

SECTION IV: EVIL AND PROVIDENCE IN THE BOOK OF JOB

Having come to the final and very important section of our research, we wish to focus now on the *Book of Job* and draw from it our authors' expositions of the problem of evil, suffering and divine providence, as played out in the life of the righteous man Job. Our approach will be to establish in a summary fashion, the basic metaphysical structures on which and through which our authors built their various theories. In Maimonides's case, this approach may involve repeating some of the points we have already discussed in the previous sections, but this is necessary if we are to successfully prove that evil is consequent upon the privation of providence. When man achieves intellectual perfection, he is *ipso facto* open to the overflow of divine providence—*largitatem splendoris spiritualis*—which assures protection from evil and complete surveillance from God. Job a righteous man suffered evil because he lacked intelligence. Maimonides makes us understand that what saves is not moral righteousness but intellectual perfection for it is this that connects us directly to the separate intelligences.

Aquinas's interpretation of Maimonides's reading of Job will also be examined through solid metaphysical principles establishing man's place as a dependent creature and his relation with God, the source of his being. *Esse*, which Maimonides considers as a mere accident, would become in the hands of Aquinas, a major ontological principle of a finite being and the hub of his metaphysics of providence and creation. Because of the centrality of this *esse*, Aquinas succeeds in negating Maimonides's theory of intellectual perfection as the key to providence and opens up the gates of divine providence to every finite being intellectual and non intellectual alike.

Recognizing the importance of the *splendor intellectus* with which man is endowed, Aquinas emphasizes the special care that man has before God. Each individual man, regardless of the level of his intelligence, has a *naturale desiderium*, which cannot but find its ultimate fulfillment in union of the beatific vision. This is what Aquinas calls *perfecta beatitudo* and it is achieved by the help of the *lumen gloriae* which elevates the created intellect beyond its natural capacity to this union with God. Aquinas has taken this pain in order to correct the impression left by Maimonides that it is only individuals who have perfected their intelligence that can enjoy not only divine providence but ultimate happiness in union with the separate intelligences. Aquinas's Job does not need to be intelligent to be under the divine providence nor to arrive at the ultimate union of the beatific vision. Providence would be seen by Aquinas as *ratio ordinis rerum in*

finem and he would interpret human endeavours including suffering, as various means of acquiring man's final end which is union with God.

1.0 Moses Maimonides and the Theoretical Foundation of his Thought

The study we have undertaken is a very complicated one, not least because of the complex nature of the major work of Maimonides, his *Dux Neutrorum—The Guide of the Perplexed*, on which our discussion is based. The author intentionally makes it a book with a double dimension: esoteric and exoteric dimensions. Its surface doctrine hides another, different set of teachings destined to different audiences. While the esoteric dimension is meant for the philosophically endowed, the exoteric-surface level dimension is directed to the philosophically unlearned masses who are guided by the authority of Scriptural tradition. One author who has done more to let us understand the complexity, the subtlety, and the inherent difficulty in understanding any of Maimonides's works, is Leo Strauss.¹ It was he who is famously quoted for writing that “contradictions are the axis of the Guide.”² In most of the doctrines that Maimonides exposes in his works, this interplay between seemingly contradictory statements are very well noticed. Such seemingly intended contradictions are meant to protect the “Secrets of the Law [Torah]” that should not be exposed to the philosophically untrained to avoid causing him perplexity. The subjects of creation, providence, God's knowledge among others are all subjects that “ought not to be spoken of except in chapter headings.”³ In the words of Maimonides:

As for the discussion...concerning His creation of that which He created, the character of His governance of the world, the “how” of His providence with respect to what is other than He...it should be considered that all these are obscure matters. In fact, they are truly

¹Strauss, Leo, «The Literary Character of the Guide of the Perplexed, » in *Essays on Maimonides*, ed. Salo W. Barron, (New York, 1941); reprinted in Leo Strauss, *Persecution and the Art of Writing*, (Glencoe, III., 1952). See also Leo Strauss, “How to Begin to Study the Guide of the Perplexed,” in Moses Maimonides, *The Guide of the Perplexed*, pp xi-lvi.

²Strauss, Leo, « The Literary Character of the Guide of the Perplexed, » in *Persecution and the Art of Writing*, p 74.

³ *Dux Neutrorum*, lib.I, cap.XXXIII, fol.14: “et non est loqui in istis nisi dando initia rationum...et cum homine qui est idoneus ad ista.” Cf *Guide* I, 35, p 81.

the mysteries of the Torah and the secrets constantly mentioned in the books of the prophets...⁴

The set of subjects enumerated by Maimonides consists of a set of claims about the existence and the nature of a “relationship” between God and the world. For the truth of these secrets to be known, the philosophically untrained must have to undergo a profound training in metaphysics and the sciences. Because this is not tenable for everybody, Maimonides accepts that the masses be guided by the teachings of the Scriptural tradition, since these teachings are appropriate to their understanding and religious beliefs. Enlisting providence among “Secrets of the Law” entails two consequences in Maimonides’s approach: the first is that his theory of providence would differ essentially from what is traditionally understood; the second is that he will deliberately obscure this discussion of providence to protect it from the ignorant masses.⁵ These consequences are built on a solid philosophical, theological and scientific base involving the very nature of God and the relation He ought to have with the world; Maimonides’s cosmogony; his discussion of causality and time; and the role of the Active Intellect. We briefly look at these one after the other.

1.1 His Working “Definition” of God

To have a proper grasp of Maimonides’s intricate theory of providence, it is necessary to set straight what he considers to be the “nature” of God. This is the first key that unlocks hidden doors to the thoughts of Maimonides. The major task of Maimonides in the *Dux Neutorum* among others is to construct a rational interpretation of Judaism such that its religious truths are seen to be in harmony with philosophical truths.⁶ Maimonides believes that the truths of faith

⁴ Ibid: “Sed loqui decet de dispositionibus et quod elongabuntur ab eo et quae est ratio dispositionis et numeri qui debet ei comparari. Et similiter loqui in creatione illorum quae creavit, et via regiminis in mundo isto: et quomodo est curae eius ad exteriora, et ratio voluntatis suae et appraehensionis et scientiae ad omnia quae scit...licet ipsa sint multa, omnia inquam ista sunt rationes profundae: et sunt occulta legis in veritate.” Cf *Guide* I, 35, p 80.

⁵Reines, Alvin J, «Maimonides’ Concept of Providence and Theodicy,» in *Hebrew Union College Annual*, 43, (1972) p 171.

⁶ Leo Strauss is of the view that philosophy and Judaism are mutually exclusive and since the *Guide* is “devoted to the explanation of the secret teaching of the Bible ... the *Guide* is not a philosophic book.” He also argues that since Maimonides is “an adherent of the law, he cannot possibly be a philosopher.” Cf *Persecution and the Art of Writing*, pp 42-43. Hyman is another who argues that the *Guide* is “best understood as a commentary on the Bible—although it must be spelled out what kind of commentary it is—and that it is addressed to Jews;” Cf Hyman, Arthur, “Maimonides as Biblical Exegete,” in Idit Dobbs-Weinstein et al, eds., *Maimonides and His Heritage*, (Albany:

must not be in opposition to reason and that is why the correct conception of God, must be the very foundation of the Law. Both faith and reason must affirm the triple indubitable truth of God's existence, incorporeality and unity even if the surest way of demonstrating such truth is to presuppose the doctrine of the eternity of the world.

For according to me the correct way, which is the method of demonstration about which there can be no doubt, is to establish the existence and the oneness of the deity and the negation of corporeality through the methods of the philosophers, which methods are founded upon the doctrine of the eternity of the world. This is not because I believe in the eternity of the world or because I concede this point to the philosophers; but because it is through this method that the demonstration becomes valid and perfect certainty is obtained with regard to those three things: I mean the existence of the deity, His oneness, and His not being a body.⁷

This means that the more we approach the truth of the eternity of the world, the more we approach humanly speaking, the truth about the nature of God as eternal. His four proofs for the existence of God follow the tradition established by earlier philosophers especially Aristotle. Of the four proofs, the first and the third are the most important. Maimonides takes the first proof which is a physical proof, from the eternal motion of the celestial spheres and just like Aristotle, infers the existence of an unmoved mover who is incorporeal, separate, eternal and unique. This is the deity, the first cause moving the sphere.⁸ From the physical, Maimonides arrives at a non physical entity. In another place, Maimonides calls it "the greatest proof through which one can

State University of New York Press, 2009) p 1. For a critical response to Strauss, confer Joseph B. Buijs, "The Philosophical Character of Maimonides' Guide—A Critique of Strauss' Interpretation" in Buijs, Joseph A, ed., *Maimonides: A Collection of Critical Essays*, (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988), pp 59-70.

⁷*Dux Neutrorum*, lib.I, cap.LXX, fol.30: "Ratio vero apud me vera, ipsa est via roborata probatione, in qua non est dubitatio per quam astruamus essentiam creatoris et unitatem eius: et removeamus ab eo corporeitatem per vias philosophorum, quae sunt viae fundatae super antiquitatem mundi: non quod ego credam antiquitatem mundi, vel convenientiam cum eis in hoc: sed qua per vias illas astruitur probatio et veritas perfecta invenitur in viis tribus scilicet quod creator est, et quod est unus, et quod non est corpus." Cf *Guide* I, 71, pp 180-181.

⁸*Ibid.* lib.II, cap.II, fol.40: "Si ergo demonstratum est quod primus motor coeli, si motus eius fuerit sempiternus, de necessitate nec est corpus nec potentia in corpore ullo modo, nisi sit in eo motus substantialis vel accidentalis...Hic autem motor est Creator benedictus scilicet causa prima motus coeli...Haec ergo consideratio induxit nos per viam demonstrationis ad credendum quod coelum non movet seipsum motum sempiterno. Et quod causa prima motus eius, nec est corpus: nec potentia in corpore: sed primus motor est unus qui non mutatur." Cf *Guide* II, 1, p 246. Cf Aristotle, *Physics* VII-VIII and *Metaphysics* XII.

know the existence of the deity—I mean the revolution of the heaven.”⁹ Even Abraham according to Maimonides, arrived at the existence of one God through this proof.¹⁰

The third proof, a metaphysical proof, is based on the ontological distinction between a necessary and a possible existence, a distinction that is the hallmark of Avicenna’s metaphysics but which Maimonides inadvertently attributes to Aristotle.¹¹ For every existent thing, we can ask whether it exists contingently as caused by another, or whether it exists independently as necessary by itself. With regard to the latter, we could inquire whether it is necessary by itself or whether its necessity is caused by another. If its necessity is caused by another, then it is possible by itself but necessary by another. Thus, there must be an existent that is necessary of existence in respect to its own essence. It has no cause for its existence and neither is it composed nor a body. He is the deity. Maimonides concludes this proof by calling it “a demonstration concerning which there can be no doubt, no refutation, and no dispute, except on the part of one who is ignorant of the method of demonstration.”¹² The backbone of that argument can be found to be the Avicennian real distinction between essence and existence.¹³ Hence on rational grounds, Maimonides demonstrates and confirms the truth of faith that God exists, that He is incorporeal, that He is eternal and that He is one.

Having settled the demonstration of God’s existence, Maimonides examines what could be learnt of the essence of God through what are normally called the essential attributes of God, for example, knowledge, power, will, life, etc. and how human language tries to come to grasp with

⁹Ibid. lib.I, cap.LXIX, fol.29: “quoniam haec est probatio maior omnibus aliis probationibus ad sciendum quod creator est circuitio vel revolutio caeli.” Cf *Guide* I, 70, p 175.

¹⁰Ibid. lib.II, cap.XL, fol.65: “Abraham advocavit gentes per viam doctrinae et ostensionis veritatis quam apprehenderat: et docebat eos per probationes speculativas quod iste mundus habet unum Creatorem: et quod ipse creavit omnia praeter se.” Cf *Guide* II, 39, p 379.

¹¹Ibid. lib.I, cap.II, fol.40: “Consideratio tertia per viam philosophiae in illa materia est sumpta de verbis Aristotelis licet induxerit eam propter animaliam rationem...Non est dubium quin entia sunt et sensu compraeensibilia: nec effugiunt quin cadant in aliquod membrorum trimembris divisionis necessario omnibus modis. Hoc est qua omnia nec sunt generabilia nec corruptibilia: vel omnia sunt generabilia et corruptibilia: vel quidam sunt generabilia et corruptibilia: quidam vero nec generabilia nec corruptibilia. » Cf *Guide* II, 1, p 247.

¹²Ibid: “Haec autem est demonstratio quae non habet repulsam vel contradicentem : nisi apud illum qui ignorat viam demonstrationis. » Cf *Guide* II, 1, 248. For a more detailed analysis of these proofs, consult William Lane Craig, “Maimonides’ Proofs for the Existence of God,” in Joseph A. Buijs, ed., *Maimonides: A Collection of Critical Essays*, pp 122-147; Carlos Fraenkel, “God’s Existence and Attributes,” in Steven Nadler and T. M. Rudavsky, eds., *The Cambridge History of Jewish Philosophy: From Antiquity through the Seventeenth Century*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009) pp 579-589.

¹³Cf Altmann, Alexander, “Essence and Existence in Maimonides,” in Joseph A Buijs, ed., *Maimonides: A Collection of Critical Essays*, pp 148-165.

it.¹⁴ With the ‘Torah speaking in the language of the sons of man,’¹⁵ the task seems complicated. The Scriptural description of God as possessing of power, knowledge, will and life, showing goodness and mercy, squares with Him as omnipotent and provident. But they introduce two major problems (i) ontological: do such attributes exist inseparably but distinct from the essence of God? (ii) Semantic: do these attributes mean the same things when predicated of other beings?¹⁶ Where such attributes exist distinctly from the essence of God, Maimonides argues that they would introduce ontological multiplicity into the essence of God. Maimonides would define attributes as certain modes of the essence and thus, accidents.¹⁷ Thus, Maimonides would engage in exegetical and philosophical interpretation of the language of the *Scripture* that is replete with anthropomorphism. For the philosophically trained, God cannot be understood as corporeal otherwise He would no longer be God—unique and absolutely simple. When God is said to be absolutely simple, it radically implies that God is indivisible even conceptually.¹⁸ In Maimonides’s expositions, there are five kinds of attributes that are normally predicated of God,¹⁹ and they include: definitions—assign a genus and difference by grouping things and distinguishing them from the others; part of definition or properties—measure another thing in respect of quantity;²⁰ quality—neither constitutes nor perfects the essence of a thing but rather acts as an addition to the essence of a thing; relation—establishes a common link between a thing and the other; and action—is an attribute that designates not what the essence is, but the products or the effects of an essence. But if philosophical reasoning is to be respected, God must be conceived as absolutely simple, that is admitting of no composition in any way possible. The first two attributes of definition and parts of definition, assume to indicate the essence of a thing while the attribute of quality attempts introducing accidents into God. To indicate the essence of a thing is to reveal it as caused and composed. God cannot be reduced to a mere corporeal being.

¹⁴ Having treated the topic of divine attributes, we are only making a passing reference to it once more for the purposes of showing Maimonides’s working “definition” of God.

¹⁵ *Dux Neutorum*, lib.I, cap.XXVI, fol.10: “Hoc est quod dixerunt: locuta est lex hominum idiomate: cuius ratio est quod quicquid considerant homines vel intelligunt in initio imaginationis, hoc est quod attribuunt Deo: et ideo nominaverunt ipsum quae conveniunt corpori, ut significant ipsum esse: quoniam gentes initio imaginationis non inveniunt existentiam nisi rei corporeae.” Cf *Guide* I, 26, p 56.

¹⁶ Cf Wolfson, Harry A., « Philosophical Implications of the Problem of Divine Attributes in the Kalām, » *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, vol 79, (1959) pp 73-80.

¹⁷ *Dux Neutorum*, lib.I, cap.L, fol.18 : « quod dispositio est res adiuncta substantiae, et est accidens. » Cf *Guide* I, 51, p 112.

¹⁸ We could refer above, in our treatment of the attributes, to the five kinds of plurality excluded by the notion of absolute simplicity.

¹⁹ Cf *Dux Neutorum*, lib.I, cap.LI, fol.18-19: Cf *Guide* I, 52, pp 114-119.

²⁰ Aristotle, *Metaphysics* VII, 10, 1035a1-5.

The fourth attribute of relation introduces an element of similarity, things are similar when they have something either essential or accidental common to them. For Maimonides, God has neither a spatial, temporal, reciprocal nor a comparative relation with anything whatsoever. The terms of relation do not simply exist between a necessary being and a contingent being, given the immense difference between them with regard to the reality of their existence.²¹ There is “absolutely no likeness in any respect whatever between Him and the things created by Him.”²² Composition and similarity are two terms that philosophically militate against the absolute simplicity, incorporeality and immutability of God. Thus, for Maimonides, they must be rejected because they introduce in God: corporeality, affections, potentiality and similarity.²³ Whoever believes in the doctrine of essential attributes without qualification follows according to Maimonides, not intellectual speculation, but the external sense of the texts of the Scriptures.²⁴ All attributes must be negated of God. The attribute of action is the only attribute that according to Maimonides can be positively predicated of God because; it designates not the essence of God but only His effects. For want of space, we shall not elaborate on this attribute of action.²⁵ It is on the background of this rational discussion on the nature of God, that Maimonides gives what he philosophically thinks God to be:

The stable One who undergoes no manner of change, neither a change in His essence—as He has no modes besides His essence with respect to which He might change—nor a change in His relation to what is other than Himself—since ... there does not exist a relation with respect to which He could change. And herein His being wholly changeless in every respect achieves perfection ...²⁶

²¹ *Dux Neutrorum*, lib.I, cap.LI, fol.19: “Non est aliqua comparatio in veritate inter ipsum et aliquam de creaturis eius.” Cf *Guide* I, 52, p 118.

²² *Ibid.* lib.I, cap.XXXIII, fol.13: “nec est comparatio vel similitudo ullo modo inter ipsum et creata.” Cf *Guide* I, 35, p 80.

²³ *Ibid.* lib.I, cap.LIIII, fol.21: “Quatuor autem ista sunt haec. Primum quod inducit corporeitatem. Secundum ex quo sequitur ut sit operatus et mutabilis. Tertium quod inducit privationem: ac si esset aliquid in eo in potentia et postea in actu. Quartum quod inducit assimilationem eius ad creata sua, et hoc est totum de utilitatibus communibus quae proveniunt ex scientia naturali in sapientiam divinam.” Cf *Guide* I, 55, p 128.

²⁴ *Ibid.* lib.I, cap.LII, fol.19: “Non enim credentem corporeitatem induxit ad hoc consideratio intelligibilis: sed plana scripturae.” Cf *Guide* I, 53, p 119.

²⁵ Cf Buijs, Joseph A, “Attributes of Action in Maimonides,” *Vivarium* 27, (1989) pp 85-102.

²⁶ *Dux Neutrorum*, lib.I, cap.XI, fol.7: “quoniam non cadit in ipsum aliqua species mutationis: neque secundum substantiam neque alio modo. Neque mutatur eius compositio ad aliud extra se: quia non est comparatio inter ipsum: et aliud extra ipsum propter quod mutetur in ipsa comparatione: sicut patebit ex sequentibus. Et in hoc completur ipsius sedere sine omni mutatione.” Cf *Guide* I, 11, p 37-38.

