the *Theologia christiana*: Peter Abelard, *Theologia christiana*, ed. Éloi Marie Buytaert, in vol. 2 of *Opera Theologica*, Turnhout 1969 (CCCM, vol. 12), II, §24, p. 142, l. 348–349; p. 142, l. 354.

⁴⁴ Peter Abelard mentions in this sense Isidore of Seville, *Summo bono*, I, c. 15, in Peter Abelard, *Expositio in epistolam ad Romanos*, p. 328, l. 4–11 (on Rom 4:11). The passage quoted by Abelard is in Isidore of Seville, *Sententiarum*, Paris 1862 (PL, vol. 83), I, c. 15, §9, col. 570b.

⁴⁵ Chardonnens, *L'homme sous le regard de la providence*, 38. 'By speaking, he indeed showed the sadness which he was suffering.'

⁴⁶ In Aquinas, *Super Iob*, c. 3, lect. 1, §51 (Leonine, vol. 26), p. 20, l. 135–36, the mentions of 'patience' in Brian Thomas Becket Mullady's translation seem incorrect. I understand '*Loquendo autem tristitiam quam patiebatur ostendit*' to mean simply 'But by speaking he showed the sadness which he was suffering.' Thomas has a discussion 'On the impatience of Job,' in Aquinas, *Super Iob*, c. 4, lect. 1, §72 (Leonine, vol. 26), p. 27 and following. Marcel Dubois points out this contrast in 1988: 'Patience is not even mentioned' in the *Super Iob*. Dubois, "Mystical and Realistic Elements", p. 52.

⁴⁷ Since Antoine Dondaine, it is clear that Maimonides's text played some important role in Thomas's project of commenting on Job. Dondaine's statement on this is quite unequivocal: 'The initial inspiration of the *Expositio* comes undeniably from the reading of some chapters of the *Dux neutrorum* of Moses Maimonides.' '*L'inspiration initiale de l'Expositio vient incontestablement de la lecture de quelques chapitres du Dux neutrorum de Moyses Maimonides*.' Dondaine, introduction of Aquinas, *Super Iob* (Leonine, vol. 26), pp. 26–27.

II. The context of the discussion with Maimonides and Islamic sources

Thomas unfolds his commentary first in discussion with Maimonides. In the context of the time, this was perhaps not the mark of a cautious mind: Maimonides's texts had been burned in Paris and Montpellier in 1234,⁴⁸ and the friars were among the leading advocates for what was seen as the necessity to either convert or expel Jews.⁴⁹ Thomas knew Maimonides long before writing the *Super Iob*, probably as early as his studies in Naples (1239–1244).⁵⁰ In the 1220s, Maimonides had appeared implicitly in the writings of Alexander of Hales (c. 1185–1245); then, Roland of Cremona seems to be the first to name 'Rabbi Moses' in his *Summa* around 1230; and by at least 1244, Albert the Great knew him, as he cited the *Dux neutrorum* in his *Commentary on the Sentences*.⁵¹

Moreover, the primary fault attributed to the Jews was their inability to understand the fullness of Christ, as they were seen as remaining bound to a carnal understanding of the Bible: reading only the literal sense rather than the spiritual one.⁵² However, Thomas does precisely this: he engages in a literal reading of a book of the Hebrew Bible through a Jewish author. In doing so, he embraces what, in the twelfth-century Christian mind, was pejoratively conceived as a distinctively Jewish exegesis of the Old Testament.

Anti-Jewish violence has been linked to the Gregorian tradition of Commentaries on Job up to Peter Riga (c. 1140–1209).⁵³ Nevertheless, my claim regarding Thomas's relative openness to Jewish thought may hold only for the period of 1260–1264. Jeremy Cohen argued that Thomas adopted a stronger stance after his sojourn in Paris between 1269 and 1272, emphasizing how it coincides with the presence of the Dominican Friar Paul Christian (d. 1274), who was active in anti-Jewish polemics in the same city.⁵⁴

In light of the context that has been clarified above, let us turn our attention more closely to the specific discussion that can be traced in the *Super Iob*. In the classical

⁴⁸ Robert I. Moore, *The Formation of a Persecuting Society: Authority and Deviance in Western Europe 950–1250*, Malden 2007, p. 9.

⁴⁹ See Jeremy Cohen, *The Friars and the Jews: The Evolution of Medieval Anti-Judaism*, Ithaca 1982.

⁵⁰ Chardonnes, *L'homme sous le regard de la providence*, p. 38.

⁵¹ See for the history of this discovery, the account in Chardonnes, *L'homme sous le regard de la providence*, p. 40, n. 1; Caterina Rigo, "Dux Neutorum and the Jewish Tradition of the *Guide of the Perplexed*", in *Maimonides' Guide of the Perplexed in Translation*, ed. Josef Stern, James T. Robinson, and Yonatan Shemesh, Cambridge Critical Guides, Chicago 2019, p. 82.

⁵² For an history of this view throughout the Middle Ages, initially rooted in the construction of an interpretation of Pauline literature, see Jeremy Cohen, *Living Letters of the Law: Ideas of the Jew in the Medieval Christianity*, London 1999.

⁵³ Seow, "Gregorian Exegesis of Job", pp. 388–389.

⁵⁴ According to the Jewish records, Friar Paul believed that the Jews were 'without a faith, a people called Bougres, heretics, worthy of being burned.' Joseph Shatzmiller, *La deuxième controverse de Paris: Un chapitre dans la polémique entre chrétiens et juifs au Moyen âge*, Collection de la Revue des Études Juives, Paris 1994, p. 44. Translation from Hebrew in Cohen, *Living Letters of the Law*, p. 337.

age of Islamic philosophy, there was an ongoing wondering about whether or not God knows particulars and their attributes. To speak of the main figures: the controversy was probably introduced by (Abū Naṣr Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad) al-Fārābī (c. 870/256 – 950–1/339), who rejected God’s knowledge of the particulars.⁵⁵ Following him, Ibn Sinā did not believe so either, nor did (Abū l-Walid Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad) Ibn Rushd (1126/520–1198/595) according to the debatable interpretation of the thirteenth-century Latin Averroists,⁵⁶ while (Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad) al-Ghazālī (c. 1058/450–1111/505) would famously denounce the former for this view, virulently accusing the *falāsifa* of diverting people from religious truth and law.⁵⁷ Thomas became promptly aware of the challenges posed by the Aristotelian paradigms he himself was embracing. As early as the 1250s, he wrote in an Avicennian idiom his short treatise, *De ente et essentia*. Then, around 1255, he composed a text that encountered less success, the *De principiis naturae*, which, by contrast, gives more room to Ibn Rushd.⁵⁸ Conceptually, the proposition that would be condemned by bishop Etienne Tempier (d. c. 1279) in Paris in 1270—namely, ‘God does not know singulars’⁵⁹—can be summarized as follows.