This is seemingly the idea of God that runs through the metaphysical discussions of Maimonides in his *Dux Neutrorum*. It is this idea of God that runs beneath the debate on creation, on the *how* of divine providence, and on those other topics that He considers “secrets and mysteries of the Torah.” In the lexicographic chapters where Maimonides takes some pains examining special scriptural texts that would help us in understanding some of these “secrets of the Torah,” Maimonides uses the word “sitting” [yeshibah] to signify “stability and permanence.” He quotes some scriptural texts: ‘Thou, O Lord, sittest for all eternity,’ [Lam. 5:19]; ‘O Thou who sittest in the heaven.’ [Ps. 123:1] In reference to the governance and the providence of the world, Maimonides hints that under the lunar sphere, where things undergo generation and corruption, the “relation” of God to the world “remains the same—stable and permanent... for this relation subsists only with regard to the species of the various things subject to generation not with individuals.”²⁷ This is perhaps a reference to general providence that keeps species permanently in existence. The importance of this word and the proper grasp of its meaning according to its context, “will” according to Maimonides, “be a key permitting one to enter places the gates to which were locked. And when these gates are opened and these places are entered into, the souls will find rest therein, the eyes will be delighted, and the bodies will be eased of their toil and of their labor.”²⁸ The radical implication of the doctrine of divine attributes and the description of God as pure essence, who does not exist in any form of relation, would extend to the question of the existence of the world. This potential difficulty is solved by Maimonides in two ways: the first is by his adoption of the Avicennian proof of God as the Necessarily Existent who is the cause of all contingent existents. The second way is by the use of the Neoplatonic metaphysical model of emanation to help him bridge the gap between this Necessarily Existent and the contingent existents while respecting the transcendent nature of God. It is this double solution that Maimonides uses to a devastating effect in his cosmogony and theory of causality that we come to next.

²⁷Ibid: “Sed comparatio eius quantum ad generabilia est eadem firma et immutabilis: quia comparatio seu relatio est ad species rerum generabilium, non ad singularia.” Cf *Guide* I, 11, p 38 “Relation” is used equivocally. Maimonides would latter explain it as God’s ‘action’ or ‘overflow.’

²⁸Ibid. lib.I, Prooemium Authoris, fol.5: “quarum portae sunt clausae: et cum aperverit homo portas illas: et intraverit illas cameras delectabuntur animae, et recreabuntur oculi: et requiescent corpora ab angustia et tristitia sua. Aperite portas et ingredietur gens iusta custos credulitatum.” Cf *Guide* I, Introduction to the First Part, p 20.

1.2 On Cosmogony

The second metaphysical structure through which Maimonides's doctrine of providence flows is his cosmogony.²⁹ The basic principle of Maimonides's cosmogony is drawn from Aristotle's principle that 'God does not do things in a direct fashion. He may be the principle of all existents but He burns by means of fire, and this fire is moved by means of the motion of the sphere, and the sphere in turn is moved by means of a separate intellect.'³⁰ What comes very close to the reality that Maimonides has philosophically demonstrated as God is the immaterial separate intellect.³¹ Maimonides's universe is divided into three categories of existents: the separate intellects, which are the angels; the second, the bodies of the spheres; the third, first matter—I mean the bodies subject to constant change, which are beneath the sphere."³² There are ten intelligences and nine spheres.³³ Leaving aside the whole debate on the creation of the world, Maimonides's cosmogony reposes on a Neo-Platonic metaphysical model of emanation "designed to explain the hierarchical structure of reality and the causal interrelation of its parts."³⁴ According to this emanation model, God as the Necessarily Existent produces the First Intelligence which, by engaging in a double act of mental representation—of the deity and of its own first principle³⁵—produces the first sphere and the second intelligence. The Second Intelligence engages in this double act of mental representation of its cause and principle—the First Intelligence—and engenders the second sphere and the third intelligence. This process is continued until the ninth sphere and the tenth intelligence called the Active Intellect, are emanated. With the Active Intellect, the separate intellects come to an end with the elements and

²⁹ Unlike cosmology which is about the structure of the created world, cosmogony concerns the way in which the world came into being in time.

³⁰ *Dux Neutrorum*, lib.II, cap.V, fol.42: « quia Creator non operatur absque medio: sed quod ignis ardet per medium: et ignis movetur mediante coelo: et coelum movetur mediante intelligentia abstracta. » Cf *Guide* II, 4, p 258.

³¹ Ibid : « Et erunt ipsae intelligentiae abstractae angeli proprii quibus mediantibus moventur coeli. » Cf *Guide* II, 4, p 258.

³² Ibid. lib.II, cap.XI, fol.45: "Et diximus quod entia dividuntur tripartito. Prima pars, intellectus separati, et ipsi sunt angeli. Secunda pars, corpora caelorum. Tertia vero pars, materia prima, scilicet corpora variabilia semper, quae sunt infra caelos. » Cf *Guide* II, 10, p 273.

³³ Ibid. lib.II, cap.V, fol.42: "Posteriores Philosophi dixerunt quod intelligentiae abstractae sunt decem. » Cf *Guide* II, 4, p 257-259.

³⁴ Hyman, Arthur, «Maimonides on Causality, » in Shlomo Pines and Y. Yovel (eds.), *Maimonides and Philosophy*, (Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1986) p 158.

³⁵ *Dux Neutrorum*, lib.II, cap.V, fol.42 : « Erit ergo finis verborum eius quod omnes coeli sunt corpora viva, habentes animam intelligibilem: et imaginantur et apprehendunt Creatorem et principia sua : » Cf *Guide* II, 4, p 259.

what is composed of them.³⁶ Emanation continues however, with the generation of the sublunar world, the world of matter. It is the Active Intellect that is responsible for the world of generation and corruption as a result of the dissipation of the emanative power. With the help of the primary matter, the physical bodies of the sublunar world are fashioned. It is the Active Intellect that emanates the forms of the four primary elements—earth, water, air and fire—upon the primary matter and subsequently, all entities of the sublunar world including man are generated. The process, of generation and corruption, has its origin in the motion of the sphere which constitutes according to Maimonides, the heart and soul of the world. He summarizes the process of generation and corruption in the following way:

Just as the ruling part which is the heart, is always in motion and is the principle of every motion to be found in the body...so heaven in virtue of its motion exerts governance over the other parts of the world and sends to every generated thing the forces that subsist in the latter...

Know that, as has been made clear, the forces that come from heaven to this world are four: [1] the force that necessitates the mixture and composition—there is no doubt that this force suffices to engender the minerals; [2] the force that gives to every plant a vegetal soul; [3] the force that gives to every animal an animal soul; [4] the force that gives to every rational being a rational faculty.³⁷

These forces serve to produce and keep in existence the entities of the sublunar world. They preserve the species in a permanent way and preserve individuals only temporally. For Maimonides, this is the meaning of “nature,” which is said to be wise. As we shall meet later in our study, general providence is the function of nature “having governance, caring for the bringing into existence of animals by means of an art similar to that of a craftsman, and also

³⁶Ibid : « sicut erit donec intelligentia quae movet coelum nobis propinquum, erit causa intelligentiae agentis: et principium eius : et usque ad ipsum pervenit essentia intelligentiarum abstractarum : sicut et corpora incipiunt a coelo altissimo et proveniunt usque ad elementa ultima : et ex eis composita. » Cf *Guide* II, 4, p 258; II, 11, p 275.

³⁷ Ibid. Lib.I, cap.LXXI, fol.31: “Sicut ergo membrum quod est de dominantibus, scilicet cor, movetur semper: et est fons cuiuslibet motus qui est in corpore...sic et caelum est rector omnium partium mundi suo motu: et transmittit omni generabili vires quae inveniuntur in ipso...Scias autem quod omnes virtutes quae proveniunt a caelo ad mundum istum secundum quod subest, sunt quatuor. Prima est aptatrix coniunctionis et compositionis quae sine dubio sufficit in compositione liquabilium. Secunda vero dat animam augmentativam cuiuslibet augmentabili. Tertia tribuit animam vivam cuiuslibet vivo. Quarta vero dat animam rationalem cuiuslibet loquenti.” Cf *Guide* I, 72, pp 186-187.

caring for their preservation and permanence through the bringing into existence of formative forces, which are the cause of the existence of living beings, and nutritive forces, which are the cause of their lasting for whatever duration is possible.”³⁸ So that is where the power of emanation of intelligences stops, that is, with the Active Intellect that gives rise to corporeal entities.

But the creative-emanation continues eternally since through it, God “continually endows the world with permanence in virtue of the thing that is spoken of as overflow.”³⁹ This Maimonidean cosmogony probably with a noted influence of Avicenna,⁴⁰ is built on a necessary emanation of intelligences, souls and spheres, and reveals a kind of necessitated “cosmic teleology” in which each higher hierarchy achieves perfection by engendering the next. Thus, as in Avicennian world that we have earlier seen in the section studying Avicenna’s take on God’s universal knowledge of particulars, we have a universe conceived as an eternal and necessary “static structure of downward devolution from the ultimate perfection represented by the Necessary Existent” who is God.⁴¹ Alexander Altmann also sees the Maimonidean world as influenced by the ontology of Avicenna.

Maimonides subscribes to the Avicennian type of ontology which sees the total reality, including God, as a continuum in which the flow of emanations from God through the hierarchy of Intelligences reaches down to the Active Intelligence as the immediate fountainhead of the activity of forms in the sublunar world.⁴²

Proceeding ontologically from God by necessity, the world is as eternal as God with the difference that the world is possible in itself and necessary through another. The world is caused and cannot exist by itself. Our lines have so much followed those of Avicenna because those are the lines Maimonides has followed but with supposedly one exception—the question of

³⁸Ibid. Lib.II, cap.XI, fol.44: “rektor studens ut faciat esse animalia cum actione imaginabili artificiali intendens in eorum cura et sempiternitate cum agitatione virtutum informativarum, quae sunt causa essendi ea et cum virtutibus regiminis quae sunt causae vitae ipsorum, et curae tempore definito.” Cf *Guide* II, 10, p 272.

³⁹Ibid. lib.I, cap.LXVIII, fol.28: “Quoniam in esse Creatoris est omne quod est: et ipse iuvat ea secundum firmitatem per modum qui vocatur splendor.” Cf *Guide* I, 69, p 169.

⁴⁰“It is clear that he was familiar with emanation as a cosmogonic theory through the writings of Avicenna.” Cf Hyman, Arthur, “Maimonides on Creation and Emanation,” in J. F. Wippel, ed., *Studies in Medieval Philosophy*, (Washington, D.C: Catholic University of America Press, 1987) p 59.

⁴¹Heath, P, *Allegory and Philosophy in Avicenna*, (Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press, 1992), p 39.

⁴²Altmann, Alexander, “Maimonides and Thomas Aquinas: Natural or Divine Prophecy?” in *AJS Review*, vol.3 (1978), p 7.

necessity. If Maimonides openly endorses this chain of necessity, he will be jeopardizing the Jewish belief in creation and scandalizing a lot of Jewish believers who are not well rooted in philosophy. To avoid this scandal, Maimonides introduces two weak attacks on the principal tenets of emanation: that multiplicity could rise from simplicity and that this proceeds by necessity. This is in the attempt to distinguish his emanative scheme from those of the Neo-Platonists and Avicenna. But, does Maimonides succeed in this project?

To the first of the tenets, Maimonides counters that “it is impossible that anything but a single simple thing should proceed from a simple thing.”⁴³ We call it weak because, whatever emanates from the Necessarily Existent owes its existence to another. That means that its ontological reality is multiple: it is made of essence and existence since it is possible by itself and necessary by another.⁴⁴ All intelligences apart from God, no matter how simple they are (devoid of matter), is composed. Thus nothing prevents the First Intelligence proceeding from God, from producing a multiplicity. It is this interpretation that Gilson confirms when he notes:

Dès la production initiale du premier causé, nous voyons donc s’engendrer une dualité, sans toutefois que la première cause en soit aucunement affectée.⁴⁵

To the second of the tenets, Maimonides counters: “For we wish to signify by the term that it—I mean the world—does not necessarily proceed from Him, may He be exalted, as an effect proceeds from its cause without being able to be separated from it.”⁴⁶ To conceive that God has been “impelled” by necessity to bring about the world is considered by Maimonides to be absurd. The best solution will be to remove “necessity” and insert “purpose and will” since that would better explain how multiplicity comes about from a single entity. And that is what Maimonides does:

⁴³ *Dux Neutrorum*, lib.II, cap.XXIII, fol.LIII : “Aristoteles et omnes qui profundaverunt in philosophia convenerunt in hac propositione quod ex simplici non potens provenire nisi unum simplex. » Cf *Guide* II, 22, p 317.

⁴⁴ Goichon, A.M., *La Distinction de l’Essence et de l’Existence d’après Ibn Sina*, p 233.

⁴⁵ Gilson, Etienne, *Pourquoi Saint Thomas A Critiqué Saint Augustin*, (Paris : Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 1981), p 37.

⁴⁶ *Dux Neutrorum*, lib.II, cap.XXII, fol.53 : «Sed intendimus et volumus dicere quod mundus non pendet a creatore necessario sicut causatum a sua causa a qua non potens separari : » Cf *Guide* II, 21, p 315.

We affirm that all these things have been made by Him in virtue of a purpose and a will directed toward this particular being, which did not exist and now became an existent in virtue of His will.⁴⁷

If multiple effects can arise from a willing agent, then nothing prevents God, though a simple being, from producing a world of multiplicity by His will. By so doing, Maimonides apparently, distinguishes his emanation from those of the Neo-Platonists and especially Avicenna.

But try as much as he could, Maimonides could not completely destroy the chain of necessity that is weaved around reality, especially the actions of the intelligences and the spheres. Maimonides remarks that the actions of the Intelligences and spheres in creating and preserving the universe are not blind and determined, and yet, they always, on a constant basis, do what is good. According to Maimonides, “the spheres and the intellects apprehend their acts, choose freely and govern, but in a way that is not like free choice and our governance ... the intellects and the spheres ...always do that which is good, and only that which is good is with them...”⁴⁸ If the intelligences and spheres freely choose what to do, why do they not vary their actions, and why is their action consistently destined to the same end? This again shows a necessary ontological dependence on the source of their being. Care must be taken to distinguish, if it is possible, between two forms of necessity in the nature of God: first, the necessity that comes from without, a negative necessity that engenders compulsion from without and robs one of freedom and will.⁴⁹ And second, the necessity that is the nature of God as Necessarily Existent. This is the necessity that comes from within because it is the essence of God. Seen from this light, it would be very difficult to argue that necessity denies God of freedom and will since there is no difference between God’s will and God’s essence as the Necessary Existent. Is that not the logical conclusion of Maimonides’s denial of positive attributes in God? “There does not exist in

⁴⁷ Ibid : « Nos vero dicimus quod ipse est operator omnem cum intentione et voluntate in hoc esse postquam non fuit, et est modo cum voluntate Creatoris. » Cf *Guide* II, 21, pp 316-317.

⁴⁸ Ibid. lib.II, cap.VIII, fol.43: “Coeli siquidem et intellectus abstracti, appraehendunt operationes suas : et eligunt et dirigunt : sed non sicut nos eligimus...intellectus vero abstracti coeli non sunt sic, sed semper faciunt bonum : et apud eos non est nisi bonum : sicut explanabitur in capitulis sequentibus : et quicquid est apud eos, existit in fine perfectionis et operationis sempiternae ab hora suae essentiae. » Cf *Guide* II, 7, p 266.

⁴⁹ Sarah Pessin has tried to make this type of distinction in her discussion of “Jewish Neoplatonism: Being above Being and divine emanation in Solomon ibn Gabirol and Isaac Israeli,” in D. H. Frank and O. Leaman, eds., *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Jewish Philosophy*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp 91-110.

Him anything other than His essence in virtue of which object He might act, know or will.”⁵⁰ And this is why Maimonides’s purported defense of “creation *ex nihilo*” theory on the ground that it permits God of will, looks very weak. Our problem could rather be said to be much more semantic than ontological. It is semantic because we assume that the “how” of “willing” as in human volition involves a change from a position of potentiality to actuality. When this mode of thinking is transferred to the nature of God’s will, we get it all wrong. Maimonides accepts a perfect identity in God between essence and will, and the fact that God is said to will does not deny His nature as necessary. What it does is to confirm man’s inability to permeate the “how” of divine essence. The other thing it does is to “effectively strip the concept of God’s will of any cognitive meaning.”⁵¹ We could then say that God wills Himself to be what He is, but this does not mean that He exercises volition as normally understood.

It would seem that despite his criticisms of emanation as being unable to explain how corporeal substances could emanate necessarily from incorporeal intelligences,⁵² Maimonides could not abandon it because among other philosophical reasons, he finds in the model of emanation a kind of metaphysical “cohesive force that binds the universe into a unitary whole.”⁵³ This cohesiveness of the emanation model could have influenced Maimonides to describe the world as “*unum solum*—one individual and nothing else.”⁵⁴

Accordingly it behooves you to represent to yourself in this fashion the whole of this sphere as one living individual in motion and possessing of a soul. For this way of

⁵⁰*Dux Neutorum*, lib.I, cap.XLV, fol.16: “ergo non habet instrumenta, id est non habet corpus: sed opera sua operatur per sine instrumentis...quoniam ista non sunt nisi vires additae super substantiam rei.” Cf *Guide* I, 46, p 102.

⁵¹ Harvey, W. Z, “A Third Approach to Maimonides’ Cosmogony-Prophetology Puzzle,” in Buijs, Joseph A, ed., *Maimonides: A Collection of Critical Essays*, p 77.

⁵²Maimonides’s only problem with emanation is the chain of « necessity » that ties it to the First Cause. He does not dispute that the First Cause or God brings about the existence of the first intelligence and consequently all the other intelligences by an act of emanation. What he seems to dispute is that this emanation proceeds by necessity. In order to make room for an argument for the creation of the world, he contends that emanation is a non eternal act of God’s will. “We affirm that all these things have been made by Him in virtue of a purpose and a will directed toward this particular being...” Cf *Guide* II, 21, p 316.

⁵³ Diamond, James A., *Maimonides and the Hermeneutics of Concealment*, p 115.

⁵⁴ *Dux Neutorum*, lib.I, cap.LXXI, fol.30: “Scito quod mundus iste qui inventus est, in universitate sua est unum solum.” Cf *Guide* I, 72, p 184.

representing the matter to oneself is most necessary or most useful for the demonstration that the deity is one ... that the One has created one being.⁵⁵

God's overflow ensures a permanent existence and governance of the universe. Maimonides again tries to strengthen this idea of permanence by his secret admiration and adoption of the Aristotelian theory of the eternity of the world based on the eternity of motion.⁵⁶ It is not to be forgotten that the thesis of the eternity of the world was a common heritage of the Peripatetic School.⁵⁷ We do not need to emphasize how much this school has influenced Maimonides. This secret admiration could be founded on the Maimonidean notion of time which has close affinity to Neo-Platonic version of eternal creation.⁵⁸ While Neo-Platonists adopted a non-temporal imagery for the explanation of the activity of God, Maimonides tends to be taken over by the same fact that God transcends time and his activities must not be bracketed under temporal predicates. In his own words:

Accordingly one's saying: God "was" before he created the world—where the word "was" is indicative of time—and similarly all the thoughts that are carried along in the mind regarding the infinite duration of His existence before the creation of the world, are all of them due to a supposition regarding time or to an imagining of time and not due to the true reality of time.⁵⁹

One of the points Maimonides is making in the passage above is the fact that God transcends the temporal sphere and must be described *atemporally*. This passage gives weight to the discussion of God's knowledge of the future which follows from His eternal nature. But the point that really

⁵⁵Ibid. fol.31: "Sic ergo intelligere te oportet quod tota illa sphaera est unum corpus viuum mobile habens animam. Haec autem ratio necesse est ut intelligatur: et est valde utilis in probatione quod creator est unus...Et per hunc intellectum ostenditur tibi quod unus non creavit nisi unum." Cf *Guide* I, 72, p 187.

⁵⁶Aristotle, *Metaphysics* XII, 6, 1071b5-20 "But it is impossible that movement should either have come into being or cease to be ... for there could not be a before and after if time did not exist. Movement is continuous."

⁵⁷Steenberghen, Fernand Van, *La Philosophie au XIIIe Siècle*, p 368: « la thèse de l'éternité du monde...est commune à l'école péripatéticienne tout entière ; »

⁵⁸Ivry is convinced that Maimonides is much more platonic when it concerns issues touching on God, and on providence. While not denying the Aristotelian affiliation of Maimonides, he notes however that "in his understanding of providence and the many issues connected with it ... Maimonides comes perilously close to abandoning his Aristotelian anchors and setting off on a Neoplatonic sea." Cf "Providence, Divine Omniscience, and Possibility," p 188.

⁵⁹*Dux Neutrorum*, lib.II, cap.XIII, fol.46: "Quod autem dicitur quod illa propositio quae dicit quod creator fuit ante creationem mundi, significat tempus fuisse, et similiter quicquid sequitur cogitationem de qualitate suae essentiae ante creationem mundi, qualitate scilicet infinita: Haec quidem omnia sunt in aestimatione vel imaginatione temporis, non in veritate temporis." Cf *Guide* II, 13, p 281.

interests us is the next one highlighted by Rudavsky.⁶⁰ It is Maimonides's use of the terms "supposition" or "imagining" of time which he opposes to "the true reality of time." Such terms refer to Maimonides's dismissal of the Mutakallimun because they were unable to distinguish between imagination and intellect and because they base all their proofs on premises that run counter to the nature of existence.⁶¹ In addition to that, the Mutakallimun "have no knowledge at all of the true reality of time."⁶² What does Maimonides consider as the "true reality of time"? In one of the premises (the fifteenth premise) drawn from Aristotelian philosophy, Maimonides notes the following about time:

Time is an accident consequent upon motion and is necessarily attached to it. Neither of them exists without the other. Motion does not exist except in time, and time cannot be conceived by the intellect except together with motion. And all that with regard to which no motion can be found, does not fall under time.⁶³

It is very interesting to note that what Maimonides calls the "true reality of time" is the theory of time enunciated by Aristotle. We note that Aristotle takes time to be inseparable from motion. In his metaphysics and the physics, he notes that it is impossible that motion should have come into being or cease to be or that time should. Thus as motion is continuous, time also is.⁶⁴ This Aristotelian theory of time conditions his theory of the eternity of the world. Averroes, a contemporary of Maimonides, also adopted the theory of the eternity of the world just like Avicenna had earlier done. But what Averroes does is to draw a distinction between two different senses of an eternal world: "eternal in the sense of being unlimited in duration, and eternal in the sense of being eternally self-sufficient, without a first cause."⁶⁵ Whereas an eternal world in the first sense requires an external agent who causes it to be at every point in time, in

⁶⁰Rudavsky, T. M., "Time, Space, and Infinity," in Steven Nadler and T. M. Rudavsky, eds., *The Cambridge History of Jewish Philosophy. From Antiquity through the Seventeenth Century*, p 404.

⁶¹*Dux Neutorum*, lib.I, cap.LXX, fol.29: "Ipsi etiam in pluribus locis sequuntur imaginationem, et vocant ipsam intellectum." Cf *Guide I*, 71, p 179.

⁶²*Ibid.* lib.I, cap.LXXII, fol.33: "Et ignorant veritatem substantiae temporis omino." Cf *Guide I*, 73, p 196.

⁶³*Ibid.* lib.II, cap.I, fol.39: "Tempus est accidens motus et comitatur ipsum: et neutrum eorum invenitur sine reliquo: nec intellectus appraehendit tempus sine motu: et quod non movetur non cadit sub tempore." Cf *Guide II*, Introduction to the Second Part, p 237.

⁶⁴Aristotle, *Metaphysics* XII, 6, 1071b5-25; *Physics* VIII, 1, 251b10-25 "If, then, time is the number of motion or itself a kind of motion, it follows that, if there is always time, motion must also be eternal."

⁶⁵Averroes, *Tahafut al-Tahafut*, 162, 2 vols (1954)1 :96-97 Cf *Aquinas on Creation: writings on the "Sentences" of Peter Lombard, book 2, distinction 1, question 1*, translated by Steven E. Baldner & William E. Carroll, (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1997) pp 17-18.

the later sense, it does not require a cause and would be totally independent of any cause. Averroes contends that philosophers, such as Aristotle, and do we dare say Maimonides, understand eternity of the world in the first sense, that is, in the sense of unlimited duration and not in the sense of being independent of an external cause.⁶⁶ The Maimonidean “true reality of time” logically flows from the idea of an eternal world understood in the sense of unlimited duration. And thus based on this assumption, “that which makes the world eternal could be identified with that which causes it to be.”⁶⁷

Among the Aristotelian premises “*in quibus non est dubitatio*—as to which no doubt is possible,”⁶⁸ Maimonides mentions another, the twenty-sixth premise according to which “time and movement are eternal, perpetual, existing in *actu*.”⁶⁹ The logical implication of this is that the world is eternal. Neither rejecting nor categorically accepting the premise, Maimonides calls it “possible—that is neither necessary, as is affirmed by the commentators or the writings of Aristotle, nor impossible, as is claimed by the Mutakallimun.”⁷⁰ That he calls it “possible” does not really change much given the fact that what he considers “possible for God” are according to Ivry, “those things which agree with his essence, being derived from it.”⁷¹ Does eternity not agree with the essence of God? The dangers are immense. If Maimonides affirms openly the existence of time prior to the world, he will be necessarily acknowledging the eternity of the world.⁷² He must find a way to remain orthodox on the surface level while secretly admiring the

⁶⁶ Averroes regards the doctrine of eternal creation “as not only consistent, but as the most appropriate way to characterize the universe.” Cf Barry S. Kogan, *Averroes and the Metaphysics of Causation*, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1985) p 203.

⁶⁷ Kogan, Barry S., *Averroes and the Metaphysics of Causation*, p 205.

⁶⁸ *Dux Neutorum*, lib.II, cap.I, fol.39: “Omnes tamen iam probatae sunt probationibus in quibus non est dubitatio: partim in libro de naturali auditu et suis expositionibus. » Cf *Guide II*, Introduction to the Second Part, p 239.

⁶⁹ Ibid: “Est autem illud quod dicit Aristoteles, quod tempus et motus sunt sempiterni, et semper in actu.” Cf *Guide II*, Introduction to the Second Part, p 240.

⁷⁰ Ibid: “Quod autem mihi videtur de illa propositione, dico quod est possibilis non necessaria ut dixerunt expositores verborum Aristotelis: et non est impossibilis: sicut dixerunt loquentes. » Cf *Guide II*, Introduction to the Second Part, p 241.

⁷¹ Ivry, Alfred L, “Providence, Divine Omniscience, and Possibility,” p 185. Cf also by the same author “Maimonides on Possibility” in Jehuda Reinharz and Daniel Swetschinski eds., *Mystics, Philosophers, and Politicians, Essays in Jewish Intellectual History in Honour of Alexander Altmann* (Durham: N.C: Duke University Press, 1982), pp 67-84.

⁷² *Dux Neutorum*, lib.II, cap.XIII, fol.46: “Si enim posueris esse temporis ante mundum, obligaberis ad credendum antiquitatem.” Cf *Guide II*, 13, p 282. For W.Z Harvey, “it should be emphasized that to conclude that Maimonides held Aristotle’s theory of eternity is not to say that he denied creation, and it is not to say that he denied religion; rather, it is to say that he denied what he considered to be the vulgar notion of creation and the vulgar notion of religion.” Confer his “Maimonides’ Cosmogony-Prophetology Puzzle” in *Maimonides: A Collection of Critical Essays*, pp 75-76.

consistency of Aristotelian theory of time with the eternity model of the world. It will be left to the careful student to decipher where Maimonides places his philosophical trust regardless of the fact that he refers to all that Aristotle has set forth on the issue of the eternity of the world as “subject to grave doubts—*incidunt multae dubitationes et magnae*.”⁷³ A typical example of Maimonides’s ploy to hide and reveal his true opinion is quite evident in his rejection and acceptance of Aristotelian principles. Against Aristotle, Maimonides says that time is created. This view fits in properly with the Jewish belief that the world is created. At the same time he acknowledges that God’s creative act could not have taken place temporally. Thus, he says:

God’s bringing the world into existence does not have a temporal beginning, for time is one of the created things. Consider this matter thoroughly. For thus you will not be necessarily attached to objections from which there is no escape for him who does not know it.”⁷⁴

Regardless of his efforts to hide his true opinion on the issues at stake, Maimonides could not avoid accepting the Aristotelian theory of the eternity of the world because it conforms, as he says, to the nature of what exists, that is, to the continuous motion of the heavens.⁷⁵ Arguments have been made and truly so,⁷⁶ against this Aristotelian-based cosmogony in the sense that his principles, according to Maimonides, hold true in the sublunar sphere where the laws of generation and corruption apply.⁷⁷ What remains an enigma is why Maimonides indirectly

⁷³ Ibid. lib.II, cap.XVII, fol.48: “Similiter etiam omnia quae dixit Aristoteles et sequaces eius in inductione demonstrationum in antiquitate mundi, non sunt apud me demonstratio certa: sed sunt rationes in quibus incidunt multae dubitationes et magnae, sicut audies.” Cf *Guide* II, 16, p 293.

⁷⁴ Ibid. lib.II, cap.XIII, fol.46: “Idcirco creatorem facere mundum istum esse, non erit in intentione temporali: quia tempus est de universitate creatoris. Ideoque pone cor tuum, et intellige bene, ne obliges te ad dandum rationes in quibus non poteris evadere ab eo qui ignorat illa. » Cf *Guide* II, 13, p 282.

⁷⁵ Ibid. lib.II, cap.XVI, fol.48: “Hoc autem verum est sine dubio quod opinio eius propinquior est veritati, quam illorum opiniones secundum probationes quae acceptae sunt de natura universitatis.” Cf *Guide* II, 15, p 292. Cf Warren Zev Harvey’s arguments in favor of the Aristotelian theory of the eternity of the world as Maimonides’ esoteric teaching on the creation of the world in “A Third Approach to Maimonides’ Cosmogony-Prophetology Puzzle” in Joseph A Buijs, ed., *Maimonides: A Collection of Critical Essays*, pp 71-88.

⁷⁶ For a good summary of the dominant positions in the debate concerning Maimonides’s true position on creation and a reasonable critique of them, confer, Norbert Samuelson, « Maimonides’ Doctrine of Creation, » *HTR* 84:3, (1991), pp 249-271.

⁷⁷ *Dux Neutorum*, lib.II, cap.XXIII, fol.54: “Quicquid dixit Aristoteles in omnibus entibus quae sunt a sphaera Lunae usque ad centrum terrae: verum est sine dubio, nec repellit illud, nec deviat ab eo: nisi qui non intelligit: vel qui consecutus est aliquas opiniones quas vult defendere: vel illae opiniones trahunt eum, ut neget ea quae apparent. Quicquid vero locutus est Aristoteles de his quae sunt a sphaera Lunae superius, est verisimile praeter quaedam et praesertim quae dixit in ordine intelligentiarum separatarum et in parte rerum spualium secundum quod ipse credit.” Cf *Guide* II, 22, pp 319-320.

endorses the same Aristotelian principles of ‘necessity-eternity’ by his adoption of emanation in explaining the realities of the supralunar realm. As we have seen in our examination of the nature of God, this cosmogony fits in logically with the description of God’s causal act as “overflow” as it is the action of an incorporeal, eternal being. A stronger criticism that tends to cast into doubt the established cosmogony, is one addressed by Maimonides.

The belief in eternity the way Aristotle sees it ... destroys the Law in its principle, necessarily gives the lie to every miracle, and reduces to inanity all the hopes and threats that the Law has held out, unless—by God!—one interprets the miracles figuratively also, as was done by the Islamic internalists; this, however, would result in some sort of crazy imaginings.⁷⁸

Three major factors apparently count against the Aristotelian cosmogony of a necessary world: the Law is against it; miracles would seemingly have no place in such a system, and reward and punishment would be baseless issues. But is the Law really against the theory of the eternity of the universe when the major foundations of the Law—God’s existence, unity and incorporeality—are established on the doctrine of the eternity of the world?⁷⁹ Proving the existence of God on the doctrine of the eternity of the world is an indisputable method appealing to both philosophers and scientists.⁸⁰ Such is also the case in the *Mishneh Torah* where Maimonides argues that the premise of eternity is required for the fulfillment of the divine commandments to know God and to know that He is one.⁸¹

The issue of miracles is another point of controversy in Maimonidean scholarship that has thrown up various camps of allegiance. While some hold that Maimonides believes in

⁷⁸Ibid. Lib.II, cap.XXVI, fol.55: “Credulitas autem antiquitatis mundi secundum sententiam Aristotelis: quae est per viam necessitatis, et quod eius natura non mutatur omnino: nec aliquid recedit a consuetudine sua: ista inquam opinio destruit fundamenta legis: et negat omnia signa et miracula: et contradicit eis, et tollit omnia quae promisit lex, vel a quibus prohibuit: nisi forte excogitaverunt opiniones super signis et mirabilibus, sicut fecerunt quidam de sapientibus Maurorum: et tunc pervenietur ad aliquam stultum viam.” Cf *Guide* II, 25, p 328.

⁷⁹ Ibid. lib.I, cap.LXX, fol.30: “quia incipio astruere quod creator est per verba quae conveniunt antiquitati.” Cf *Guide* I, 71, p 182.

⁸⁰ Kraemer, Joel L., *Maimonides: The Life and World of One of Civilization’s Greatest Minds*, (New York: Doubleday, 2008) p 327.

⁸¹Cf Twersky, Isadore, *Introduction to the Code of Maimonides (Mishneh Torah)*, (New Heaven and London: Yale University Press, 1980), p 448 n.224: “Note ... that in the MT (Yesode hat-Toray, I, 5) Maimonides rather boldly operates with the eternity of the world as a basis for his proofs of the existence of God.”

supernatural miracles,⁸² others thought that he secretly denied the reality of such events.⁸³ Maimonides may not have expressly stated his position as in almost all his controversial teachings, but the contradiction such belief would entail both in the nature of God and the eternal laws of nature which Maimonides accepts, leave much to desire. In so many texts of the *Guide*, Maimonides tends to cast rational doubt on what are called supernatural events as represented in the Bible. Did he not say that the miracle of the *fleece* took place only in Gideon's dream?⁸⁴ Has Maimonides not warned us not to be led astray "by what is said with regard to the light of the sun standing still for Joshua for certain hours,"⁸⁵ as such may be a way of expressing their "joy due to military victory."⁸⁶ If miracles are understood as unusual acts that are contrary to the normal course of events, generated by the direct intervention of God, then it would have no place in the fixed order of the universe advocated by Aristotle. This meaning of miracle would pose two major problems: cosmological in that nature may have to be changed after it has been fixed or created; and theological in that God's will may have to be employed again and again as if God is a changing nature.⁸⁷ The only solution to this is a different interpretation of miracle such that it fits the nature of what exists without going contrary to popular belief. The teaching of the Torah which the generality of the people accept is that God who has willed the creation of the world, could intervene into this world as and at when He wills. Maimonides however distinguishes between two categories of belief that the Law has called on its adherents to accept: *opinionibus rectis*—correct belief and *opinionones necessariae*—necessary belief.⁸⁸ Correct belief according to Maimonides, leads to the acquisition of the ultimate perfection. Though we shall still come to examine this in detail, Maimonides points that it is a kind of perfection one achieves through

⁸² Heller, J, "Maimonides' Theory of Miracles," in Alfred Altmann, ed., *Between East and West*, (London, 1958) pp 112-127.

⁸³ Cf Reines, A.J, "Maimonides' Concept of Miracles," *Hebrew Union College Annual (HUCA)* 45, (1974), pp 325-361; see also Howard Kreisel, "Miracles in Medieval Jewish Philosophy," *Jewish Quarterly Review (JQR)* 75 (1984), pp 99-133.

⁸⁴ *Dux Neutrorum*, lib.II, cap.XLVI, fol.70: « Simile etiam videtur mihi illud quod dictum est de Gedeone in tonsione eius, quod fuit in visione: sed non in visione prophetiae praecise. Quoniam ipse non pervenit ad gradum prophetarum, nedum ad gradum faciendi signa." Cf *Guide* II, 46, p 406.

⁸⁵ Ibid. lib.II, cap.XXXVI, fol.63: «Nec te decipiat quod accidit in statione solis in diebus Iosue in horis notis." Cf *Guide* II, 35, p 368.

⁸⁶ Cf Kasher, Hannah, "Biblical Miracles and the Universality of Natural Laws. Maimonides' Three Methods of Harmonization," in *The Journal of Jewish Thought and Philosophy*, vol.8, (1998) pp 25-52 for a detailed discussion of Maimonides' ideas, sometimes contradictory, on miracles.

⁸⁷ Ibid. p 38.

⁸⁸ *Dux Neutrorum*, lib.III, cap.XXIX, fol.89: "Scire debes et intelligere quod lex de opinionibus rectis per quas acquiritur ultima perfectio non dedit nisi finem earum...Eodem modo lex induxit opinionones quae sunt necessariae." Cf *Guide* III, 28, p 512. Cf Charles Touati, *Prophètes, Talmudistes, Philosophes* (Paris: Cerf, 1990) pp 243-256.

intellectual apprehension of metaphysical realities; and to this “ultimate perfection there do not belong either actions or moral qualities.”⁸⁹ It is important to note that among correct beliefs include: the existence of the deity, His unity, His knowledge, His power, His will, and His eternity.⁹⁰ These are truths based on rational demonstration. But necessary beliefs do neither lead to the ultimate perfections nor can be arrived at exclusively by the way of speculation. Maimonides calls this belief “which is necessary for the sake of political welfare.”⁹¹ In other words, it is a belief aimed at promoting social stability the ingredients of which include: “the abolition of reciprocal wrongdoing or for the acquisition of a noble moral quality—as, for instance, the belief that He, may He be exalted, has a violent anger against those who do injustice” or that He “responds instantaneously to the prayer of someone wronged or deceived.”⁹² These and others like them are groups of beliefs that foster social harmony and it is not surprising that they are based on political authority. Kreisel is suggesting and for a good reason, that belief in creation and miracles may well have been viewed by Maimonides “as belonging to the latter category of beliefs rather than to the former.”⁹³ For a seeming validation of the belief in creation of the world, makes the existence of Law and the realization of miracles possible.⁹⁴ Thus Maimonides, on the authority of the Sages, proceeds to interpret miracles as an act destined by God to manifest at a particular time.⁹⁵ This interpretation changes nothing with the fixed order of the universe as advocated by Aristotle.⁹⁶

This notion consists in their holding the view that miracles too are something that is, in a certain respect, in nature. They say that when God created that which exists and stamped

⁸⁹Ibid. lib.III, cap.XXVIII, fol.89: “Et manifestum est quod in hac ultima perfectione non sunt opera nec compositio morum.” Cf *Guide* III, 27, p 511.