In the hylomorphic understanding of reality, knowing a thing means either knowing its form or knowing its material attributes. On the one hand, material attributes are known through the senses, whereas God is intellect and, as such, ill-equipped to apprehend matter. On the other hand, if knowing a thing is knowing its form, and if matter is the principle of individuation, then the knowledge of a form abstracted from matter by the intellect does not, in itself, provide any knowledge of particulars. A third option would be to argue that God may have knowledge of certain individual substances insofar as they arise from the specific existence of distinct matter-form compounds. This raises further difficulties, which Ibn Sinā pointed out, as no notion of such a particular substance can be defined, making it difficult to apprehend them as intelligible ideas which are the entities contained in God’s mind and being.⁶⁰ How,

⁵⁵ Abū Naṣr Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad Fārābī, *Fuṣūl muntaza’a in Selected Aphorisms*, in *The Political Writings: Selected Aphorisms and Other Texts*, trans. Charles E. Butterworth, Ithaca 2001, §86, p. 55–57. Ibn Rushd has a general sense that the problem dates back to al-Fārābī, as he explains in Abū l-Walid Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad Ibn Rushd, *Tahāfut al-tahāfut*, in *Le livre du discours décisif*, Paris 1996, §27, p. 124.

⁵⁶ Most scholarship literature explains that Ibn Rushd holds God’s knowledge of the particulars, although the clarity of his assertion and argument remains elusive, not to say dubious to me. See Ibn Rushd, *Tahāfut al-tahāfut*, §27, p. 124, 126; §29, p. 128. For example, Catarina Belo contends that ‘a convincing response to the issue of God’s knowledge of particulars is provided’ in Ibn Rushd, although “indirectly and implicitly”. See Catarina Belo, “Averroes on God’s Knowledge of Particulars”, *Journal of Islamic Studies* 17, no. 2 (2006), p. 199.

⁵⁷ The literature on this topic is massive. For a concise summary of the discussion, see Belo, “Averroes on God’s Knowledge of Particulars”, pp. 177–199.

⁵⁸ Jean-Pierre Torrell, *The Person and His Work*, vol. 1 of *Saint Thomas Aquinas*, trans. Robert Royal and Matthew K. Miner, St Thomas Aquinas in Translation, Washington 2023, pp. 60–61.

⁵⁹ ‘10. *Quod Deus non cognoscit singularia*.’ *Chartularium Universitatis parisiensis*, ed. Heinrich Denifle and Emile Chatelain, Paris 1889, p. 487.

⁶⁰ “There is, however, no definition of the singular (*al-mufrad*) in any respect whatsoever, even though the composite has some definition. This is because the definition is composed of descriptive names

then, can God's immutable intellect contain some notions involving the transient material attributes responsible for individuality?

These reasonings correspond to ancient prevalent worldviews that were not so easy to extirpate for all those thinkers who resolutely employed Aristotle's vocabulary and logic to frame their reflections.

The *Super Iob* indicates that Thomas is aware of the Islamic tribulations in resolving this, as he reports the Avicennian position through the account of Eliphaz:

Consider that some deny that God has knowledge and providence over human affairs because of the high character of his substance, to which they say his knowledge is proportioned so that he knows nothing except himself. They think that his knowledge would be defiled if it were extended to lower things [...].

Still, men of this sort do not totally take knowledge of things away from God, but they say that he knows them universally, for example, by knowing the nature of their being or universal causes, and so he says, 'he judges as though through a fog' (Job 22:13). For to know something only in the universal is to know it imperfectly [...].⁶¹

As early as the late 1250s, in the *De Veritate*, Thomas may indicate his (perhaps erroneous) belief that Ibn Rushd upholds God's ignorance of particulars.⁶² Maimonides

that necessarily do not refer to anything specific." Abū 'Alī al-Ḥusayn ibn 'Abd Allāh Ibn Sinā, *Kitāb al-Ilāhiyyāt*, book 5, chap. 8, in *The Metaphysics of The Healing / al-Shifā': Al-Ilāhiyyāt. A Parallel English-Arabic Text*, trans. Michael E. Marmura, Provo 2005, p. 188. Aristotle, albeit for different reasons, also contends that individual sensible substances cannot be defined. See Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, in *The Complete Works of Aristotle: The Revised Oxford Translation*, ed. Jonathan Barnes, vol. 2, Princeton, 1984, Book Z, p. 1039b20 and following.

⁶¹ 'Est autem considerandum quod aliqui negant Deum habere cognitionem et providentiam rerum humanarum propter altitudinem suae substantiae, cui proportionari dicunt suam scientiam ut nihil sciat nisi se ipsum, putantes quod scientia eius vilesceret si se ad inferiora extenderet, [...] Non tamen huiusmodi homines rerum cognitionem Deo totaliter subtrahunt, sed dicunt quod eas cognoscit in universali, puta cognoscendo naturam entis vel universales causas, unde subdit et quasi per caliginem iudicat: cognoscere enim aliquid solum in universali est cognoscere imperfecte, [...]': Aquinas, *Super Iob*, c. 22, lect. 1, §326 (Leonine, vol. 26), p. 129, l. 110–116; p. 129, l. 121–127.