⁹⁰Ibid. lib.III, cap.XXIX, fol.89: “essentia Creatoris et eius unitas et sapientia et potentia voluntas et aeternitas, et hoc est causa finis ultimi. » Cf *Guide* III, 28, p 512.

⁹¹Ibid: «Eodem modo lex induxit opiniones quae sunt necessariae in dispositione regiminis civitatis:» Cf *Guide* III, 28, p 512.

⁹²Ibid. fol.90: « In quibusdam autem erit credulitas illa valde necessaria in tollendo superbiam et in instruendo in bonis moribus:» Cf *Guide* III, 28, p 514.

⁹³ Kreisel, Howard, “Miracles in Medieval Jewish Philosophy,” in *Jewish Quarterly Review*, Vol.75, 2, (1984) p 111.

⁹⁴Ibid. lib.II, cap.XXVI, fol.55: “Signa vero et mirabilia testificantur super veritate nostrae rationis : quum si credimus novitatem mundi, signa et mirabilia omnia erunt possibilia: et lex erit possibilis. » Cf *Guide* II, 25, p 329.

⁹⁵ Hayoun, Maurice-Ruben, *Maimonide et La Pensée Juive*, (Paris : Presees Universitaires de France, 1994) p 210 : « La thèse maïmonidienne sur les miracles est que ceux-ci ont été inscrits dans l’économie générale de l’univers dès sa création. »

⁹⁶ Kenneth Seeskin has also argued that “miracles are not last-minute attempts to remedy a desperate situation but extraordinary events that were provided for during creation.” Cf his “Metaphysics and Its Transcendence,” in Seeskin, K, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Maimonides*, p 103 fn. 21.

upon it the existing natures, He put it into these natures that all the miracles that occurred would be produced in them at the time when they occurred.⁹⁷

Maimonides goes on to argue that it is even this that indicates the authenticity and superiority of the prophets since God reveals to them the time to make their proclamation as to harmonize with the natural manifestation that is called miracle. On the strength of this, nothing new happens in the supposed miracle, since it is “extremely difficult to admit that a nature may change after the *Work of the Beginning* or that another volition may supervene after that nature has been established in a definite way.”⁹⁸ Even if we go by the accepted principle of the “nature of what exists,” Maimonides would still cast doubts on the nature of miracles defined any other way. Being the philosopher that he is, Maimonides would definitely follow reason wherever it leads, because as noted by Fox, “intellectual honesty demands that we accept conclusions that reason has demonstrated to be true.”⁹⁹ An idea of an eternal, necessary world inspired by Aristotle and based on causal laws, reinforces the validity of scientific explanations for everything observable in the world. A grasp of the principles underlying the order of the world, leads to its ultimate source, God. The stability of such a world makes no room for indiscriminate intervention of God in the world. Would Maimonides prefer fidelity to the Law above fidelity to scientific truth? This emanationist world view confirms Maimonidean thinking of God’s relationship with the world as entirely indirect and mediated through a long range of spheres and intelligences. As noted by Leaman, “any notion of providence which is going to survive such a distant relationship to God must be based upon the principles of thought and influence present in the intelligences.”¹⁰⁰ The notion of reward and punishment just as the traditional notion of providence would all have to undergo a reformulation based on the principles of intellectual reasoning. Let us next examine God’s causality.

⁹⁷ *Dux Neutrorum*, lib.II, cap.XXX, fol.59: “Ipsi quidem credunt quod signa sunt in natura secundum alium modum quem dixerunt. Quoniam Creator quando creavit esse universum et terminavit ipsum interris istis, dedit potestatem naturis ad renovandum in illis omnia signa quae fecit in hora renovationis suae.” Cf *Guide* II, 29, p 345.

⁹⁸ Ibid: “Licet autem ratio ista sicut tu vides sit ostensiva utilitatis eius qui dixit: et quod sit secundum ipsum difficile valde, quod natura quaecunque mutetur post opera sex dierum: vel quod natura voluntatis mutetur postquam ita fuerunt firmata.” Cf *Guide* II, 29, p 345.

⁹⁹ Fox, Marvin, *Interpreting Maimonides*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990) p 34.

¹⁰⁰ Leaman, Oliver, *Evil and Suffering in Jewish Philosophy*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p 80.

1.3 On Causality

In a study that is concentrated on Maimonides's account of divine causality, Fox identifies three separate accounts of divine causality in the *Guide*.¹⁰¹ He identifies the first as physical or quasi-physical treatment of causality in accordance with the requirements of physics where causality is a result of contact, the push and pull effect. From its Aristotelian root, the basic principle of motion has it that "the source of the motion is always together with that which is moved by it (by 'together' I mean that there is nothing intermediate between them). This is universally true wherever one thing is moved by another."¹⁰² This is the guiding principle behind Aristotle's efficient cause where there is an immediate force bringing about motion and change. Here the causality of the agent is consequent upon what it does. But does this apply to the supralunar realm, to the world of immaterial realities? The second account of divine causality is what Fox identifies as metaphysical and the third he identifies as religious account of divine causality. This latter has as principle "God's will and free choice"¹⁰³ and is actually the anchor for the theory of the existence of the world by creation *ex nihilo*.¹⁰⁴ Our concern is how Maimonides's treatment of causality, the treatment that we consider metaphysical, helps in understanding his theory of providence. Briefly speaking, Maimonides accepts Aristotle's four physical causes in the natural science¹⁰⁵ and through the influence of Avicenna, adds a metaphysical cause of existence. The latter is the Necessarily Existent being that we have earlier examined. While in physical causes, there exists a kind of "physical contact" between a cause and its effects, in metaphysical causes, no such likeness exists. "It is necessarily known that this agent [the incorporeal intelligence] does not act through immediate contact or at some particular distance, for it is not a body."¹⁰⁶ This is what happens in God's causal agency of the world. His causality does not depend on what He does but on what He is. Even though the world proceeds from Him, there is no "contact" and no likeness between Him and the world. "There is accordingly an existent whom none of the existent things that He has brought into existence resembles and who has nothing in common

¹⁰¹ Fox, Marvin, *Interpreting Maimonides*, pp 229-250.

¹⁰² Aristotle, *Physics*, VII, 2, 243a1-5.

¹⁰³ *Dux Neutorum*, lib.II, cap.XLVIII, fol.70: "Et ipsa est voluntas Creatoris: » Cf *Guide* II, 48, P 409.

¹⁰⁴ Fox, Marvin, *Interpreting Maimonides*, p 247.

¹⁰⁵ *Dux Neutorum*, lib.I, cap.LXVIII, fol.27: "Probatum est iam in scientia naturali: quod omne creatum habet causam: Causae autem sunt quatuor scilicet: materia, forma, efficiens, et finis: et quaedam est propinqua, et quaedam remota. » Cf *Guide* I, 69, pp 166-171.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.* lib.II, cap.XIII, fol.46: "Fuit scitum necessario quod operator talis non operatur secundum obviationem, vel secundum elongationem: quia non est corpus." Cf *Guide* II, 12, p 279.

with them in any respect.”¹⁰⁷ For a better explanation of this causal agency by an incorporeal intelligence, Maimonides uses the metaphor of “overflow” or “emanation.” As he writes:

The action of the separate intellect is always designated as an overflow, being likened to a source of water that overflows in all direction and does not have one particular direction from which it draws while giving its bounty to others. For it springs forth from all directions and constantly irrigates all the directions nearby and afar.¹⁰⁸

Above, Maimonides makes three important points, some of which we have seen. The first is that this emanation proceeds from the incorporeal intellect continuously and necessarily. This “overflow” is the image of an ‘eternal act.’ Secondly, as a kind of causal agency, it produces multiple effects; and thirdly, its action knows no bounds.¹⁰⁹ It is in fact, this image of “overflow—*épanchement*” that Wohlman, describes as the “most adequate” image that assists us in understanding the efficient action of God, “the transcendent cause of existence.”¹¹⁰ If Thomas Aquinas were to be allowed to help Maimonides on this issue, he would explain the action of intellectual substances as a “contact of power,” a process that calls attention to activity and passivity. The reasoning is that because intellectual substances are immaterial, they enjoy a higher degree of actuality than bodies, and can act on the latter and move them.¹¹¹ This “contact of power” differs from physical contact or what Aquinas calls “contact of quantity” in three different ways. First is that, by the contact of power, the indivisible, intellectual substance, can touch the divisible by acting on it. Second is that the contact of quantity obtains only with respect to the extremities while the contact of power regards the whole object touched. And thirdly, because by the contact of quantity, that which touches must be extrinsic to that which is touched, it cannot penetrate the thing touched, but is obstructed by it, whereas, the contact of power,

¹⁰⁷ Ibid. lib.I, cap.LVII, fol.22 : «Et quod est ens cui nihil est simile eorum quibus dedit esse, et non participat eis aliquo et non est in eo multitudo : » Cf *Guide* I, 58, p 137.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid. lib.II, cap.XIII, fol.46: “Et idcirco nominant semper actionem separati in splendore, per viam similitudinis fontem aquae, ex quo undique largitas effunditur: et non manat ex una parte, sed undique fluit, et ex omni parte satiat remota et propinqua semper. » Cf *Guide* II, 12, p 279.

¹⁰⁹ Hyman, Arthur, “Maimonides on Causality,” p 165.

¹¹⁰ Wohlman, Avital, *Thomas d’Aquin et Maïmonide : un dialogue exemplaire*, p 98 : « Ainsi, cette image est à ses yeux la manière sensible la plus adéquate pour faire percevoir l’action efficiente de Dieu, cause transcendante de l’existence, sur toutes les réalités de l’univers et en particulier,...sur les formes concrètes par lesquelles elles existent. »

¹¹¹ SCG II, 56, 8: “Hoc igitur modo tangendi possibile est uniri substantiam intellectualem corpori per contactum. Agunt enim substantiae intellectuales in corpora et movent ea, cum sint immateriales et magis in actu existentes.”

extends to the innermost thing and penetrates it without hindrance.¹¹² Thus, intellectual substances act on bodies without being themselves, acted upon.

1.4 On the Active Intellect

Another important component in the proper comprehension of the doctrine of providence according to Maimonides is the Active Intellect or the Agent Intellect. Before Maimonides, we would like to highlight the importance, in this domain, of Arabic philosophers like al-Fârâbî, Ibn Sina (Avicenna), and later on, Ibn Rushd (Averroes), whose long tradition of Aristotelian commentaries surely exercised much influence on both Maimonides and Aquinas. The background for their theories of the intellect was provided by Aristotle's discussion of intellect in the book III of his *De Anima*, and the distinction he made of agent or active and the potential intellect.¹¹³ We shall concentrate our discussion more on the Active Intellect, than on the potential intellect, and how the categories arising from the early interpretations of Aristotle's *De Anima*, structure further discussions of this by later philosophers including Thomas Aquinas. Under the influence of the Greek commentators like Theophrastus, Alexander of Aphrodisias, and Themistius, the Agent Intellect who for Aristotle is immortal and eternal, comes also to be regarded by the Arabic philosophers, as a separate entity existing outside of the individual soul. The consequences of this interpretation are seen more on the ontological and epistemological side, and they shape man and his relation to God.

1.4.1 Al-Fârâbî [870-950]: It could be argued that the first Arabic philosopher that tried to provide a systematic metaphysical explanation to the structure of the universe is Al-Fârâbî. He tried to build this structure on the Neo-Platonized theory of reality. According to Plotinus, reality

¹¹² SCG II, 56, 9: "Hic autem tactus non est quantitatis, sed virtutis. Unde differt hic tactus a tactu corporeo in tribus. Primo quidem, quia hoc tactu id quod est indivisibile potest tangere divisibile. Quod in tactu corporeo non potest accidere: nam puncto non potest tangi nisi indivisibile aliquid. Substantia autem intellectualis, quamvis sit indivisibilis, potest tangere quantitatem divisibilem, in quantum agit in ipsam...Secundo, quia tactus quantitatis est solum secundum ultima: tactus autem virtutis est ad totum quod tangitur. Sic enim tangitur secundum quod patitur et movetur...Quia in tactu quantitatis, qui fit secundum extrema, oportet esse tangens extrinsecum ei quod tangitur; et non potest incidere per ipsum, sed impeditur ab eo. Tactus autem virtutis, qui competit substantiis intellectualibus, cum sit ad intima, facit substantiam tangentem esse intra id quod tangitur, et incedentem per ipsum absque impedimento. »

¹¹³ Aristotle, *De Anima* III, 5, 430a15-25.

is ordered according to natural priority where other forms of priority are secondary and subordinate to what is prior by nature. As summarily put by O'Meara, "what is absolutely prior by nature, the One, produces a posterior reality, intellect, in which the power of the One is expressed in structures of order and difference; intellect in turn produces, as posterior by nature to it, soul, in which the structure of intellect is expressed in a further articulation; and finally soul produces, as posterior by nature to it, the material world, in which intelligible structures find expression in the succession of time and space."¹¹⁴ It is this continuous stream of reality from the One, with the Aristotelian own version of Prime Mover, that has been developed in medieval philosophy into a well constructed metaphysical theory of emanation ending with the Active Intellect, the last of the ten intelligences, responsible for the material world.¹¹⁵ How does this Active Intellect affect the human understanding?

It is al-Fârâbî's teaching that the Active Intellect performs an epistemological role by providing man with the "something" enabling him to engage in abstraction.¹¹⁶ In other words, this "something" is external to the rational human soul as it is given by the Active Intellect. This "something" acts on the material intellect of the rational soul, assisting it in the activity of abstraction.¹¹⁷ Because of the influence of the external Active intellect, it could be said that the act of human intellectual understanding is not intrinsic in man. Averroes would latter criticize al-Fârâbî on this issue, in his *Long Commentary on the De Anima of Aristotle*. Understanding is equivalent to nearness to the Active Intellect, even though, this nearness does not lead to conjunction with the Active Intellect.

1.4.2 Avicenna [980-1037]: He follows the same Peripatetic philosophical tradition as Al-Fârâbî that bases the structure of the universe on a hierarchy of emanative separate intelligences,

¹¹⁴ O'Meara, Dominic J., "The hierarchical ordering of reality in Plotinus," in *The Cambridge Companion to Plotinus*, p 78.

¹¹⁵ Confer *Al-Fârâbî on the Perfect State*, edited and translated by Richard Walzer, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985) pp 100-104. For a better link between the active intellect of Aristotle's *De Anima* and the active intellect of the emanation, consult Herbert A. Davidson, "Alfarabi and Avicenna on the Active Intellect," *Viator* 3, (1972) pp 134-136.

¹¹⁶ Taylor, Richard C., "Abstraction in al-Fârâbî," *Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association*, vol. 80, (2006), pp 151-168.

¹¹⁷ Taylor, Richard C., "Aquinas and the 'Arabs': Arabic/Islamic Philosophy in Thomas Aquinas's Conception of the Beatific Vision in his Commentary on the Sentences IV, 49, 2, 1" (2011) p 6 <http://www.aquinasandthearabs.org>

stopping at the last in the scheme, the tenth intelligence called the Active Intellect. It is this separate and immaterial intelligence that engenders the human soul and the world of generation and corruption.¹¹⁸ Inbuilt in this emanation scheme, is a necessary generation of intelligences, souls and spheres pouring down from the summit of the hierarchy-the Necessarily Existent. By its very act of self-knowledge, it produces the first intelligence which by knowing itself is aware of its possibility, and by knowing its cause, knows its own necessity. It is the fact of its possibility that implies multiplicity in the nature of the first intelligence.¹¹⁹ The Avicennian universe is thus eternally causal and the Active Intellect, which is separate and one for all human beings, is generally known as the *giver of forms* since from it flows, the substantial forms of the lower world and the intelligible forms of human thought.¹²⁰ By the illumination of the Active Intellect, intelligible knowledge and truth are formed in human beings.¹²¹ Without going into his stages of the intellect which we shall come to later, Avicenna takes the material intellect as belonging to the rational soul of each individual person. It is his teaching that the human rational soul functions only as a receiver of 'intelligible thoughts that flow directly from the Active Intellect, and are not abstracted at all.'¹²² This function of abstraction does seem not to take place

¹¹⁸ Avicenne, *La Métaphysique du Shifa*, IX, 4, 407, 1-5, p 141 : « Il en est de même pour chaque intelligence et pour chaque sphère jusqu'à ce qu'on arrive à l'Intellect Agent qui régit nos âmes. »

¹¹⁹ Ibid. IX, 4, 406, 1-5, p 140 : « Il faut donc qu'il y ait en lui en fait de multiplicité, [à savoir] l'intention par laquelle [il intelligne] son essence comme possiblement existante en elle-même et qu'il intelligne la nécessité de son existence à partir du Premier, qui est intelligible par soi ; enfin qu'il intelligne le Premier ... Ensuite la multiplicité qu'il y a en lui du fait qu'il intelligne le Premier et qu'il s'intelligne lui-même est une multiplicité concomitante à la nécessité de son existence à partir du Premier. »

¹²⁰ Ibid. IX, 5, 410, 10-15, p 145: "Il faut donc, que les Intelligences séparées, surtout la dernière, celle qui est la plus rapprochée de nous, soit celle-ci d'où efflue, en association avec les mouvements célestes, quelque chose où se trouve un dessin des forms du monde inférieur, du point de vue de la passion..." Confer also Robert E. Hall, "Intellect, Soul and Body in Ibn Sina: Systematic Synthesis and Development of the Aristotelian, Neoplatonic and Galenic Theories," in John McGinnis, ed., *Interpreting Avicenna: Science and Philosophy in Medieval Islam*, (Leiden: Brill, 2004) p 65: "The Active Intellect is responsible thereafter for human intellection-in-act."

¹²¹ Gilson, Etienne, 'Avicenne en occident au Moyen Age,' *AHDLMA* 44 (1969) pp 99-103, 113 quoted in Vivian Bolando, *Ideas in God According to Saint Thomas Aquinas*, (Leiden: Brill, 1996) p 181.

¹²² Davidson, Herbert A., *Alfarabi, Avicenna, and Averroes, on Intellect*, p 93. Avicenna says that the active intellect 'imprints on the soul the intelligible forms.' Cf *Avicenna's Psychology* translated by F. Rahman, (Westport (conn.): Hyperion, 1981) p 68. According to Taylor, "The Agent Intellect in a way gives intelligibles to the soul, not by a changing, transforming or transferring of imagined forms in the imagination into intelligible forms in the human intellect after the manner of abstraction, but rather by emanating ... the immaterial intelligible forms to the soul when the soul has been suitably prepared for reception through sense perception and the workings of the internal sense powers." Cf Richard C. Taylor, "Thomas's Debts to Avicenna and Averroes on Cognition: The Commentary on the Sentences," in <http://www.aquinasandthearabs.org>

in man.¹²³ This necessitates the earlier preparation of the rational soul. Louis Gardet expresses this thought:

Pour Ibn Sina, l'âme humaine, de soi, « est vide » de formes intelligibles. Mais quand elle est en junction avec l'Intellect agent, l'intellect possible est alors actué et devient le *réceptacle* (*mahall*) de ces formes. Elle ne les abstrait pas à proprement parler des formes sensibles. L'actuation opérée par l'Intellect agent ne consiste pas en une lumière donnée à l'âme pour qu'elle puisse abstraire les *species*, mais en une infusion de formes (*suwar*) préexistantes dans l'Intellect agent, et qui sont elles-mêmes lumineuses. La connaissance sensible n'est que l'excitant, le prétexte pour l'âme humaine de se tourner vers la lumière qui lui vient du « donateur des formes », et donc vers les intelligibles.¹²⁴

One of the epistemological consequences of Avicenna's teaching that knowledge is an emanation, is the denial of intellectual memory, where intellectual understanding is simply the presence of the object known in the knower.¹²⁵ Because this process does not take into account the immanence that is the characteristic of an intellectual activity, P.M de Contenson labels the Avicennian *processus* a failure.

Ces traits caractéristiques de la noétique avicennienne pourraient à la limite faire conclure que la tentative du philosophe persan aboutit au plan noétique à un échec puisqu'elle ne réussit pas à rendre compte de l'immanence propre à l'activité intellectuelle.¹²⁶

As an extension to his theory of emanation, Avicenna tries partially to justify miracles on the basis that special men like prophets, who have a special relationship with the emanations of the Active Intellect, could absorb special powers enabling them to produce extraordinary effects

¹²³ There has been a whole new range of different interpretations backed up by textual evidence, showing that Avicenna actually has a theory according to which the 'rational faculty is an active faculty performing the abstraction of a form at will.' According to Hasse, the confusion in the interpretation is a result of the collaboration of two very different powers in the process of abstraction—the human intellect and the separate universal intellect where the function of the later is limited only to an assisting role, "in a manner similar to light with respect to the human ability to see." Cf Dag Nikolaus Hasse, "Avicenna on Abstraction," in *Aspects of Avicenna*, edited by Robert Wisnovsky, (Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 2007) pp 45-46; 56-58.

¹²⁴ Gardet, L., *La Pensée Religieuse d'Avicenne (Ibn Sina)*, (Paris : Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 1951) p 150.

¹²⁵ Black, Deborah L., "Psychology: Soul and Intellect," in Peter Adamson and Richard C Taylor, eds., *The Cambridge Companion to Arabic Philosophy*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005) p 320. Cf also Dag Nikolaus Hasse, *Avicenna's De Anima in the Latin West: The Formation of a Peripatetic Philosophy of the Soul 1160-1300*, (London-Turin: The Warburg Institute-Nino Aragno Editore, 2000) pp 186-187.

¹²⁶ De Contenson, P.M., "Avicennisme Latin et Vision de Dieu au début du XIIIe Siècle, » *Archives d'histoire doctrinale et littéraire du moyen âge*, 34 (1959) p 63.

beyond human capacities.¹²⁷ His interpretation of Aristotle's concept of the soul seems to safeguard the substantial difference of the soul from the body. Avicenna takes the soul to be the "perfection of the body, whereas essentially in itself, the soul is immaterial and a substance."¹²⁸ Avicenna, in the reading of Haase, teaches that the human soul has a temporal beginning together with its particular human body; at the death of the body, this human soul because individuated by certain dispositions or attributes, remains individually immortal.¹²⁹ The question that remains to be answered is how the human soul could exist in immortality without having an internal agent intellect. Distinguishing between two forms of Aristotelianism in the medieval ages: Avicennian and Averroist, Gauthier observes that the former, that is, Avicennian Aristotelianism posed a great threat to Christian belief of immortality and had to be combated:

...15 ans de lute entre l'aristotélisme avicennien et l'aristotélisme averroïste...l'aristotélisme le plus opposé à la foi, c'est aristotélisme avicennien qui en faisant de l'intellect agent une Intelligence séparée aboutit à nier l'immortalité de l'âme (sans compter qu'il en fait un rival de Dieu). C'est donc Avicenne qu'il faut avant tout combattre...¹³⁰

Seeing that the Active Intellect in the Arabic Peripatetic tradition is external to the human soul and thus, not one with it, there is also great difficulty understanding how the the soul could be the perfection of the body without its agent principle.¹³¹ On this later failure, Avicenna's idea of the individual will come under heavy attack when Aquinas posits the human individual as a substantial composite of body and soul where the rational soul with its intellectual faculty of the active intellect, is the form of the body that cannot be separated from the body without doing harm to the composite. By rejecting the Avicennian metaphysics of emanation and knowledge, Aquinas is rejecting the Avicennian notion of immortality that does neither actually guarantee individual immortality nor the intellectual vision of the divine essence.

¹²⁷ Guttman, Julius, *Philosophies of Judaism*, translated by David W. Silverman, (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1964) p 142.

¹²⁸ Avicenna, *De anima*, 1.1, ed. Rahman, p 10. Cf Dag Nikolaus Haase, *Avicenna's De anima in the Latin West*, p 92.

¹²⁹ Haase, Dag Nikolaus, *Avicenna's De anima in the Latin West*, p 175.

¹³⁰ Gauthier, R. A., "Le Traité *De anima et de potentiis eius* d'un maître ès arts (vers 1225), » *Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques*, 66, (1982) p 25.

¹³¹ Avicenne, *La Métaphysique du Shifa*, III, 8, 142, 10-15, p 193: «Car leur essence (l'intellect-agent et des substances séparées) est séparée. Elle ne peut être elle-même une forme pour une âme humaine.»

1.4.3 Averroes [1126-1198]: He belongs to the Arabic tradition that has given a special place to the Active Intellect as a separate intellect and as a major factor in intellectual understanding in human beings. This Active Intellect belongs to the causal hierarchical chain in which every link affects what comes after it.¹³² But unlike in the system of his predecessors, the Active Intellect is not the very last in the incorporeal hierarchy. This belongs to the Material human intellect, which Averroes locates after the Active Intellect, in the incorporeal hierarchy.¹³³ The difficulty in studying Averroes stems from not only his changing ideas throughout his career, but most importantly from the diverse and sometimes contradictory interpretations of his work made very difficult by the very low quality of the earlier translations.¹³⁴ His commentary on the *De Anima* of Aristotle, has been divided into three major works—the *Short Commentary* on the *De Anima* (ca. 1160s), the *Middle Commentary* (ca. 1180-1183), and the *Long Commentary* (ca. 1186)—each representing his evolving ideas on the question of the human soul, the material and the agent intellect. Not least influential in these evolving ideas of Averroes is what has been termed “les deux entrées d’Averroès au XIIIe siècle” by historians and especially R. A. Gauthier and Alain de Libera.¹³⁵ The paradox of this double entrance attributes two different, absolutely incompatible doctrines to Averroes, none of which is said to represent really his thoughts.

La première interprétation en faisait une sorte d’antidote à la psychologie philosophique d’Avicenne, la seconde en faisait un poison encore plus nocif.¹³⁶

The first entrance of Averroes¹³⁷ presents him as a defender of orthodoxy against the Avicennian doctrine of a unique separate agent intellect for all individuals. Averroes according to this

¹³² Davidson, Herbert A., *Alfarabi, Avicenna and Averroes, on Intellect*, p 224.

¹³³ Averroes, *Long Commentary on the De Anima of Aristotle*, translated and with introduction and notes by Richard C. Taylor, (New Heaven & London: Yale University Press, 2009), Book 3, commentary 19, p 354. Confer also Davidson, Herbert A., *Alfarabi, Avicenna and Averroes, on Intellect*, p 230 fn 50. Davidson notes that “The *Long Commentary* on the *De anima* does not, to be precise, place the active intellect at the very end of the incorporeal hierarchy; for it locates the material human intellect—which Averroes there construes as a single eternal substance shared by all men—directly after the active intellect in the incorporeal hierarchy.”

¹³⁴ Hayoun, M. R et Libera, Alain de, *Averroès et l’Averroïsme*, (Paris : PUF, 1991) p 76ff.

¹³⁵ Libera, Alain de, *La Philosophie Médiévale*, (Paris : PUF, 1993) pp 383-386 ; Cf also Averroès et l’Averroïsme, pp 78-80 ; R. A. Gauthier, « Notes sur les débuts (1225-1240) du premier ‘Averroïsme’ », dans *Revue des Sciences Philosophiques et Théologiques* 66, (1982), pp 321-374.

¹³⁶ Libera, Alain de, *Averroès et l’Averroïsme*, p 78.

¹³⁷ R. A. Gauthier places this first entrance at about the year 1225, inaugurating the end of Avicenna’s dominance and the beginning of a new interpretation of Aristotle. According to Gauthier, “Le règne d’Avicenne prend fin ... l’Aristote d’Avicenne avait enlevé à l’âme son intellect agent, l’Aristote d’Averroès le lui rend ; » Confer R. A. Gauthier, « Le Traité *De anima et potentiis eius* d’un maître ès Arts (vers 1225), » dans *Revue des Sciences Philosophiques et Théologiques*, 66, (1985), p 25.

interpretation presents the agent and the potential intellects as two powers of the same rational soul in every individual man. It is even said that Aquinas took his orthodox reading of Aristotle from this first Averroes.¹³⁸ The second entrance of Averroes around the year 1250, goes beyond the interpretation of Avicenna in that this second Averroes reads not only the agent intellect but also the possible intellect, as separate substances and unique for all individuals. What would have been Averroes's motivation for this second theory? R. A. Gauthier suggests that Averroes would have been impelled by the desire to safeguard not only the unity of the human person against Avicenna's weak interpretation, but also the immortality of the soul against the materialist interpretation of Alexander of Aphrodisias.¹³⁹ What would interest us however, is not the justification for the second doctrine of Averroes but the development and distinction of his noetics and the influences that shaped them.

What we shall do is try to represent the essential teaching of Averroes on the concerned subject of the human intellect, through the various stages of his philosophic career.¹⁴⁰ He was particularly interested in the Aristotelian teaching that there is an intellect in man which is "potential," and which "is what it is by virtue of becoming all things," and "an intellect characterized by that to bring all things about."¹⁴¹ Ordinarily, these came to be known as the potential or material intellect (especially by Alexander of Aphrodisias whose explication of the material intellect has been dubbed "the Alexandriste materialism"¹⁴²) and the agent or active intellect. Aristotle however, does not reveal the kind of entity they are meant to be nor their proper functions in human understanding and this silence has given rise to intellectual dialogues

¹³⁸ Trottmann, Christian, *La vision béatifique : Des disputes scolastiques à sa définition par Benoît XII*, (Paris : Ecole française de Rome, 1995) p 218 : « Cette lecture d'Averroès, où certains avaient cru voir la novation de saint Albert, (avant même saint Thomas qui s'en inspirait) semble donc leur être antérieure. »

¹³⁹ Gauthier, R. A., "Notes sur les débuts (1225-1240) du premier « Averroïsme »,» p 335 : « Il semble en effet que l'intention foncière d'Averroès ait été de sauvegarder, contre le matérialisme d'Alexandre d'Aphrodise, la spiritualité et l'immortalité de l'âme, tout en respectant, mieux que ne l'avait fait Avicenne, l'étroite union de l'âme et du corps. »

¹⁴⁰ We shall basically rely on the numerous works already done in this area especially by Professor Richard C. Taylor: "The Agent Intellect as "form for us" and Averroes's Critique of al-Fârâbî," in *Proceedings of the Society for Medieval Logic and Metaphysics*, Volume 5, 2005, pp 18-32 <http://www.fordham.edu/gsas/phil/klima/SMLM/PSMLM5/PSMLM5.pdf>; "Arabic/Islamic Philosophy in Thomas Aquinas's Conception of the Beatific Vision in his Commentary on the Sentences IV, 49, 2, 1" (2011) pp 1-25; "Thomas's Debts to Avicenna and Averroes on Cognition: The Commentary on the Sentences" in <http://www.aquinasandthearabs.org>. Confer also Herbert A Davidson, "Averroes on the Material Intellect," *Viator*, 17, (1986), pp 91-137; Stephen ChakTornay, "Averroes' Doctrine of the Mind," *The Philosophical Review*, Vol. 25, 3, (1943) pp 270-288.

¹⁴¹ Aristotle, *De Anima III*, 5, 430a15.

¹⁴² Hayoun, M. R et Libera, Alain de, *Averroès et l'Averroïsme*, (Paris : PUF, 1991) p 92.

between his eminent interpreters: Theophrastus, Alexander of Aphrodisias, Themistius, al-Fârâbî, Avicenna, and Ibn Bâjjah (Avempace).¹⁴³ These interpreters, especially the Greek commentators—Alexander and Themistius—have in more ways than one, influenced Averroes. It is his consistent worry of trying to get the correct meaning of Aristotle that has given rise to his various commentaries containing his changing ideas. While trying to understand the teaching of Aristotle, the Greek commentators each took an opposite stand. Alexander interprets the human potential or material intellect as an ordinary disposition in the human compound for receiving intelligible forms, whereas Themistius calls it a separate ‘material’ substance in its own right.¹⁴⁴ Averroes’s interpretation would eventually be a series of forward-backward movement between the two poles of interpretation established by the Greek commentators and their followers.

In the *Short Commentary*, Averroes holds the material intellect to be a possession of each human being and a disposition that is in the forms of the imagination, “by which the intelligibles of human understanding are apprehended in some fashion by human beings.”¹⁴⁵ It must be noted that according to Averroes, it was specifically Ibn Bâjja who construed the material intellect as a disposition in the imaginative faculty of the soul.¹⁴⁶ By its nature, the material intellect necessarily requires the assistance of an intellect in act. Averroes describes the active intellect, as “a unique entity” enjoying its “own existence independent of things in the world;” it is eternal; being intellect and intelligible, it is a form and an agent.¹⁴⁷ Yet, to transform the potential intelligibles in the forms of the imagination, into actual intelligibles for intellectual understanding, Averroes thinks it necessary that the active intellect be somehow present in us. This is against the teaching of al-Fârâbî for whom the active intellect remains the external cause of human understanding. However, after much reflection, Averroes would abandon this position saying that he was misled by Ibn Bâjja, and that the material intellect cannot exist within something, either a human soul or a human imaginative faculty of the soul, containing its own actual forms.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴³ Cf Davidson, Herbert A., *Alfarabi, Avicenna, and Averroes, on Intellect*, pp 258-261.

¹⁴⁴ Averroes, *Long Commentary on the De Anima of Aristotle*, Book 3, comm. 20, pp 355-356.

¹⁴⁵ Taylor, Richard C., “The Agent Intellect as “form for us” and Averroes’s Critique of al-Fârâbî,” p 20.

¹⁴⁶ Cf Davidson, Herbert C., “Averroes on the Material Intellect,” p 100.

¹⁴⁷ Taylor, Richard C., “The Agent Intellect as “form for us” and Averroes’s Critique of al-Fârâbî,” p 20.

¹⁴⁸ Davidson, Herbert C., “Averroes on the Material Intellect,” p 101.

In the *Middle Commentary*, a different teaching emerges that still holds for a plurality of individual material intellects. Averroes struggles to explain the Aristotelian description of the thinking intellect as “unmixed,”¹⁴⁹ and this struggle is very evident in his constant change of position. Because of that, Averroes now sees the material intellect as a “disposition with the soul as subject but with the special understanding that it is in its subject without being in a composed union with it.”¹⁵⁰ What Averroes does is to find a compromise solution where the two poles of interpretation by Alexander and Themistius are both included. Davidson describes Averroes’s material intellect in the *Middle Commentary* as “a hybrid entity, a mere disposition in one respect, but an eternal substance in another.”¹⁵¹ Ivry describes Averroes as taking “a position mediating between the views of Alexander and Themistius, rejecting their extreme foundations of the material intellect, but accepting much of their perspectives.”¹⁵² The compromise position looks very absurd since what is considered eternal and actual cannot at the same time be considered a disposition, which is an attribute of matter. Averroes must have to look for a new and different interpretation. As for the active intellect, it ‘remains an ontologically separate entity that is independent of the physical world.’

We now come to the *Long Commentary* which is said to be the final word of Averroes on the issues at stake. Not satisfied with his earlier positions, he now elevates the material intellect, like the agent intellect, to the status of an independent separate entity that is shared by all human beings. What this means is that Averroes, after rejecting Alexander’s position improved upon by Ibn Bâjja,¹⁵³ and abandoning his compromise position of the *Middle Commentary*, tends finally to settle with Themistius’s position that “the material intellect is a substance which is neither generable nor corruptible.”¹⁵⁴ In other words, being neither a determinate particular, nor a body, nor a form in a body, the material intellect is an eternal, incorporeal substance, and thus “it is not enumerated through the numbering of individuals.”¹⁵⁵ What this means then is that individual

¹⁴⁹ Aristotle, *De Anima* III, 4, 429a15.

¹⁵⁰ Taylor, Richard C., “The Agent Intellect “as form for us” and Averroes’s Critique of al-Fârâbî,” p 22.

¹⁵¹ Davidson, Herbert C., “Averroes on the Material Intellect,” p 106.

¹⁵² Ivry, Alfred L., “Averroes’ Three Commentaries on *De Anima*,” in Gerhard Endress and Jan A. Aertsen, eds., *Averroes and the Aristotelian Tradition*, (Leiden: Brill, 1999), p 211.

¹⁵³ Averroes, *Long Commentary on the De Anima of Aristotle*, Book 3, commentary 14, p 344: “Oh, Alexander, you figured that Aristotle intends to demonstrate to us the nature of the disposition alone, not the nature of what is disposed ... But I am ashamed of this account and of this fantastic exposition.”

¹⁵⁴ Ibid. Book 3, comm. 5, p 305.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid. Book 3, comm. 5, p 318.

men do not possess individual material intellects.¹⁵⁶ And then Averroes concludes that “on the basis of this account we have held the opinion that the material intellect is one for all human beings.”¹⁵⁷ Following the teaching of Aristotle, Averroes confirms that in the soul, there are two parts belonging to the intellect: the material intellect which is the recipient and the agent intellect which as the efficient cause moves what is in potency to act. These two parts are “eternal substances.”¹⁵⁸ As for the agent intellect, Averroes maintains that it must somehow be united with us as it is “form for us,” and that Alexander holds the same interpretation.¹⁵⁹ When it comes to the rational explication of the vision of the divine essence, it is from Averroes and Alexander of Aphrodisias that Aquinas would borrow not only the structure but also the philosophical principles of his noetics of the beatific vision in *patria*.¹⁶⁰ Averroes rejects the Avicennian teaching that describes the Active Intellect as the *dator formarum*.¹⁶¹ Having now specified what is particular to these Arabic Peripateticians, let us see what Maimonides makes of the Active Intellect and the functions it does.

1.4.4 Moses Maimonides

Maimonides would have a lot of explanation to do, concerning the Active Intellect, to Thomas Aquinas. In the Arabic Aristotelianism from where Maimonides borrows much, the Active Intellect is considered as a “repository of universal ideas” that could only be assessed by human beings through their intellects.¹⁶² And it has as one of its major functions the turning of the

¹⁵⁶ Davidson, Herbert A., “Averroes on the Material Intellect,” p 117.

¹⁵⁷ Averroes, *Long Commentary on the De Anima of Aristotle*, Book 3, comm. 5, p 322.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid. Book 3, comm. 18, p 351.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid. Book 3, comm. 20, p 355; comm. 18, p 352. Cf also Brenet, Jean-Baptiste, who says: “Ainsi est-il manifeste que l’intellect, pour Averroès, qu’il s’agisse de l’intellect matériel ou de l’intellect agent, est forme pour nous, notre forme.” in “Vision béatifique et séparation de l’intellect au début du XIVe siècle. Pour Averroès ou contre Thomas d’Aquin,” *Freiburger Zeitschrift für Philosophie und Theologie*, 53 (2006) ½, p 318.