⁶² 'For some, as the Commentator [says] in *Metaphysics XI* have simply denied that God knows singular things, except perhaps in a universal way, wishing to constrain the nature of the divine intellect to the measure of our intellect.' 'Quidam enim, ut Commentator in *XI Metaphysic*. [dicit], simpliciter negaverunt Deum singularia cognoscere, nisi forte in universali; volentes naturam intellectus divini ad mensuram nostri intellectus coartare.' Aquinas, *Quaestiones disputatae de Veritate*, vol. 22 of *Opera omnia*, ed. Leonine, Rome 1970–1976, q. 2, a. 5, arg., p. 61, l. 204–62, l. 208. Serge-Thomas Bonino and Chardonnnens read Aquinas as referring to Ibn Rushd here. See Chardonnnens, *L'homme sous le regard de la providence*, p. 109, n. 5. However, it seems to me that Thomas mistakenly attributes to Ibn Rushd the opinion of Ibn Sinā, as the book he quotes is apparently Ibn Sinā's *al-Shifā': Al-Ilāhiyyāt* (known as *The Metaphysics of The Healing*). Moreover, Thomas seems more concerned with Ibn Sinā in the subsequent passages of this section. Thomas is also perhaps referring to Ibn Rushd as the one mentioning the opinion of others (some manuscripts add 'dicit'). Probably, another passage of the same period may better suggest Thomas awareness of Averroes opinion on the matter: 'It was the opinion of the Commentator that by knowing his essence God does not know individual effects in a determined way, that is, as they are distinct in their own proper nature, but that he knows only the nature of being which is found in all of them.' '[...] quod opinio Commentatoris fuit, quod Deus cognoscens essentiam suam non determinate cognosceret singulos effectus, prout sunt in propria natura distincti; sed

offers a different perspective in the *Guide*, explaining that God directly knows what happens to human individuals.⁶³ And Thomas, in his *Sentences commentary*, indicates he understands Maimonides to assert God's knowledge of particulars, whether human or not, without apparent restrictions.⁶⁴ In reality, Maimonides makes clear that God's providence certainly does not unfurl itself over the most particulars:

I just do not believe that this leaf falls at its own providence, that this spider ate that fly at God's present and particular desire and decree, that Zayd's spittle flew right to that mite and killed it by God's judgment, or that this fish snapped up that nymph on the water's surface at God's instant behest. To me, all this is pure happenstance, as Aristotle held.⁶⁵

Maimonides's conception poses indeed problems for Thomas in his endeavor to account for and articulate God's providence and knowledge of all particulars. For the author of the *Guide*, not only the most particular but even Job stood beyond the reach of God's protection, that is, beyond God's providence. For Maimonides, God's providence 'depends on reason, and reason is its measure.'⁶⁶ Providence is granted to those who possess enough reason:

I explained that providence over any rational subject is in the measure of his reason. So providence is constant over an enlightened person whose focus on God is unbroken. But should that person's thoughts stray for a moment, he is cared for only while he concentrates on Him. Providence recedes while he is distracted [...].⁶⁷

However, Job, in Maimonides, is certainly not such a being, as the Jewish philosopher unambiguously states that Job is neither wise nor intelligent.⁶⁸ Thereafter, how can Maimonides sustain that God has nevertheless knowledge of the most particulars,

solummodo cognosceret naturam essendi, quae in omnibus invenitur. Aquinas, *Quaestiones disputatae de Veritate*, q. 2, a. 15, ad. 3 (Leonine, vol. 22), p. 94, l. 83–87). Thomas also ignores the *Destructio destructionis* (*Tahāfut al-tahāfut*). My sense is that Thomas makes various major confusions between the philosophical beliefs of Ibn Sīnā and Ibn Rushd's early in his career, whereas in his late writings he begins to make differences, even using the former against the latter.

⁶³ Maimonides, *The Guide of the Perplexed*, III, c. 19, pp. 389–390.

⁶⁴ Aquinas, *Super Sententiis*, I, d. 36, q. 1, a. 1., sol. (MM), p. 830. With a reference to Maimonides, *Dux neutrorum*, III, c. 17.

⁶⁵ Maimonides, *The Guide of the Perplexed*, III, c. 17, p. 383.

⁶⁶ Maimonides, *The Guide of the Perplexed*, III, c. 17, p. 386. Shlomo Pines's translation has 'intellect' instead of 'reason.' See Maimonides, *The Guide of the Perplexed*, trans. Shlomo Pines, III, c. 17, p. 474.

⁶⁷ Maimonides, *The Guide of the Perplexed*, III, c. 51, p. 521. Compared with the translation from Shlomo Pines which has a slightly different emphasis: '[Providence is] endowed with intellect proportionately to the measure of his [someone's] intellect. Thus providence watches over an individual endowed with perfect apprehension, whose intellect never ceases from being occupied with God.' Maimonides, *The Guide of the Perplexed*, trans. Shlomo Pines, III, c. 51, p. 624.

⁶⁸ 'The most striking and remarkable facet of the story: Job is not described as knowledgeable. It does not say that he was wise, discerning, or insightful but just describes him as a man of good character and upright deeds.' In Shlomo Pines's translation, it ends as 'Only moral virtue and righteousness in action are ascribed to him.' Maimonides, *The Guide of the Perplexed*, III, c. 22, p. 398. Maimonides, *The Guide of the Perplexed*, trans. Shlomo Pines, III, c. 22, p. 487.

as Thomas believed? This conundrum will not be resolved here, but Thomas may have discerned the tensions inherent in Maimonides's assertions regarding the articulation of God's knowledge and providence. These very considerations—these subtle hesitations, these unresolved intricacies—infuse how Thomas engages in the discussion within the context of his *Expositio in Iob ad litteram*.

III. Multiplicity in the divine

Although some scholars resist a more philosophical approach to Thomas's *Super Iob*, from the very first words of his prologue, Thomas situates his reflection in dialogue with non-Christian philosophers, in what has been described as 'a very brief history of philosophy.'⁶⁹ Thomas, while expected to engage as promised in a literal exegesis of the Bible, also employs the biblical text as a pretext for communicating some of his metaphysical tenets—coherent with the intention of his prologue, which addresses the opinions of philosophers on providence.⁷⁰ For example, he introduces his hylomorphic conception of the human being on the basis of Job 4:19, 'How much more those who dwell in houses of clay,'⁷¹ rejecting the ancient Hellenic metaphor of ensoulment as a sailor in a ship.⁷² He even seized upon the clause 'whose foundation is dust' (Job 4:19) to argue against reducing the soul-body association to mere accidentality. Throughout his commentary, Aquinas treats Eliphaz's words as vessels of philosophical truths—adopting Maimonides's perspective on this character.⁷³

Thomas similarly mobilizes Scriptures to argue for God's knowledge of particulars and providence over them. The discussion is introduced when Eliphaz 'seems to have imposed the charge on Job that he did not believe that God has providence over human affairs.'⁷⁴ Like Albert the Great in his own *Super Iob*, Thomas cites Eliphaz's position as that of an anti-Averroist denouncing Job as having a somewhat Averroist position.⁷⁵ In the chapters of the *Guide* that influenced Thomas here,

⁶⁹ '[...] una brevissima storia della filosofia,' in Carmelo Pandolfi, "Il prologo al commento a Giobbe di San Tommaso d'Aquino", *Aquinas* 37 (1994), p. 600.