¹⁶⁰ Cf Langevin, Gilles, « Capax Dei : La Créature Intellectuelle et l’Intimité de Dieu, » dans *Studia : recherches de philosophie et de théologie*, 20, (1966) p 30 : « Averroès et Alexandre d’Aphrodise se représentaient les rapports de l’intelligence humaine avec les substances séparées sur le type de l’union de la matière et de la forme, la substance séparée constituant alors l’objet et le moyen à la fois de l’intellection. Voilà, estime saint Thomas, l’explication qu’il faut retenir. »

¹⁶¹ Touati, Charles, “Les problèmes de la génération et le rôle de l’intellect agent chez Averroès, » *Multiple Averroès*, préparée par Jean Jolivet, (Paris : Les Belles Lettres, 1978), p 157 : « S’opposant à ses devanciers arabes, comme Avicenne ... Ibn Rushd nie qu’un être transcendant accorde les formes à la matière, qu’il s’agisse d’êtres inanimés ou d’être animés ; en d’autres termes, qu’il existe un « donateur des formes. »

¹⁶² Ivry, Alfred L, «Maimonides’ Psychology »in Idit Dobbs-Weinstein et al, eds., *Maimonides and His Heritage*, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2009) p 54.

human intellect from potentiality to actuality since it can only be done by an agent in act. In the hierarchy of intelligences, it is the very last that is responsible for the sublunar realm inhabited by man. In a long explanation given by Maimonides,

The tenth intellect is the Active Intellect, whose existence is indicated by the facts that our intellects pass from potentiality to actuality and that the forms of the existents that are subject to generation and corruption are actualized after they have been in their matter only in *potentia*. Now everything that passes from potentiality to actuality must have necessarily something that causes it to pass and that is outside of it. And this cause must belong to the species of that which it causes to pass from potentiality to actuality... In this way the giver of a form is indubitably a separate form, and that which brings intellect into existence is an intellect, namely, the Active Intellect.¹⁶³

As we have already seen in the section talking about cosmogony, it is the Active Intellect that emanates the forms of the four primary elements—earth, water, air and fire—upon the primary matter, and subsequently generates all the entities of the sublunar region including man. It is not surprising that Maimonides describes it as “the *angel* and the *prince of the world*.”¹⁶⁴ Davidson characterizes it as “an eternal cosmic transmitter, broadcasting an undifferentiated range of forms as well as the substratum that can receive them.”¹⁶⁵ Because the Active Intellect is “the final outlet for divine overflow to the world of man it enhances man’s ability to glimpse into the divine realm.”¹⁶⁶ We shall pay a little attention to the human rational faculty or intellect because it is the means of man’s “contact” with the Active Intellect, and what permits him to receive divine providence by way of overflow. For Maimonides, the Active Intellect also plays a significant role in the process of human knowledge, in prophecy and immortality. Although Maimonides did not specifically write about the intellect, he has much to say about it throughout his writings. And much of what he says on the intellect are ideas he has taken over from his

¹⁶³ *Dux Neutrorum*, lib.II, cap.V, fol.42: «Intellectus autem .x. est intelligentia agens quae demonstrat super exitu nostri intellectus de potentia ad actum omne autem quod exit de potentia ad actum, habet extractorem extra ipsum necessario, necesse est autem ut extractor sit eiusdem generis cuius et extractum...Similiter dicemus quod dator formae est forma abstractae: et dator intellectus est intellectus: et ipsae est intelligentia agens.” Cf *Guide* II, 4, p 257-258.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid. lib.II, cap.VII, fol.43: “quae est angelus, qui vocatur princeps mundi : » Cf *Guide* II, 6, p 264.

¹⁶⁵ Davidson, Herbert; *Alfarabi, Avicenna, and Averroes on Intellect*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992) p 124.

¹⁶⁶ Diamond, James A, *Maimonides and the Hermeneutics of Concealment*, p 116.

Arabic predecessors especially al-Fârâbî and Avicenna.¹⁶⁷ It shall become clear that like Avicenna, the doctrine of Maimonides on the Active Intellect unites his cosmogony, his metaphysics and his psychology in a consistent whole.¹⁶⁸

To give a *locus standi* to our inquiry, we note that like Aristotle and his Arabic interpreters, Maimonides takes the human soul to be the form of the human composite endowed with life. But he recognizes many difficulties associated with the study of the soul viz: “what the soul is, and how it is created in time in the body, and whether the human soul can be separated from the body, and if it can, in what manner and through what instrument and with what distinction in view.”¹⁶⁹ These are the questions that influence Maimonides’s sometimes scattered discussion of the soul and he makes it clear of the difficulties and the fact that answers to these problems “would require many premises and a long time for investigation.”¹⁷⁰ As it is not our purpose to engage in a thorough discussion of the soul, our goal would be limited to the unique manner and through which instrument, the soul comes in contact with divine overflow which assures providence. In his *Eight Chapters*, Maimonides mentions five parts of the soul: nutritive, sentient, imaginative, appetitive, and rational. Other living things share some of these souls even though what this soul means in man and in other things is only equivocal.¹⁷¹ With particular interest in the rational part, Maimonides defines it clearly and even acknowledges the existence of two types or activities of the rational soul:

The rational part is the power found in man by which he perceives intelligibles, deliberates, acquires the sciences, and distinguishes between base and noble actions. Some of these activities are practical and some are theoretical.¹⁷²

¹⁶⁷ Cf Davidson, Herbert A, «Alfarabi and Avicenna on the Active Intellect, » in *Viator* 3, (1972) pp 109-178.

¹⁶⁸ Cf Lee, Patrick, “St. Thomas and Avicenna on the Agent Intellect,” in *The Thomist: A Speculative Quarterly Review*, 45:1, (1981) p 45.

¹⁶⁹ *Dux Neutrorum*, lib.I, cap.XXXIII, fol.12: “Et quid est anima, et quomodo fuit creata in corpore: et utrum anima hominis separabitur a corpore, et si separetur, cuiusmodi erit illa seperatio: et ad quid revertetur: et similia istis super veritate eorum.” Cf *Guide* I, 34, p 74.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid: “Et abhorret cum dicitur ei quod quaedam sunt in sapientia quae indigent multis antecedentibus: et longo spatio ad investigandum et intelligendum.” Cf *Guide* I, 34, p 74.

¹⁷¹ Maimonides, “Eight Chapters” I, in Raymond L. Weiss, ed., *Ethical Writings of Maimonides*, (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1975) p 62.

¹⁷² Maimonides, “Eight Chapters,” p 63. In the *Guide* I, 72, p 191, Maimonides gives a similar definition of the rational faculty of man as “that in virtue of which he thinks, exerts his perspicacity, works, and prepares by means of various arts his food, his habitation and his clothing. Through it he rules all the parts of his body in such a way that

As the form of the body, the rational soul should be understood as existing in the body without being itself corporeal.¹⁷³ The living body is consequent upon the mixture of the elements prepared in such a manner that they receive various forms of the soul. But the original source of this form, Maimonides explains, must inevitably be an agent, “*scilicet datorem formae, qui non est corpus*—I mean the giver of the form, which giver is not a body.”¹⁷⁴ A little bit latter, Maimonides gives more precision by insisting that this giver of form must of necessity be a form that is separate. In the Arabic Peripatetic tradition, it is Avicenna that is credited with describing the Active Intellect as the giver of forms.¹⁷⁵ Maimonides follows this tradition in calling this separate form that gives form the Active Intellect. In the *Dux Neutorum*, lib.II, cap.V cited above, Maimonides assigns two functions to the Active Intellect: a cosmological one to explain the presence of forms in generated material substances; and an epistemological one to explain how the human potential intellect is actualized to apprehend intelligibles.¹⁷⁶ Under the influence of Avicenna, it would seem that Maimonides believes human thoughts to be the result of an “overflow;” as Davidson describes it: the “thought itself comes to the human mind from without, as an emanation continually made available—constantly broadcast, as it were—by a supernal being called the Active Intellect.”¹⁷⁷ In other words, man’s thoughts seemingly come to him fully fashioned from outside. It will be very interesting to see what Aquinas makes of this. But before coming to Aquinas, we have every reason to think that Davidson and others like him may have partially read Maimonides. It is our aim to show that Maimonides has his theory of abstraction

the ruling part acts in the way it does and the ruled part is governed the way it is ruled... This faculty is very noble indeed, being the noblest of the faculties of the living beings.”

¹⁷³ *Dux Neutorum*, lib.I, cap.XL, fol.15: “Anima est nomen aequivocum, et significat animam viventem nutritivam omnis vivi sensibilis...Dicitur etiam de anima rationali quae est forma hominis. Significat etiam illud quod remanet post mortem de homine.” Cf *Guide I*, 41, p 91.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.* lib.II, cap.XIII, fol.46: «Omnes formae, impossibile est ut non habeant operatorem, scilicet datorem formae, qui non est corpus: quoniam operator formae est forma, non in materia.» Cf *Guide II*, 12, p 278. When Maimonides describes the Active Intellect as the giver of forms, he did neither exclude nor include the form of man, as one of those forms. But while describing the “*intellectus in actu qui est in nobis*—intellect *in actu*” existing in us, which is responsible for intellectual apprehension—the specific form of man—Maimonides explicitly states that it “*est in splendore intelligentiae agentis*—derives from an overflow of the Active Intellect.” *Ibid.* lib.II, cap.V, fol.42: Cf *Guide II*, 4, p 258.

¹⁷⁵ Hasse tends to accept that the term ‘*dator formarum*’ is peculiar to Avicenna and at the same time denies that Avicenna explicitly identifies “the giver of forms and the active intellect.” However he concludes that “the term *dator formarum* thus belongs to Avicenna’s theory of creation, but not to his epistemology.” Cf *Avicenna’s De Anima in the Latin West*, p 188.

¹⁷⁶ Stern, Josef, “Maimonides’ Epistemology,” in Kenneth Seeskin, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Maimonides*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p 110.

¹⁷⁷ Davidson, H.A., *Moses Maimonides*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005) pp 122, 371.

according to which, contrary to the idea that human thoughts come from “above,” the human intellect abstracts its own intelligibles from their material substrates.

In one section of his work, Maimonides while offering distinction between the intellect and the imagination, describes in a clear way, the process by which concepts are formed: “Intellect divides the composite things and differentiates their parts and makes abstractions of them, represents them to itself in their true reality and with their causes, and apprehends from one thing very many notions, which differ for the intellect just as two human individuals differ in regard to their existence for the imagination.”¹⁷⁸ Here, we find three phases in intellectual cognition: the act of abstraction; the act of representation of what is abstracted; and the apprehension or cognition of the thing. If thoughts do really come to man from “above,” why does Maimonides talk about the processes of cognition as shown already? And why would he indulge in demarcating the various phases of the development of the human intellect and their various functions? It would later be clear that the Active Intellect, by its “existence” and nature as a “giver of forms,” bestows form upon matter and thus, prepares the passage of the potential intellect and potential intelligibles into actual intellect and actual intelligibles.¹⁷⁹

In a manner similar to Aristotle, his Arabic commentators and especially Avicenna,¹⁸⁰ Maimonides in an informal way, lists the various stages of the human intellect from its earliest stages as a potential intellect to its highest point of acquired intellect. Stern describes them as

¹⁷⁸*Dux Neutrorum*, lib.I, cap.LXXII, fol.35: “quoniam intellectus qui dissoluit composita, et cognoscit partes illorum, et intelligit illas, et spoliatur in veritate sua, et in causis suis: apprehendet ex una re multas, inter quas est differentia in intellectu: sicut differentia duorum singularium hominum in existentia quantum ad praedictam virtutem.” Cf *Guide I*, 73, p 209.

¹⁷⁹Altmann, Alexander, “Maimonides on the Intellect and Scope of Metaphysics,” in *Von der mittelalterlichen zur modernen Aufklärung*, (J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck) Tübingen, 1987), p 75.

¹⁸⁰For Avicenna, (1) Material intellect “is the wholly “unqualified potentiality” for thought which belongs to “every member of the species.” It is a “disposition” inhering in the incorporeal human soul from birth. (2) “Intellect in *habitu*” is the “possible potentiality” in which the human subject possesses the “first intelligible thoughts.” (3) “Actual intellect,” despite the name, is a further stage of potentiality—the stage of fully actualized potentiality ... At the stage of actual intellect, the human subject does not “actually ... attend to” his knowledge, yet can do so “whenever he wishes.” (4) “Acquired intellect,” which alone is an “unqualified actuality.” At the level of acquired intellect, “intelligible forms” are actually “present” to the man, and he “actually attends” to them.” Cf Davidson, Herbert A, *Alfarabi, Avicenna, and Averroes, on Intellect*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp 84-85; “Alfarabi and Avicenna on the Active Intellect,” p 160; Dag Nikolaus Hasse, *Avicenna’s De Anima in the Latin West : The Formation of a Peripatetic Philosophy of the Soul 1160-1300*, pp 178-179. He describes these four intellects as “different relations (*nisab*) of one faculty, the theoretical faculty, to the intelligibles, characterized by different states of actualization. Each time a new relation is reached, the older intellect is transformed into or replaced by a new intellect.” p 183.

“different intellects corresponding to differences of potentiality and actuality.”¹⁸¹ Before the process of cognition takes place, the human intellect could be said to be in *potentia* and it is called the hylic or material intellect.¹⁸² Maimonides describes it as the “soul that comes into being at the time a man is generated” and that it “is merely a faculty—*praeparationis tantummodo*—consisting in preparedness.”¹⁸³ As a faculty, it is only an innate capacity to apprehend intelligibles. This is the intellect Maimonides holds, is a faculty subsisting in a body and not separable from it.¹⁸⁴ It is the human rational faculty before it begins to think, that is, before it passes from its state of potentiality to actuality by the Active Intellect. Because the human intellect is not separable from the body, Maimonides thinks that it does its abstraction of intelligibles from their material habitat and once the abstraction has taken place, the intelligibles now achieve what Alexander Altmann, in his magisterial interpretation calls “an ontological status of their own.”¹⁸⁵ Man’s intellect then passes from the level of the hylic intellect to become

¹⁸¹ Stern, Josef, “Maimonides’ Epistemology,” p 108.

¹⁸² *Dux Neutorum*, lib.I, cap.LXVII, fol.27: “Si vero intellexeris de potentia, erunt duo necessario intellectus in potentia, et intellectum in potentia: sicut si diceris, iste intellectus Isaac est in potentia: et illud lignum est in potentia intellectum.” Cf *Guide* I, 68, p 165. The Latin translation has no word for “hylic” which is specifically translated as “intelligens in potentia” that is, “quod homo ante quae intelligat.” Maimonides could have borrowed much of his discussion of the “hylic intellect” from Alexander of Aphrodisias, who interpreting Aristotle, describes the rational faculty as “the material intellect.” He means by it that “whatever has the capacity to receive something else is matter with respect to the thing received.” Cf *The De Anima of Alexander of Aphrodisias*, translated by Athanasios P. Fotinis, (Washington, D. C: University of America, Inc., 1979), p 105. For Davidson, the material intellect is understood by Alexander, as “merely a disposition in the human soul and nothing whatsoever actual in itself; for just that reason, it undergoes no affection. Since the material intellect is a “power” in the soul, it is, in Alexander’s view, “destroyed together with the soul [when the soul is destroyed].” Cf Davidson, Herbert A., *Alfarabi, Avicenna, and Averroes, on Intellect*, p 260.

¹⁸³ Ibid. lib.I, cap.LXIX, fol.28: “quum anima quae remanet post mortem, prorsus non es tilla substnata quae est in homine tempore vitae eius. Ista enim quae invenitur in homine in tempore vitae eius, est potentia praeparationis tantummodo.” Cf *Guide* I, 70, p 173-4. In Alexander’s usage of this expression, the human soul is considered to be a potency arising from a mixture of elements in the body, similar to the production of the curative power generated in certain mixtures of medical potions. But in Maimonides, it has a different connotation. According to Altmann, “the term can only mean that the rational soul as the form of the human body supplied by the Active Intellect is no substance but a mere capacity to think, is merely “material” or potential intellect.” Cf Altmann, Alexander, “Maimonides on the Intellect and Scope of Metaphysics,” in *Von der mittelalterlichen zur modernen Aufklärung*, (J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck) Tübingen, 1987), p 67.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid. lib.I, cap.LXXI, fol.32: “Illa virtus rationalis est potentia in corpore, nec separata ab ipso.” Cf *Guide* I, 72, p 192. That it subsists in a body does not necessarily mean that it is itself a body or material distributed through the human body. As expressed by Maimonides in his eleventh premise, ‘some of the things that constitute a body are sometimes divided through the division of the body whereas some are not divisible in any way, as for instance the soul and the intellect.’ Cf Ibid. lib.II, cap.I, fol.39: “Que sunt in corpora, dividuntur secundum divisionem corporis: sed per accidens sicut colores et aliae dispositiones quae sunt in corporibus: sed intellectus non dividuntur.” Cf *Guide* II, Introduction to the Second Part, p 236.

¹⁸⁵ Altmann, Alexander, “Maimonides on the Intellect and Scope of Metaphysics,” p 80.

possessed of intellectual cognition in *actu*.¹⁸⁶ The “human intellect when thinking any intelligible thought” is called the actual intellect.¹⁸⁷ It is actually an intellect *in actu*. To distinguish it from the hylic intellect, Maimonides measures their survival after death. Because the hylic intellect is a faculty subsisting in the body and not separable from the body, it does not survive corporeal death. In one of the rare passages where the actual intellect is mentioned by the name “actual,” Maimonides contrasts it to the hylic intellect and notes that “the thing that after death is separate from matter is the thing that has become actual.”¹⁸⁸ To underline its distinctness, Maimonides insists that this intellect *in actu* existing in us, “derives from an overflow of the Active Intellect” and through this intellect we apprehend the Active Intellect.¹⁸⁹ In not so clear connection with his train of thought, and without any explanation how it comes about, Maimonides jumps over to what we would understand as the final stage of the human intellect, the acquired intellect. It is the human intellect at its ultimate perfection. To worsen matters, Maimonides notes ambiguously that this intellect is completely separate from the body and emanates upon the body and that it is related to man just as God is related to the world. Do we not recognize the characteristics of the actual intellect in this acquired intellect?

This intellect is not a faculty in the body but is truly separate from the organic body and overflows toward it. ... However, the case of the intellects of the heavens, that of the existence of separate intellects, and that of the representation of the acquired intellect, which is also separate, are matters open to speculation and research.¹⁹⁰

Two points raised about the acquired intellect require some light. By saying that it is “separate from the organic body,” Maimonides could actually mean that, as a fully actualized intellect, it

¹⁸⁶ *Dux Neutorum*, lib.I, cap.LXVII, fol.27: “Intelligens actu qui apprehendit in actu est forma ligni quam spoliavit a materia, et est in anima simplex...quia intellectus in actu non est aliud nisi quod intellexit. » Cf *Guide* I, 68, p 164.

¹⁸⁷ Davidson, Herbert A, *Alfarabi, Avicenna, and Averroes, on Intellect*, p 201.

¹⁸⁸ *Dux Neutorum*, lib.I, cap.LXIX, fol.28: “Illa vero quae remanet separata post mortem ab ipso, est res in actu.” Cf *Guide* I, 70, p 174.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.* lib.II, cap.V, fol.42: “intellectus in actu qui est in nobis: et est in splendore intelligentiae agentis: cum quo etiam apprehendimus ipsam intelligentiam agentem.” Cf *Guide* II, 4, p 258.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.* lib.I, cap.LXXI, fol.32: “intellectus adepti...non est virtus in corpore, sed est abstractus a corpore abstractione vera: et effundit de splendore virtus suae super ipsum. Similiter etiam erat conveniens assimilare virtutem rationalem intellectui caelorum quae invenitur in corporibus, nisi quia maneries intellectus caelorum, et essentia intellectus separati, et intelligere maneriam intellectus adepti, qui similiter est separatus super res quae indigent consideratione et inquisitione. » Cf *Guide* I, 72, p 193.

no longer needs the bodily senses.¹⁹¹ The fact that this intellect “overflows” toward the body conjures up the emanative manner of the divine providence that constantly provides care for man. It already tries to respond to the initial questions of “instrument” through which the soul can be and is separate from the body, and the “purpose in view.” The providential aspect of this “overflow” is not overlooked by Altmann in his interpretation:

That the acquired intellect “overflows” toward the body can mean only that the apprehension of the intellect serves to determine the actions performed by man.¹⁹²

It is very remarkable that while Maimonides establishes an epistemological process of the passage of the hylic intellect to intellect *in actu*, he is totally silent on that between the intellect *in actu* and the acquired intellect.¹⁹³ Is Maimonides leaving us to make this connection? Has he given us any sign that they are perhaps the same thing? Is he trying to hide the truth from the philosophically untrained? Without any pretension to the exoteric/esoteric controversy, Altmann notes simply that there is nothing to suggest that they are two different intellects. And that in fact, “Averroes, likewise, regards the intellect *in actu* as the acquired intellect.”¹⁹⁴ In a very important passage in the *Guide*, Maimonides notes that man has two perfections: the perfection of the body, and an ultimate perfection, which is the perfection of the soul. Maimonides’s thought on human felicity would revolve around the latter perfection—the perfection of the soul. However in our distinction of the intellects, Maimonides centers on this perfection of the soul and the consequences that he draws from that. He thus writes of man that:

His ultimate perfection is to become rational *in actu*, I mean to have an intellect *in actu*; this would consist in his knowing everything concerning all the beings that it is within the capacity of man to know in accordance with his ultimate perfection.¹⁹⁵

¹⁹¹ Stern, Josef, “Maimonides’ Epistemology,” p 114 Cf also Fazlur Rahman, *Prophecy in Islam*, (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1958), pp 12-20.

¹⁹² Altmann, Alexander, “Maimonides on the Intellect and the Scope of Metaphysics,” p 80.

¹⁹³ That is a very important insight given by Howard Kreisel in his “The Practical Intellect in the Philosophy of Maimonides,” *Hebrew Union College Annual*, LIX, (1988) p 192; Cf also his: *Maimonides’ Political Thought*, (Albany: State University of New York, 1999) p 66.

¹⁹⁴ Altmann, Alexander, “Maimonides on the Intellect and the Scope of Metaphysics,” p 80.

¹⁹⁵ *Dux Neutrorum*, lib.III, cap.XXVIII, fol.89: “Ultima vero perfectio hominis est ut fiat rationale actu scilicet ut habeat intellectum in actu: et hoc est ut sciat quicquid in potestate est hominis scire de universitate entium secundum perfectionem suam ultimam. » Cf *Guide* III, 27, p 511.

This uncertainty on the real meaning of the acquired intellect and Maimonides's apparent unwillingness to clearly distinguish between it and the intellect *in actu*, that is, actual intellect, have opened up a new debate and diverse interpretations. At one side is Davidson who tries to distinguish between two types of actual intellect in the doctrine of Maimonides: the actual intellect which is the "human intellect when thinking any intelligible thought,"¹⁹⁶ and the actual intellect that is the ultimate perfection of man. It is this latter actual intellect that according to Davidson, "very plausibly is equivalent, in Maimonides' terminology, to acquired intellect."¹⁹⁷ On the other hand is Kreisel who does not admit of the two types of actual intellects as specified by Davidson. But like the latter, he tends to believe that the intellect *in actu* is the equivalent of the acquired intellect. In his own words:

In treating even the Divine Intellect as an intellect *in actu*,¹⁹⁸ Maimonides apparently does not draw any distinction between the acquired intellect, which is the highest form of human intellect, and a perfect intellect *in actu*—i.e., an intellect that has apprehended metaphysics to the full extent of human ability.¹⁹⁹

Contrary to the opinions above, one author Tirosh-Samuelson, tries to note a difference between the acquired intellect and the actual intellect. According to him, the original state of the intellect is called "the potential intellect" and the "achieved final state is when the intellect has become the "acquired intellect." What he calls the "actual human intellect" or the "intellect *in actu*," is "the intermediate state when the intellect is in the process of realizing knowledge."²⁰⁰ However, nothing in the text of Maimonides supports this difference. The intellect, by the overflow of the Active Intellect, is the bond between us and God. The strength of this bond depends on how much this intellect is perfected by the apprehension of intelligibles, by the apprehension of the divine; the weakening of this bond comes about by the occupation of the intellect by what is in

¹⁹⁶ Davidson, Herbert A; *Alfarabi, Avicenna, and Averroes, on Intellect*, p 201; Cf *Guide* I, 68, p 164: "And it has become clear that the act of every intellect, which act consists in its being intellectually cognizing, is identical with the essence of that intellect."

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.* p 202.

¹⁹⁸ *Dux Neutorum*, lib.I, cap.LXVII, fol.27: "sed intentio mea est ostendere quod illud quod est in Creatore solo, est ut sit intellectus semper in actu:" Cf *Guide* I, 68.

¹⁹⁹ Kreisel, Howard, "The Practical Intellect in the Philosophy of Maimonides," p 193.

²⁰⁰ Tirosh-Samuelson, Hava, "Virtue and Happiness," in Steven Nadler et T.M. Rudavsky, eds., *The Cambridge History of Jewish Philosophy*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009) p 732.

the order of matter.²⁰¹ By this, Maimonides perhaps is saying that when man perfects his intellect to the highest possible point, he is directly attuned into the emanations of the Active Intellect which direct him away from dangerous situations and toward the actions that benefit him. This is how divine providence works specifically only with human species because they alone of all creatures are endowed with the intellect. It is also this intellectual apprehension that ensures immortality.²⁰² It is interesting to note that when Maimonides talks about immortality, it is the ability of man's acquired intellect to survive the destruction of matter, which is being referred to.²⁰³ The dilemma we have is the real source of this intellect. At one hand, Maimonides says that it is the intellect that is acquired when one has known everything within the capacity of man to know, and on the other hand, he describes it as an intellect that "is separate from the organic body and overflows toward it." This is exceedingly problematic and there is actually little or no reconciliation in view. We understand the statement "separate from the organic body" to mean not in need of the bodily senses. A possibility of reconciling them is by examining what Maimonides says about this intellect's conjunction with the Active Intellect. As the only instrument through which man gets access to the divine reality and as that which Maimonides calls the "divine in man,"²⁰⁴ Maimonides may be suggesting that this acquired intellect, in its conjunction with the Active Intellect, becomes imperfectly one in nature with it; imperfect because it still has a material nature over which it conveys providence. As a possession of an individual self, the acquired intellect is not a pure intellect because not yet separated from matter. This explains the intermittent nature of this connection with the divine. Immortality in its truest sense can only be achieved in a non-corporeal nature. It is only at this point that intellectual apprehension is purified and it rejoices in what it apprehends.²⁰⁵ Maimonides describes immortality as a *durabit sempiternum* "condition of enduring permanence" where the intellect "remains in one and the same state, the impediment that sometimes screened him off having been

²⁰¹ *Dux Neutorum*, lib III, cap.LII, fol.110: "Et crescet coniunctio quae est inter te et ipsum. Et hic est intellectus : » Cf *Guide* III, 51, p 620.

²⁰² Cf Rudavsky, T.M., *Maimonides*, p 102.

²⁰³ Alcoloumbre, Thierry, *Maimonide et le problème de la personne*, (Paris : Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 1999) p 59 : « Quoi qu'il en soit des détails de l'eschatologie traditionnelle, l'identification de l'immortalité à la survie de l'intellect acquis pose de nouveau, et avec plus d'acuité que jamais, le problème de l'élitisme maïmonidien. Non seulement elle laisse dans l'ombre ce qui était tout à fait au centre de l'enseignement traditionnel (le respect de la moralité ou des *mitsvot*) mais en plus elle crée une discrimination, intellectuelle cette fois, à l'intérieur de l'humanité et d'Israël en particulier. »

²⁰⁴ *Dux Neutorum*, lib.I, cap.I, fol.5: "intellectum spiritualem qui est coniunctus in eo:" Cf *Guide* I, 1, p 23.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.* lib III, cap.LII : « apprehensio illius erit clara et polita in eo quod apprehendit : » Cf *Guide* III, 51, p 627.

removed. And he will remain permanently in that state of intense pleasure, which does not belong to the genus of bodily pleasure.”²⁰⁶ What is not clear is whether this state of *magna delectatione* includes the direct vision of the divine essence. Like in the tradition of Arabic Aristotelians, Maimonides thinks that man knows the separate intellects by the conjunction of his acquired intellect with the Active Intellect. It is this conjunction that assures human happiness and the flow of divine providence. Seeing that the Active Intellect is one for all, the question of individual vision of the divine essence and individual immortality, is ruled out.

Latter we would see that even this providence is proportioned according to one’s degree of intellectual perfection. The less one is connected to that intellectual overflow, the less he is protected by providence and the more he is exposed to dangers and whatever might happen to befall him. The clearest examples would be seen in the biblical story of the fall of Adam and in the sufferings of Job. All in all, the belief that God is directly involved in human affairs, is reduced to a barest minimum. Ethical factors are even less decisive in the acquisition of divine providence.

Briefly, we note that it is the same Active Intellect which is responsible for divine providence that is also responsible for prophecy. In the phenomenon of prophecy, three things are involved: a perfected intellect; a healthy imaginative faculty and a high level of moral discipline.²⁰⁷ When the perfected intellect taps into the emanation of the Active Intellect, this emanation overflows into the imaginative faculty where abstract truths about God received from the Active Intellect, are converted into visual and audible images. As explained by Maimonides:

Know that the true reality and quiddity of prophecy consist in its being an overflow overflowing from God, may He be cherished and honored, through the intermediation of the Active Intellect, toward the rational faculty in the first place and thereafter toward the imaginative faculty. This is the highest degree of man and the ultimate term of perfection

²⁰⁶ Ibid : « Et intellectus ille durabit in sempiternum uno et eodem modo sine omni variatione : quoniam ablata sunt impedimenta quae quandoque dividebant inter ipsum et creatorem, et erit status eius in ista magna delectatione, quae non est de genere delectationis corporalis ; » Cf *Guide* III, 51, p 628.

²⁰⁷ Ibid. lib.II, cap.XXXVII, fol.64: “Scitum est autem quod ista tria quae adunavimus, sunt perfectio virtutis rationalis in disciplina et perfectione virtutis imaginativae in natura creationis; et perfectio morum in removendo cogitationem ab omnibus delectationibus corporalibus et in elongando desiderium inanis gloriae. » Cf *Guide* II, 36, p 372.

that can exist for his species; and this state is the ultimate term of perfection for the imaginative faculty.²⁰⁸

Once the requisite conditions are fulfilled, Maimonides says that “this individual will only apprehend divine and most extraordinary matters, will see only God and His angels, and will only be aware and achieve knowledge of matters that constitute true opinions and general directives for the well-being of men in their relations with one another.”²⁰⁹ It is this mixture of events put into play by the emanation of the Active Intellect, which enables man to predict the future. But this does not credit the prophets with a far superior apprehension to what the philosophers’ intellect *in actu* is able to achieve.²¹⁰ What makes the difference is the preparation and natural disposition of individuals. Thus the human intellect is very important in the phenomenon of providence and prophecy.

2.0 Maimonides on Providence:

What is then the Jewish and Scriptural traditional understanding of providence? It is considered as a supernatural act in which God establishes a direct relationship with humans and the world, in such a way that He personally protects the weak, rewards the righteous and punishes the wicked. This is what Maimonides describes as knowing God “through the traditional stories and not by way of speculation.”²¹¹ Behind this system of thought is man’s anthropomorphic concerns based on his inaccurate perspective that the universe is anthropocentric and not theocentric.²¹² Related to this is God’s knowledge, as He is said to personally know every existent. If He were

²⁰⁸ Ibid. lib.II, cap.XXXVII, fol.43: “Scito quod veritas prophetiae et substantia sua est largitas a Creatore effusa mediante intelligentia agente super potentiam animae rationalis primo, demum super imaginativam virtutem. Et ille est finis gradus hominis et finis perfectionis quae inveniri potest in eius specie: et hoc est finis perfectionis virtutis imaginativae.” Cf *Guide* II, 36, p 369. Cf H. A. Wolfson, “Hallevi and Maimonides on Prophecy,” *Jewish Quarterly Review*, n.s.33 (1943) p 71 where this “overflow” is described as “a free grace flowing from God through the medium of the Active Intellect.”

²⁰⁹ Ibid. lib.II, cap.XXXVII, fol.44: “apprehendet rationes spirituales valde mirabiles: et non videbit nisi Creatorem et angelos eius : et non considerabit nisi sententias rectas, et regimina communia hominibus inter se. » Cf *Guide* II, 36, p 372.

²¹⁰ Altmann, Alexander, “Maimonides on the Intellect and the Scope of Metaphysics,” p 82.

²¹¹ *Dux Neutrorum*, lib III, cap. XXIII, fol.86: “ita cum cognoscebat et sciebat Creatorem, per viam narrationis cognovit: non per viam considerationis et speculationis.” Cf *Guide* III, 23, p 493.

²¹² Ibid. lib.III, cap.XIII, fol.76: “Causa vero huius erroris est quod iste stultus et similes ei ingentibus, non considerat in entibus nisi in uno homine solummodo... Si autem considerate homo universum esse: et intelligeret quam parva pars est homo universi esse: tunc videret veritatem et cognosceret quod errores isti.” Cf *Guide* III, 12, p 442.

to assign reward and punishment according to changeable human action, it would be logical to say that God's knowledge changes. But Maimonides had earlier shown that God exists in an irreducibly pure, non-relational, changeless essence. If that is so, how then can God indulge in a governmental, caring context in relation to mankind? The problem, Maimonides notes, is due to our consideration of knowledge and providence in relation to our knowledge and providence, which have only their names in common with His knowledge and His providence.²¹³ God's knowledge is His essence and it is perfect. That means that He is never ignorant at any time so that new knowledge would come to Him. God has knowledge of whatever is, has been, or shall be and He has known them perpetually. "God's knowledge of a thing before it has come into being, and after it has acquired reality as existent and after it has ceased to exist is one and the same knowledge in which there is no change."²¹⁴ In Maimonides's cosmogony, God makes to "overflow," a hierarchy of incorporeal intelligences ending with the Active Intellect, the tenth intellect. It is this Active Intellect that emanates and is responsible for the sublunar region inhabited by man. According to Maimonides, this chain of intelligences overflows from God and they are the intermediaries between God and all these bodies. It is through them that God's creative and provident action comes to the world. As he puts it, "governance overflows from the deity...to the intellects according to their rank; that from the benefits received by the intellects, good things and lights overflow to this body subject to generation and corruption."²¹⁵ Thus, calling God a 'provident father' in the literal sense of the word is only meant for the philosophically ignorant masses. And hence, to provide a correct thinking on providence, Maimonides engages first in a proper examination of the existent "opinions of those engaged in speculation concerning providence."²¹⁶

²¹³Ibid. lib.III, cap.XXI, fol.84: "Sed secundum nostram opinionem qui dicimus quod sapientia eius non est res addita super substantiam ipsius naturae, obligati sumus ad ostendam differentiam scientiae ipsius et scientiae nostrae: differentiam veram scilicet et substantialem: sicut differt substantia coelorum a substantia terrae." Cf *Guide* III, 20, p 483.

²¹⁴Ibid. lib.I, cap.LVIII, fol.24: "Et scit quod est antequam sit: et postquam est in esse suo post suam privationem scientia quae non variatur." Cf *Guide* I, 60, p 144.

²¹⁵Ibid. lib.II, cap.XII, fol.45: « Virtus autem regiminis diffunditur a creatore super intellectus separatos. Et similiter provenit ex largitate bonorum eis datorum, et ex splendore super corpora caelorum. De caelis vero diffunduntur virtutes et bonitates super corpora generabilia et corruptibilia cum fortitudine eius quod adepti sunt ex potentia principii sui. » Cf *Guide* II, 11, p 275.

²¹⁶Ibid. lib.III, cap.XVII, fol.80 : « incipiam narrare opiniones eorum qui speculantur secreta curae Creatoris." Cf *Guide* III, 16, p 464.

2.1 The Five Opinions on Providence:

Before we go into the examination of the different opinions on providence, it is good to acknowledge the existence of interpretations that would sometimes shed some light on our own interpretation of the issue of providence. The major translator of the *Guide* in English, Shlomo Pines, has shown that the structure and content of Maimonides's treatment of providence are borrowed from two treatises written by Alexander of Aphrodisias: the treatise *On Governance* (or as shown in some manuscripts *On Providence*) and the treatise *On the Principles of the All*.²¹⁷ Pines's reading acknowledges the five different opinions on providence stated by Maimonides and emphasizes the fact that Maimonides distinguishes his own personal opinion from the opinion of the Jewish law. If these others are logically cohesive with his philosophical ideas of God and His relation to the world, why would Maimonides need to formulate a different view and why didn't he endorse the existent opinions? Our examination of the various existent opinions on providence and that of "my own belief," as noted by Maimonides, would bring to light the difference.

Another text that is worth studying because of the compelling force of its arguments, and the beauty of its structure and analysis, is that by Raffel.²¹⁸ He correctly identifies the double criteria which every correct opinion on providence must satisfy: conformity to the philosophic sense and conformity to the fundamental principles of the Law.²¹⁹ Another thing he correctly identifies is the four-layered pattern which Maimonides follows in his discussion of the existing views on providence: (i) the opinion on providence; (ii) the individual or group associated with this opinion; (iii) the identification of the group of Israelites holding this opinion, with the scriptural reference; and (iv) the criticism of the opinion.²²⁰ These basic requirements would be reflected in our examination of the views given by Maimonides.

The Epicurean View: This view denies providence since there is no order or governance in the world. According to its proponent, Epicurus, things happen by mere chance by the random

²¹⁷Pines, Shlomo, "Translator's Introduction to The Guide of the Perplexed," in *The Guide of the Perplexed*, pp lxiv-lxviii.

²¹⁸Raffel, Charles M, "Providence as Consequent upon the Intellect: Maimonides' Theory of Providence," in *AJS Review*, vol.12, 1, (1987) pp 25-71.

²¹⁹*Ibid.* p 37. Cf *Guide* III, 17, p 474: « This is the opinion to my mind corresponds to the intelligible and to the texts of the law. »

²²⁰*Ibid.* p 38.

mingling of atoms which result in the accidental generation of things. This generation is “in accordance with the way things were predisposed.”²²¹ The group of Israelites who hold this opinion are called “*blasphemi-unbelievers*” and are those of whom it is said: “*They have belied the Lord, and said: It is not He.*”²²² Maimonides dismisses this opinion since it is contrary to demonstrable principles of existents laid down by Aristotle.²²³

The opinion attributed to Aristotle holds that providence is a function of the immutable laws of nature, it is limited to the species of the sublunar and spheres of the supralunar world while other things are left to chance. The things under providence exist through the governance and the ordering of one who governs and orders. But individuals of the various species are not direct objects of providence.²²⁴ Maimonides concurs with Aristotle on the sphere and species but refuses that individuals of the human species be left without particular providence. The group of Israelites who hold this opinion, are said to be those “deviating from our Law” and are those who said: “The Lord hath forsaken the earth.”²²⁵ It is interesting to note that Maimonides’s criticism is not addressed to Aristotle himself whose argument meets the requirements of the philosophic sense, but to the group of Israelites who adhere to this view. Against the criterion of the Law, Aristotle denies individual providence over man. The contours of Aristotle’s arguments reflect his long-held view of the eternity of the world. Maimonides does not in any way, challenge this Aristotelian view.