⁷⁰ Aquinas, *Super Iob*, §1 (Leonine, vol. 26), p. 3, l. 35 and following.

⁷¹ Aquinas, *Super Iob*, §89 (Leonine, vol. 26), p. 32, l. 464–465.

⁷² A few years before, he already made that criticism in his *Sentences Commentary*, referring to the authority of Gregory of Nyssa to attribute this opinion to Plato. See Aquinas, *Super Sententiis*, III, d. 22, q. 1, a. 1 (MM), p. 663, §13. Thomas seems to make his own the criticism of Aristotle in Aristotle, *On Soul*, in *The Complete Works of Aristotle: The Revised Oxford Translation*, ed. Jonathan Barnes, vol. 1, Princeton, 1984, p. 413a.

⁷³ Maimonides, *The Guide of the Perplexed*, III, c. 23, pp. 404–405.

⁷⁴ 'Quia Eliphaz in verbis praemissis imposuisse videtur Iob quod non crederet Deum habere providentiam de rebus humanis [...]' Aquinas, *Super Iob*, c. 22, lect. 2, §330 (Leonine, vol. 26), p. 130, l. 155–158.

⁷⁵ Albert identifies the error described by Eliphaz as corresponding to Alexander of Aphrodisias, Ibn Rushd, and other Peripatetics. Albert the Great, *Super Iob*, ed. Melchior Weiss, Fribourg 1904, on 22:14, p. 265, l. 22–31. See also Meyer, "Passionate Dispute", pp. 217–18.

Eliphaz voices the opinion of the Torah, the Jewish Law, i.e. the opinion of Rabbi Moses himself, while Job embodies the opinion of Aristotle.⁷⁶

A crucial preliminary aspect to grasp is that, for Thomas, the extension of divine providence to the most particular details is interwoven with the question of the extension of God's knowledge to the most particular things.⁷⁷ God's providence extends as far as his knowledge does. Moreover, just as things are ordered by God's knowledge, so too are they ordained by his providence. Thomas forged this opinion gradually. In his earlier works, the extent of God's knowledge and God's providence do not appear to fully coincide, for example, in the *Quaestiones disputatae de Veritate* (from about 1256–1259).⁷⁸ The discussion there occurs in relation to predestination since, for Thomas, 'predestination is a particular type of providence.'⁷⁹ On this occasion, Thomas writes that sometimes we can observe God's providence over particular things, but in other cases, he concedes that providence over particular things is not observed, even though the general finality remains preserved in them.⁸⁰

The understanding of knowledge as an ordering power reflects the tone of the scholastic attitude to and conception of *ratio*. In §142 in the *Commentary on Job*, Thomas describes the lack of reason as the inability to dispose things in discourse according to their proper order: the irrational person speaks 'without the order of reason (*absque ordine rationis*).'⁸¹ In this scholastic perspective, the vocation of reason is not so much contemplating eternal principles but rather ordering things, 'order things to the higher goods or withdraw them to the lower ones.'⁸² Thomasian knowledge, at least in the *Super Iob*, consists in actively bringing forth a cosmological order. Consequently, the perfect knowledge that God has of the world enables him to dispose all things according to their end, since he alone comprehends all these specific ends, whereas other beings do not. Divine power is the archer who directs all natural things toward their end, namely, ultimately himself. At times, this divine

⁷⁶ Maimonides, *The Guide of the Perplexed*, III, c. 23, p. 494.

⁷⁷ For example, the following passage conflates the two problems: 'Consider that some deny that God has knowledge and providence over human affairs because of the high character of his substance, to which they say his knowledge is proportioned so that he knows nothing except himself. *'Est autem considerandum quod aliqui negant Deum habere cognitionem et providentiam rerum humanarum propter altitudinem suae substantiae, cui proportionari dicunt suam scientiam ut nihil sciat nisi se ipsum, [...]*' Aquinas, *Super Iob*, c. 22, lect. 1, §329 (Leonine, vol. 26), p. 129, l. 110–114.

⁷⁸ On this dating of the *De Veritate*, see, for example, Dominic Legge, "Thomas Aquinas: A Life Pursuing Wisdom", in *The New Cambridge Companion to Aquinas*, ed. Eleonore Stump and Thomas Joseph White, Cambridge Companions, Cambridge 2022, p. 13.

⁷⁹ '[...] *cum praedestinatio sit quaedam providentiae pars [...]*' Aquinas, *Quaestiones disputatae de Veritate* (Leonine, vol. 22), q. 6, a. 3, resp.

⁸⁰ Aquinas, *Quaestiones disputatae de Veritate* (Leonine, vol. 22), q. 6, a. 3. On the development of Thomas Aquinas' thought on this, see Bernard McGinn, "The Development of the Thought of Thomas Aquinas on the Reconciliation of Divine Providence and Contingent Action", *The Thomist: A Speculative Quarterly Review* 39, no. 4 (1975) pp. 747–749.

⁸¹ Aquinas, *Super Iob*, c. 8, lect. 1, §142 (Leonine, vol. 26), p. 53, l. 25.

⁸² '[...] *in superiora bona ordinat et ab inferioribus retrahat [...]*' Aquinas, *Super Iob*, c. 7, lect 4, §139 (Leonine, vol. 26), p. 52, l. 486–487.

regulation of the natural order is intended as a means to punish the sins of human beings—once more following Maimonides' interpretation.⁸³

Thus far in the argument, Ibn Sinā would concur, since supposing God's knowledge of particular things is not a prerequisite to affirming that he directs each thing toward its end. To illustrate this possibility that the divine ruler may ignore the details of what he governs, Thomas introduces an analogy from human governance:

Among men, one is superior in ruling to the extent that his ordering only extends to more universal considerations, and he can leave the particular details of government to his subordinates. Thus, the law, under the direction of a higher ruler, is universal and simple.⁸⁴

In other words, the ruler needs only to apprehend the most universal principles and then ensure that these principles are obeyed, while delegating the rest to the angels, or some members within the hierarchy of the Church, or maybe to any subsequent causes within the natural order.

However, Thomas proceeds to argue that such a model of cosmological governance should not be applied to God. He indeed explains that, unlike human rulers, God's law is *multiplex* and versatile. The philosophical option he crafts to resolve the dilemma of divine providence is to admit a certain multiplicity within the divine. In doing so, he advances a claim that marks a rupture with his Islamic predecessors who emphasized unity in God, and he brings his claim on account of Scriptures: 'and his law is manifold (*et quod multiplex sit lex eius*)' (Job 11:6). The attribution of some 'manifoldness' to the divine being is ambiguous in the Latin west. A precedent may be in the Carolingian era when John Scotus Eriugena (c. 800–877) describes God as a '*unum multiplex*'⁸⁵ and Alan of Lille (c. 1128–c. 1202) who writes '*Ergo Deus multiplex est*.'⁸⁶

In *Super Iob* §193, the scriptural statement of the manifoldness of God's law allows Thomas to ensure that God's 'ordering power can extend even to the most insignificant details.'⁸⁷ It offers the authority of a scriptural foundation to support

⁸³ 'He adds "by his anger," to show that God sometimes regulates natural operations according to the order of his providence as a necessary means to punish the sins of man.' '*Addit autem 'in furore suo', ad ostendendum quod Deus interdum naturales operationes moderatur secundum ordinem suae providentiae prout necessarium est ad hominum peccata punienda.*' Aquinas, *Super Iob*, c. 9, lect. 1, §155 (Leonine, vol. 26), p. 59, l. 140–144. Maimonides, *The Guide of the Perplexed*, III, c. 17, p. 485.

⁸⁴ '[...] *nam apud homines quanto aliquis est superior in regendo tanto eius ordinatio ad universaliora solum se extendit, particularia vero relinquit inferioribus rectoribus dispensanda, et sic lex regiminis superioris rectoris est universalis et simplex; [...]*' Aquinas, *Super Iob*, c. 11, lect. 1, §193 (Leonine, vol. 26), p. 76, l. 62–67.

⁸⁵ '*Deus est enim unum multiplex in se ipso.*' Johannes Scottus Eriugena, *Periphyseon*, vol. 3, ed. Édouard Jeuneau, Turnhout 1999 (CCCM, vol. 163), III, 674c, p. 79, l. 2270–2271. Augustine asserted that God's mercy is '*multiplex*,' in *Enarrationes in Psalmos I–L*, ed. Eligius Dekkers and Jean Fraipont, Turnhout 1956 (CCSL, vol. 38), Psalm 35, §11, p. 330, l. 6).

⁸⁶ Alan of Lille, *Summa 'Quoniam homines'*, I, part 2, §3, ed. Palémon Glorieux, *Archives d'histoire doctrinale et littéraire du Moyen Âge* 20 (1953), p. 212, l. 17.

⁸⁷ '[...] *eius ordinatio etiam usque ad minima se extendit [...]*' Aquinas, *Super Iob*, c. 11, lect. 1, §193 (Leonine, vol. 26), p. 76, l. 68–69.

a claim Thomas may find difficult to argue otherwise. If indeed divine providence and governance are *multiplex*, his understanding should be in virtue of the connection established above between these three dimensions. However, in the first book of the *Summa contra gentiles*, contemporary to the composition of the *Super Iob*, Thomas explicitly denies the possibility of qualifying God's understanding as '*multiplex*.' In this, he may be reflecting his dependence upon the Lombardian understanding of the term,⁸⁸ but also, once more, his reliance on the foremost influence of his philosophical insights in this commentary, namely Maimonides.⁸⁹ How then can this apparent contradiction be resolved? Is it that only God's law and providence are manifold and not his understanding and knowledge, despite the fact that he governs primarily through his knowledge? For the moment, the philosophical coherence of Thomas seems difficult to express, only his intention of reintroducing some manifoldness into the divine providence emerges with clarity.

Equally clear is that Thomas advances further against the Islamic philosophical framework of Ibn Sīnā, and of Ibn Rushd, as he understands him, by laying out divine involvement in particularity as a sign of power, not weakness.⁹⁰ Instead, in the Islamic general view, the involvement of God into materiality, even if it is only through knowledge, would be a sign of dependence.

While Thomas's account appears to diminish God's distance from his creation, in his understanding, the divine multiplicity, on the contrary, reinforces God's transcendence by highlighting the ungraspable complexity of God. The very 'complexity' ascribed to God renders his wisdom even more unfathomable to the human mind:

Since, then, man cannot attain the divine law itself, as though he examined things hidden in the wisdom of God, and consequently cannot understand its complexity (*multiplicitatem*).⁹¹

⁸⁸ In the *Summa contra gentiles*, this is asserted in order to prove that God does not understand 'by composition and division (*componendo et dividendo*): 'Hence, if God considers things by composing and dividing, it follows that his act of understanding would not be one only but manifold. And thus again his essence would not be one only, since his intellectual operation is his essence [...]'—which would be absurd. '*Si igitur Deus res considerat componendo et dividendo, sequetur quod suum intelligere non sit unum tantum sed multiplex. Et sic etiam sua essentia non erit una tantum: cum sua operatio intellectualis sit sua essentia [...]*' Aquinas, *Summa contra gentiles* I, c. 58, vol. 13 of *Opera omnia*, ed. Leonine, Rome 1918, p. 166a, l. 12–17. Peter Lombard's sentences had an article 'That God should not be said *multiplex* (*Quod non debet dici deus multiplex*).' In Peter Lombard, *Sententiarum libri quatuor*, Paris 1855 (PL, vol. 192), I, d. 23, §10, col. 586.

⁸⁹ 'Nor is it sound, even for those who believe in attributes, to assume plurality or multiplicity in God's knowledge.' And 'His knowledge, unlike ours, is not pluralized by its diverse objects.' In Maimonides, *The Guide to the Perplexed*, III, c. 20, p. 392.

⁹⁰ 'But God is more superior in ruling the more his ordering power can extend even to the most insignificant matters.' '[...] *sed Deus quanto est superior in regendo tanto eius ordinatio etiam usque ad minima se extendit [...]*' Aquinas, *Super Iob*, c. 11, lect. 1, §193 (Leonine, vol. 26), p. 76, l. 67–68.

⁹¹ '*Quia igitur homo ad ipsam legem divinam, prout est in secreto sapientiae Dei inspiciendam, pertingere non potest et per consequens nec eius multiplicitatem agnoscere, [...]*' Aquinas, *Super Iob*, c. 11, lect. 1, §194 (Leonine, vol. 26), p. 76, l. 88–91.

At this stage, Thomas has developed an understanding of God's providence as a governance of the world that extends even to the most particular entities, made possible through the description of manifoldness in God's action. However, as previously noted, his reflection on divine providence of particulars appears to have left behind divine knowledge of them,⁹² making it difficult to maintain the coherence between these two dimensions.

IV. God's knowledge of Evil

The reconciliation of these two dimensions takes place as Thomas confronts a major objection to God's knowledge of particular things—an objection made especially salient by the story of the book of Job. If God knows particular things, then he knows evil, including individual sinful acts committed by humans that fall under his judgment. This raises a series of significant problems that, without being exhaustive, include:

1. By knowing specific evils, God might be more or less directly the cause of them according to the principle later articulated in the *Summa theologia* that God's knowledge 'extends as far as his causality extends.'⁹³
2. For Thomas, what resides in God's wisdom and intellect must also be in his will as well, in a perfect unity.⁹⁴ Once more, within this metaphysical system, it is arduous to argue that God intellectualizes particular evil or anything that he does not will nor cause.⁹⁵
3. There may be scriptural grounds to claim that God ignores evil, just as there are to claim that he knows it.⁹⁶ In §455, Thomas himself acknowledges regarding evil persons that 'just as they did not want to know God, so God does not want to know them.'⁹⁷

⁹² Since the solution of the 'manifoldness' argument only applies to God's providence, not his knowledge, see p. 408 and following of the present article.

⁹³ Thomas's statement in the *Summa* that God's knowledge 'extends as far as his causality extends.' '[...] *intantum se extendit scientia Dei, inquantum se extendit eius causalitas*.' Aquinas, *Summa theologia* I, q. 15, a. 11, resp. (Leonine, vol. 4), p. 183.

⁹⁴ Aquinas, *Summa theologia* I, q. 25, a. 5, ad. 1 (Leonine, vol. 4), p. 297.

⁹⁵ The *Super Iob* reminds that God cannot cause evil: 'But there are also some spirits which are evil, not by nature or creation, because God is the author of the nature of each, and the supreme good cannot be the cause of anything but good things, but these spirits are evil through their own fault.' '*Mali autem spiritus quidam sunt, non per naturam aut per creationem cum cuiusque naturae auctor sit Deus nec summum bonum potest esse causa nisi bonorum, sed sunt mali per propriam culpam; [...]*' Aquinas, *Super Iob*, c. 1, lect. 2, §11 (Leonine, vol. 26), p. 8, l. 249–253. For example, the problem is briefly discussed in Aquinas, *Summa theologia* I, q. 14, a. 10, arg. 2 and ad. 2 (Leonine, vol. 4), p. 182.

⁹⁶ 'Your [God's] eyes are too pure to look on evil; you cannot tolerate wrongdoing.' Hb 1:13 (NIV). God is said to ignore people who commit evil. On the fact that God knows evil, after the fall, God said 'The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil' (Gn 3:22). In the *Summa*, Aquinas argues that God knows evil with Prv 15:11: 'Death and Destruction lie open before the Lord' (NIV).

⁹⁷ '[...] *quasi scilicet sicut ipsi cognoscere Deum nolunt ita Deus eos non cognoscat [...]*' Aquinas, *Super Iob*, c. 34, lect. 1, §455 (Leonine, vol. 26), p. 182, l. 253–254.

Perhaps to circumvent an overly intricate engagement with these complexities, Thomas, in the *Summa*, positions the article on God's knowledge of singular things after the article on his knowledge of evil. Therefore, by the time he argues for the divine ability to know material singular things, he no longer needs to establish that God knows evil, as this has previously been demonstrated as a premise.

A striking fact is that, in the *Commentary on Job*, Thomas highlights his most compelling argument for God's knowledge of individual things, precisely in the context of affirming God's knowledge of evil. In the discourse of justice, Eliud declares, 'For his eye is on the way of men and he considers all their steps' (Job 34:21). Expounding upon this verse, Thomas writes:

He [Eliud] then expresses the fact that God knows each and every one of the particular details of human actions, saying 'and all their steps,' all the process of human works 'he considers,' not just in general but individually.⁹⁸

Although we do not find here a subtle philosophical argument to resolve the problems faced by Ibn Sīnā, Thomas realized that, in the book of Job—and in this verse specifically—he has a basis to decide the problematic theological question of God's knowledge of particulars.

Given his awareness of the discussion by the Peripatetics, it seems that Thomas sidesteps the metaphysical discussion in this specific instance. The framework that links God with the world through cause, depicting the divine as the cause of causes, indeed fails—in Ibn Sīnā and Ibn Rushd—to properly account for God's knowledge of singular things and evil deeds. Instead, Thomas approaches the problem through a different paradigm while drawing upon the book of the Hebrew Bible that probably most explicitly states that God is not the cause of everything: in the book of Job, the daemon instead causes material casualties in Job's existence. This alternative paradigm consists in presenting God primarily as a judge and a governor.

V. God as judge and the paradigm for the divine order

Providence in Thomas's *Super Job* is the absolute transcendence of God's governing power:

So, just as he did not commit the making of the world to anyone else, so he did not give the governing of the world to anyone else, and he expresses this, saying, or whom did he place over the world which he has fashioned? as governor of the whole world. He implies the

⁹⁸ '[...] *et ut exprimat Deum singulariter omnia particularia operum humanorum cognoscere, subdit et omnes gressus eorum, idest omnes processus operationum humanarum, considerat, scilicet distincte, non solum in generali.*' Aquinas, *Super Job*, c. 34, lect. 1, §454 (Leonine, vol. 26), p. 182, l. 243–247.

answer is 'no one,' because just as he has fabricated the world by himself, so also he himself governs and judges the world by himself. True, he has executors of his government, like ministers, but he himself is the orderer of all.⁹⁹

In Thomas's vision, providence is not knowing the universal entities and arranging everything toward them or around them. It is rather the most anti-subsidiarity form of government that consists for the ruler, i.e. God, in arranging the most individual details. This somewhat political reading which frames God not primarily as creator in this context, but as governor and judge, restores the articulation between God's providence and his knowledge of everything. Just as an excellent governor must have knowledge of everything happening under their watch, so too must God know all things plainly. This opinion resonates with Maimonides's description of the Ash'arite's view, in which 'whatever is controlled is also known.'¹⁰⁰

Therefore, if knowledge corresponds to providence, and knowledge is ordering, then providence is ordering too: 'But one should know that divine providence governs things with such an order that lower things are ordered through higher things'¹⁰¹ The infinite multiplicity of singular things are ordered within God's knowledge just as the most singular questions are ordered in the *Summa* to harmoniously fit within a rational whole. This is the 'order of providence (*ordinem providentiae*)',¹⁰² an expression which designates this order that embraces everything so that even the utmost evil, i.e. Satan, cannot escape from it.¹⁰³

Within this paradigm, divine providence functions as an order akin to a great social order of a properly governed kingdom. Yet, it has a peculiar specificity: no one knows the unfolding of this order. Providence is indeed hidden: 'it proceeds from the hidden origin of divine providence as from the womb.'¹⁰⁴ Thus, the causal structure of this order, if any, remains beyond the grasp of human understanding.

Yet, the natural world follows some principles which are metaphysical and not judicial principles. One is the notion that matter should obey spirit.¹⁰⁵ The articulation

⁹⁹ '[...] ita nullum alium praeposuit gubernationi mundi, et hoc est quod subdit aut quem posuit super orbem quem fabricatus est, idest totius orbis gubernatorem? Quasi dicat nullum, quia sicut ipse per se ipsum orbem fabricatus est, ita etiam per se ipsum orbem gubernat et iudicat; habet quidem gubernationis suae executores tamquam ministros, sed ipse est omnium ordinator [...].' Aquinas, *Super Iob*, c. 34, lect. 1, §451 (Leonine, vol. 26), p. 180, l. 136–143.

¹⁰⁰ Maimonides, *The Guide of the Perplexed*, III, c. 17, p. 378.

¹⁰¹ 'Sciendum est autem quod divina providentia tali ordine res gubernat quod inferiora per superiora dispensat; [...].' Aquinas, *Super Iob*, c. 1, lect. 2, §11 (Leonine, vol. 26), p. 7, l. 235–237.

¹⁰² Aquinas, *Super Iob*, c. 1, lect. 3, §26 (Leonine, vol. 26), p. 12, l. 610.

¹⁰³ Aquinas, *Super Iob*, c. 1, lect. 3, §26 (Leonine, vol. 26), p. 12, l. 607–610.

¹⁰⁴ '[...] ex occulto divinae providentiae procedebat quasi ex utero quodam.' Aquinas, *Super Iob*, c. 38, lect. 1, §497 (Leonine, vol. 26), p. 201, l. 195–196.

¹⁰⁵ 'For although corporeal matter obeys only the nod of God the Creator for the reception of forms, and does not obey the nod of either the good or the wicked angels, corporeal nature is still born to obey spiritual nature, as far as local movement is concerned: 'Quamvis enim materia corporalis non oboediat ad nutum angelis neque bonis neque malis ad susceptionem formarum sed soli creatori Deo, tamen ad motum localem natura corporea nata est spirituali naturae oboedire; [...].' Aquinas, *Super Iob*, c. 1, lect. 3, §30 (Leonine, vol. 26), p. 13, l. 708–712. And also: 'For bodies which are generated and corrupted are

of Providence with the questions of the natural order is fundamental for understanding that Aquinas is, in the meantime, articulating a distinctive cosmology. As an illustration, he argues that the mass of the sun or the moon, which may not be settled by natural law, are not due to hazard but to divine providence.¹⁰⁶ This may be read as some sort of early draft of the discussion on the hypothesis of the fine-tuned universe. As such, the order of providence is a balance, not only between God's transcendence and immanence but also between necessity and contingency within the divine order. Contrary to the ancient paradigms that assert only necessity in aspects such as the celestial bodies, Thomas disrupts this order by introducing contingency into it, and instituting instead an order of providence.

Another principle of the natural order under the law of Providence is that the good of the species comes before the good of the individuals if those individuals are not eternal.

For example, the fact that this lamb is killed by this wolf or some such thing is not arranged by God because of the merit or demerit of this wolf or of this lamb, but because of the good of the species, since its own food has been divinely ordained for the good of each species. [...] He [God] does not turn his heart to the good of individual animals, but rather to the good of the species, which can exist perpetually.¹⁰⁷

This is a strong statement once more. Again, God's providence in Aquinas is not a motherly love for each thing within the universe. It is the order of a governor, who sees a higher good, and whose knowledge embraces everything. There is always a higher finality in Thomas, in contrast to Maimonides, for whom only particular finalities hold, and who firmly criticizes teleology.¹⁰⁸ In the *Guide*, having been created

subject to the motion of the heavenly bodies, and in the same way, lower reasoning spirits united to mortal bodies, namely, souls, are directed through higher incorporeal spirits.' '[...] *corpora enim generabilia et corruptibilia subduntur motui corporum caelestium, et similiter inferiores spiritus rationales mortalibus corporibus uniti, scilicet animae, per superiores spiritus incorporeos administrantur*.' Aquinas, *Super Iob*, c. 1, lect. 2, §11 (Leonine, vol. 26), p. 7, l. 237–241.

¹⁰⁶ 'Divine providence is most powerfully demonstrated by those things which cannot be explained by natural principles like these, one of which is the determined quantity of the bodies of this world. For no reason can be assigned from some natural principle why the sun or the moon or the earth should be a certain mass, and not a greater or lesser one. Thus, it is necessary to say that this determination of masses is from the ordering of some intellect, [...]': '*Ex his ergo potissime providentia divina manifestatur quorum ratio reddi non potest ex huiusmodi naturalibus principiis, inter quae unum est determinata magnitudo corporum huius mundi: non enim potest assignari ratio ex aliquo principio naturali quare sol aut luna aut terra sit tantae quantitatis et non maioris aut minoris; unde necesse est dicere quod ista dispensatio quantitatum sit ex ordinatione alicuius intellectus, [...]*' Aquinas, *Super Iob*, c. 5, lect. 2, §99 (Leonine, vol. 26), p. 36, l. 152 to p. 37, l. 161.

¹⁰⁷ '[...] *utpote quod haec ovis occiditur ab hoc lupo vel aliquid aliud huiusmodi, non dispensatur a Deo propter aliquod meritum vel demeritum huius lupi vel huius ovis, sed propter bonum specierum, quia divinitus unicuique speciei ordinatus est proprius cibus. [...]* non ponit autem erga animalia singularia cor suum, sed erga bonum speciei quod potest esse perpetuum.' Aquinas, *Super Iob*, c. 7, lect. 4, §135 (Leonine, vol. 26), p. 50, l. 385–394.

¹⁰⁸ Maimonides, *The Guide of the Perplexed*, III, c. 13, p. 362 and following. See a review of this aspect in Warren Zev Harvey, "Maimonides' Critique of Anthropocentrism and Teleology", in *Maimonides'*

and having a beginning, implies having a finality: 'This is evident philosophically and needs no proof.'¹⁰⁹ But, when it comes to anything that does not arise in time, the purposive nature disappears. Concerning God, there is no 'why' to be sought,¹¹⁰ an opinion closely echoed in a key feature of Ibn Sīnā's metaphysics:

There is no demonstration of Him [God], since there is no cause of Him. For this reason, there is no 'why' regarding Him, and you shall know that there is no 'why-ness' for His act.¹¹¹

Maimonides's world is as eternal as Aristotle's, then, there is no finality for the cosmos either.¹¹² While in Maimonides, providence is restricted to those very particulars, in Thomas, providence is the care for the higher purpose of things, sometimes at the expense of most particulars, for the sake of the higher end. Accordingly, Thomas can allow for a possible causal nature of Providence, particularly in terms of the Aristotelian 'for the sake of which (τὸ οὐ ἕνεκα)'—the final cause—whereas Maimonides asserts: 'Divine providence, as I see it, comes only by emanation.'¹¹³

Conclusion

While there has been an increasing emphasis in scholarship on the importance of Scriptures in Thomas's thought, this contribution has aimed to contextualize the complexity and specificity of his reading.¹¹⁴ The historical originality of Thomas's *Super Job* resides in an ambivalent commitment: on the one hand, its pledge to scrutinize the literal meaning when commenting on Job, marking a departure from the Gregorian tradition of the *Moralia*; on the other, as I argue, a mobilization of the biblical text in order to confront issues extrinsic to Job and imported from afar. This 'afar' is a subtle discussion, maybe echoing a metaphysical anxiety, over God's ability to

Guide of the Perplexed: *A Critical Guide*, ed. Daniel Frank and Aaron Segal, Cambridge Critical Guides, Cambridge 2021.

¹⁰⁹ Maimonides, *The Guide of the Perplexed*, III, c. 13, p. 362.

¹¹⁰ 'One does not ask why the Creator exists. [...] If such a thing was intended, one must indeed ask why. But for what had no origin, as I said, there is no purpose to be sought.' Maimonides, *The Guide of the Perplexed*, III, c. 13, p. 362.

¹¹¹ Ibn Sīnā, *Kitāb al-Ilāhiyyāt*, book 8, chap. 4, p. 277.

¹¹² Maimonides, *The Guide of the Perplexed*, III, c. 13, p. 362. For a review of his opinion on this topic, see Howard Kreisel, "Maimonides on the Eternity of the World", in Kreisel, *Judaism as Philosophy: Studies in Maimonides and the Medieval Jewish Philosophers of Provence*, Emunot: Jewish Philosophy and Kabbalah, Boston 2015, pp. 40–69.

¹¹³ Maimonides, *The Guide of the Perplexed*, III, c. 17, p. 383.

¹¹⁴ As an illustration of this view, Christopher T. Baglow wrote in 2002: 'One could say that the major shift of this century in our comprehensive understanding of Thomas Aquinas is this new awareness of the pervading presence and influence of Scripture on his thought. One need only survey the works of such pioneering Thomistic scholars as Marie-Dominique Chenu, Yves Congar and Jean-Pierre Torrell to see that the relationship between Thomas and the Bible is at the cutting edge of development in this field.' Baglow, "Modus et Forma", pp. 5–6.

embrace and know particulars, rooted in Islamic and Jewish traditions of the Baghdad caliphate and the Almoravid dominions of the Western Maghreb and al-ʿAndalus.

Thomas does not seek resolution through intricate philosophical argumentation but rather presents a paradigm—that of the ruler—allowing scriptural milestones to dictate the course of his reasoning. Through that, the *Super Iob* illustrates a further shift in the history of Christian thought. Whereas as early as Athanasius of Alexandria (c. 296–373), God’s condescension and providence (πρόνοια) over all creation primarily originate from God’s intrinsic nature as ἀγαθός (good) and φιλόανθρωπός (loving humanity),¹¹⁵ Thomas’s *Super Iob* instead places the emphasis on God as judge and ruler in its account of divine providence.

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Abbreviations

- CCCM** Corpus Christianorum, Continuatio Mediaevalis, Turnhout 1953–.
- CCSL** Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina, Turnhout 1953–.
- Leonine** Thomas Aquinas, *Opera omnia*, Editio Leonina, Paris 1888–.
- MM** Thomas Aquinas, *Scriptum super Libros Sententiarum*, ed. Pierre Mandonnet and Maria Fabianus Moos, Paris 1929–1947.
- NIV** Bible, New International Version.
- PL** Patrologiae Cursus Completus, Series Latina, ed. Jacques Paul Migne, Paris 1844–1864.

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¹¹⁵ See for example, Athanasius, *Contra Gentes*, §41, in *Athanasius. Contra Gentes and De Incarnatione*, ed. Robert W. Thomson, Oxford 1971, pp. 112–14, and the analysis in Khaled Anatolios, *Athanasius: The Coherence of His Thought*, Routledge Early Church Monographs, London 1998, pp. 41–42.

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