The Asharite theory of providence holds that nothing happens by chance. The Latin edition describes the holders of this opinion as *opinio scientium Maurorum*.²²⁶ Rather everything is

²²¹ *Dux Neutrurum*, lib III, cap.XVIII, fol.80: “Haec autem est opinio Epicuri, et idem credit atomos esse, dicens quod miscentur casu: et quod erit ex eis quicquid acciderit casu. Hanc opinionem tenuerunt blasphemi de populo Israel, de quibus dictum est. » Cf *Guide* III, 17, p 464.

²²² Jer 5:12, Cf *Guide* III, 17, p 464.

²²³ *Dux Neutrurum*, lib III, cap XVIII, fol.80: “Aristoteles autem probavit destructionem huius opinionis...”

²²⁴ Ibid: “Opinio secunda est illius qui credit quod quaedam res habent curam, et sunt in regimine rectoris, et in ordine ordinatoris. Aliae vero res sunt derelictae secundum quod accidit eis. Haec autem est opinio Aristotelis.” We must note that Aristotle does not by himself propound any theory of providence. What Maimonides attributes to Aristotle is the commentary on Aristotle that was given by Alexander of Aphrodisias. Maimonides himself acknowledges the original source of this opinion when he writes: “Alexander has formulated this, saying that in Aristotle’s opinion God’s providence ends at the sphere of the moon.” Cf *Guide* III, 17, p 465.

²²⁵ Ibid: “Qui vero de gente nostra rebelles crediderunt in istam opinionem, sunt illi qui dicebant, *Dereliquit Dominus terram.* » Cf *Guide* III, 17, p 466. Cf Ezekiel 9:9.

²²⁶ Ibid: “Et est opinio illius qui credit quod in universo esse nihil contingit per accidens ullo modo, nec in singularibus, nec in universalibus: sed omnia sunt ex voluntate et intentione et regimine. Palam autem est quod omnis rector cuiuscumque rei scit illam. Haec autem est opinio scientium Maurorum. » In the English and the

brought about-*ex voluntate et intentione et regimine*-through the will, purpose and governance of God. If a leaf falls by the way side; if a man is killed by a ferocious animal; if an individual was born blind, these are all willed to be so by God in His justice.²²⁷ Things are either ruled by force of necessity before which we can do nothing or they are impossible. For this Islamic school, providence extends thus to every aspect of every event in nature and God knows them in their particular details. But Maimonides rejects this opinion on the basis that it renders the divine law useless since man has not the ability to obey or not to obey it and it is also full of philosophical incongruities. To show this ‘great incongruity’ as an example of divine justice is a mockery of knowledge and whatever justice stands for. No group of Israelites is mentioned by Maimonides to hold this incongruous view.

The fourth opinion attributed to the Mutazila (*Separati*), holds that providence watches over all things even the falling of this particular leaf or the creeping of a particular ant.²²⁸ It adds that man is free to act of his own accord. Unlike the Ashariyya School, everything, including punishments and rewards, is according to God’s wisdom-*omnia opera Creatoris sequuntur sapientiam ipsius*. There is always a compensation that follows every perceived act of injustice. If a man is born with an infirmity, the Mutazilite believes that God’s wisdom has made it so in order to benefit the infirm with greater rewards in the next life. “They say in the same way that if this mouse, which has not sinned, is devoured by a cat or a hawk, His wisdom has required this with regard to the mouse and that the latter will receive compensation in the other world for what has happened to it.”²²⁹ Their point is to avoid putting injustice on God. For Maimonides however, this opinion is as good as being cast aside since the proponents have no idea of justice and neither do they understand the workings of nature. This opinion is full of incongruities seen in their “regrettable doctrine of compensation” according to which the suffering of a child born with defects is ascribed to God’s wisdom,²³⁰ and it is full of self-contradictions “for they believe

French translations, they are described as the ‘Asharites.’ Cf *Guide* III, 17, p 466; *Guide des égarés*, III, 17, pp 119-121.

²²⁷ Ibid: « Sed ventus non flavit casu, immo creator movit ipsum: nec ventus proiecit folia, immo quodlibet folium cecidit iudicio Dei, et definitione ipsius. » Cf *Guide* III, 17, pp 466-467.

²²⁸ Ibid: « Separati etiam credunt in hanc opinionem: quisquis potentia hominis non definita sit super opera quae facit secundum sententiam ipsorum. Et ipsi credunt quod scit casum foliorum, et iter formicarum : et cura sua fixa est in omnibus istis. » Cf *Guide* III, 17, p 468.

²²⁹ Ibid : « Similiter et de mure qui non peccavit, quem rapuit catus, dicit quia sic exigit dei sapientia in eo quod convenit muri, et remunerabit eum propter damnum : quod recipiet in seculo venturo. » Cf *Guide* III, 17, p 468.

²³⁰ Raffel, Charles M, « Providence as Consequent upon the Intellect: Maimonides Theory of Providence, » p 40

both that He, may He be exalted, knows everything and that man has the ability to act; and this leads, as the slightest reflection should make clear, to self-contradiction.”²³¹ How can a just man’s suffering be justified by his purported rewards in the next life? Like the above opinion, no group of Israelites is identified with this view.

The fifth opinion is called the “opinion of our law” because the fundamental principle guiding it is taken from the “*legis Moysi magistri nostri*—Law of Moses our Master.” It is stated literally in the book of the prophets and is believed by not only the “*universaliter sapientes nostri*—multitude of our scholars,” but by all those who follow the Law of Moses our Master. The major things affirmed by this opinion are: that man has the freedom to act as he wishes; even as all the species of animals has been willed by God to move by their own will;²³² that God is never unjust and that consequences following from one’s acts according to rewards and punishments are just. “Thus if some individual were wounded in the hand by a thorn, which he would take out immediately, this would be a punishment for him, and if he received the slightest pleasure, this would be a reward for him—all this being according to his deserts.”²³³ The biblical passage qualifying this opinion of the Law is: “*For all His ways are judgment, and so on.*”²³⁴ God knows every individual and every event in the world that He gets personally involved in the exercise of punishment and reward of individuals according to His divine justice for He cannot be known for administering injustice. Maimonides notes also that His modality of administering judgment is beyond human comprehension.²³⁵ This is the opinion, in itself very anthropomorphic, that we shall describe as the traditional opinion on divine providence. In conformity with our interpretation, Maurice-Ruben Hayoun describes this fifth opinion on providence as:

²³¹ *Dux Neutrorum*, lib.III, cap. XVIII, fol.81: “Et secundum eos sequitur destructio et ablatio: quia credunt quod creator scit omnia, et quod homo habet patrem, et quod est aptator istorum quod apparet cum modica consideratione quod quaedam pars rationis destruit aliam. » Cf *Guide* III, 17, p 469. Does man’s freedom contradict God’s Omniscience? For a study on this consult: Seymour Feldman, “Divine Omnipotence, Omniscience, and Human Freedom,” in Steven Nadler and T. M. Rudavsky, eds., *The Cambridge History of Jewish Philosophy*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009) pp 659-704.

²³² *Dux Neutrorum*, lib III, cap. XVIII, fol.81: “Eodem modo species omnium animalium moventur propria voluntate: et ita voluit Creator;” Cf *Guide* III, 17, p 469.

²³³ Ibid: « Et si contingerit homini ut aliqua spina intret in manum eius, et statim removeat eam, dicemus quod istud datum est ei in poenam. Quod si aliquid boni contingerit ei: dicemus quod istud datum est ei in praemium. » Cf *Guide* III, 17, p 469.

²³⁴ *Deut.* 32 :4.

²³⁵ *Dux Neutrorum*, lib.III, cap.XVIII, fol.81: «ignoramus propter quam causam illud est conveniens.» Cf *Guide* III, 17, p 469.

La doctrine exotérique (ou vulgaire) de la providence. De manière significative Maïmonide se démarque par rapport à elle en ajoutant: “Enfin, je te ferai connaître ce que j’en pense moi-même. »²³⁶

Judging by the criteria adopted by Maimonides, this opinion is lacking in conformity to philosophic sense. Because of this lack, Maimonides would have the need to reformulate a different opinion that would meet his double criteria of conformity to philosophic sense and conformity to the fundamental principles of the Law. This is exactly where we part company with Raffel because, he thinks that Maimonides’s “I” opinion is only an off shoot of the “Our” opinion and both belong to the fifth opinion. In other words, Maimonides held a dual theory of providence—an our account and an I—account.²³⁷ He adds that “rather than harmonizing conflicting conceptions, Maimonides has found a method for allowing antagonistic conceptions to coexist” and he “has shown that speaking two languages will resolve a problem that speaking one will not.”²³⁸ Our approach is to show that Maimonides has a view on providence that is distinct from the fifth opinion and indeed any other opinion, the opinions that he Maimonides regards as *antiquae*. The practical application of this opinion is seen in his interpretation of the *Book of Job*, where he streamlines each of the different views, except his “my belief,” with those of Job and his different friends.²³⁹ The only correspondence that is missing is that of Elihu, the last of Job’s friends whose opinion is described as “superior.” Our interpretation will show that Elihu’s opinion corresponds to Maimonides’s distinct opinion on providence.

2.2 Maimonides’ View: Providence as Consequent upon the Intellect:

Maimonides rejects these opinions and goes on to provide what he calls “*ego credo*—my own belief” that he regards as “less disgraceful than the preceding opinions and nearer than they to

²³⁶ Hayoun, Maurice-Ruben, *Maïmonide*, (Paris : Presses Universitaires de France, 1987) p 56.

²³⁷ Raffel, Charles M, “Providence as Consequent upon the Intellect: Maimonides’ Theory of Providence,” p 42.

²³⁸ *Ibid.* p 51.

²³⁹ *Dux Neutrorum*, lib.III, cap.XXIII, fol.86: “Scito quod opinio quae attribuitur ipsi Iob: similis est opinioni Aristotelis. Opinio autem Eliphath similis est opinioni nostrae. Opinio vero Baldath, similis est opinioni separatorum. Opinio autem Sophar, similis est opinioni sentientium. Istaе autem fuerunt opinionones antiquae in cura Creatoris. » Cf *Guide* III, 23, p 494. « The opinion attributed to Job is in keeping with the opinion of Aristotle; the opinion of Eliphaz is ... the opinion of our Law; the opinion of Bildad is ... the doctrine of Mutazila; the opinion of Zophar is ... the doctrine of Ashariyya. These were the ancient opinions concerning providence.”

intellectual reasoning.”²⁴⁰ In his desire to produce what fits his double criteria, Maimonides signals that he would go as far as interpreting the “intention of the book of God and of the books of our prophets.”²⁴¹ The first thing Maimonides does is to rehabilitate Aristotle’s opinion so that its philosophical strand would be elastic enough to accommodate one of the fundamental requirements of the Law: that God’s providence extends to individual human beings.²⁴² Maimonides would latter justify this opinion by confirming “in the books of our prophets,” that this providence watching over individual human beings, do exist.

For I for one believe that in this lowly world—I mean that which is beneath the sphere of the moon—divine providence watches only over the individuals belonging to the human species and that in this species alone all the circumstances of the individuals and the good and the evil that befall them are consequent upon the deserts, just as it says: *For all His ways are judgment.*²⁴³

Unlike Aristotle, Maimonides reasons that beneath the sphere of the moon, divine providence watches only “over the individuals belonging to the human species,” and with regards to animals, plants and all other things, Maimonides signals his total agreement with Aristotle that they are all objects of pure chance.²⁴⁴ The second thing Maimonides does is to explain the distinctive

²⁴⁰*Dux Neutrorum*, lib.III, cap.XVIII, fol.81: “Huius autem opinionis quam ego credo, dubitationes sunt pauciores et inconvenientia similiter, quam opinionum quas praemisimus. Est etiam propinquior intellectui et haec est eius explanatio. » Cf *Guide* III, 17, p 471.

²⁴¹*Ibid*: “Ego vero non innitor in hac ratione super eo quod ostensum est mihi, quod est mens legis creatoris, et librorum prophetarum. » Cf *Guide* III, 17, p 471. The book of prophets we know. But what could the “book of God” represent for Maimonides? Could it not be the physical existence so much documented by Aristotle in his *Physics* and *Metaphysics*?

²⁴²*Ibid*. lib.III, cap.XIX, fol.82: “curae quod est fixa in specie hominum solummodo inter omnes species animalium.” Cf *Guide* III, 18, p 475.

²⁴³*Dux Neutrorum*, lib.III, cap.XVIII, fol.81: « Ego credo quod cura specialis est in hoc mundo inferiori, qui est sub sphaera Lunae: et est coniuncta in singularibus speciei hominum tantummodo. Species autem illa, scilicet hominum, ita se habet quod omnes diversitates singularium suorum et ea quae accidunt ipsis sive bona, sive mala, sequuntur debitum, sicut scriptura dicit, universae viae Domini iudicia. » Cf *Guide* III, 17, p 471.

²⁴⁴*Ibid*: “Alia vero animalia quanto magis et plantae, opinio mea in illis est sicut opinio Aristotelis...immo totum istud secundum opinionem meam fuit per accidens pure, sicut dixit Aristoteles.” Cf *Guide* III, 17, p 471. «For I do not by any means believe that this particular leaf has fallen because of a providence watching over it; nor that this spider has devoured this fly because God has now decreed and willed something concerning individuals; nor that the spittle spat by Zayd has moved till it came down in one particular place upon a gnat and killed it by a divine decree and judgment; nor that when this fish snatched this worm from the face of the water, this happened in virtue of a divine volition concerning individuals. For all this is in my opinion due to pure chance, just as Aristotle holds.”

means—the intellect,²⁴⁵ through which this providence operates and as a result of which divine providence is the particular reserve of human beings.

According to me, as I consider the matter, divine providence is consequent upon the divine overflow and the species with which this intellectual overflow is united, so that it became endowed with intellect and so that everything that is disclosed to a being endowed with the intellect was disclosed to it, is the one accompanied by divine providence, which appraises all its actions from the point of view of reward and punishment.²⁴⁶

Maimonides then backs up his claim, by finding in the “book of God and the book of our prophets,” instances of divine providence—reward and punishment—over individual human beings and the lack of such over individual animals. As for human individuals, Maimonides cites: “For thine eyes are open upon all the ways of the sons of man, to give everyone according to his ways.” “Whoever hath sinned against Me, him will I blot out of My book.”²⁴⁷ And then he says:

And all the stories figuring [in Scripture] concerning *Abraham* and *Isaac* and *Jacob* are an absolute proof of there being an individual providence. As for the other individuals of animals, the position with regard to them is indubitably as Aristotle sees it.²⁴⁸

Maimonides accepts Aristotle’s general providence as a function of the laws of nature passing through the various species. This providence extends to all creation—the intelligences, the spheres, the human and non-human species of the sublunar world, and it is providence that is destined to the preservation of the species. It must be noted that what both Aristotle and Maimonides reject is that individuals of non-human species be the objects of particular providence. This is because individuals of non-human species in the sublunar world are not

²⁴⁵Refer to our treatment of the place of the intellect—the Active Intellect—in Maimonides’s view on providence. Cf also James T. Robinson, “Soul and Intellect,” in *The Cambridge History of Jewish Philosophy*, pp 534-537.

²⁴⁶*Dux Neutrorum*, lib.III, cap.XVIII, fol.81: « Sed cura specialis apud me in eo quod Creator vult, sequitur splendorem specialem: et speciem in qua coniungitur splendor specialis, donec fit intelligens, et revelatur ei quod revelatur cuilibet intelligenti: quem sustentat cura specialis: et omnia opera eius sunt ad poenam, vel ad praemium.” Cf *Guide* III, 17, pp 471-472.

²⁴⁷Jer 32: 19; Exod. 32:33.

²⁴⁸*Dux Neutrorum*, lib.III, cap.XVIII, fol.81: “Quicquid etiam legitur de Abraham, Isaac, et Jacob, est probatio pura quod cura fixa est in quolibet singulari hominum: Sed in aliis animalibus opinio mea est sicut opinio Aristotelis sine dubio.” Cf *Guide* III, 17, p 472.

endowed with the intellect.²⁴⁹ Like in so many other areas, Thomas Aquinas would disagree with Maimonides on this issue and would eventually show that God's particular providence extends to all creation, including the individuals of the non-human creation. Thus, arriving at this point of assembling together a different opinion on providence that meets all the criteria he has set out for himself, and insisting that this opinion is distinct and unique and should not be confused with the others that he has examined and abandoned, Maimonides confirms this "my opinion" by stating that it "is the opinion that to my mind corresponds to the intelligible and to the texts of the Law."²⁵⁰ He states it thus:

But I believe that providence is consequent upon the intellect and attached to it. For providence can only come from an intelligent being, from One who is an intellect perfect with a supreme perfection, than which there is no higher. Accordingly everyone with whom something of this overflow is united, will be reached by providence to the extent to which he is reached by the intellect.²⁵¹

It is very clear from the passage above that God's role in providence is not as thought by the multitude. His role could be said to be indirect or even passive, since His unchanging overflow passes through the separate intellects and especially the Active Intellect whose area of influence is the sublunar region. But Maimonides has not explained what it actually means to say that "providence is consequent upon the intellect" or in its Latin edition—*cura non erit nisi in eo qui habuerit intellectum*—that "providence is to be found only in he who possesses the intellect." Another way the Latin Maimonides expresses the same thing is to say: *cura trahit post intellectum*, that is, providence is derived from the intellect.²⁵² Was he waiting to unfold all his teachings on providence before explaining what he actually means? Or is it his manner of

²⁴⁹Ibid. fol.82: "quare cura est in singularibus hominum: et non est cura similis in singularibus aliorum animalium: quia consimilis quaestio potest proponi sic. Quare datus est intellectus homini: et non aliis animalibus? Huius autem quaestionis ultimae erit responsio, ita voluit, vel ita exigit Dei sapientia: vel hoc est debitum naturae. » Cf *Guide* III, 17, p 474: «Why does He watch over the human individuals, and does not watch in the same way over the individuals belonging to the other species of animals? For he who propounds this question ought to ask himself: Why did He give intellect to man and not to the other species of animals? The answer to this last question is: He willed it so; or, His wisdom has required this to be so; or, nature has required this to be so."

²⁵⁰ Ibid : « Opinio illa convenit cum intellectu et cum versibus legis. » Cf *Guide* III, 17, p 474.

²⁵¹Ibid: "quia cura non erit nisi in eo qui habuerit intellectum. Quod autem habet intellectum, est perfectum secundum modum perfectionis post-quam non est perfectio. Quicquid habet in se aliquid splendoris, secundum quod pervenerit ad ipsum de intellectu: perveniet ad ipsum de cura. » Cf *Guide* III, 17, p 474.

²⁵² Ibid. cap. XIX, fol.82: "erit in eo cura magis fixa modis omnibus: si cura trahit post intellectum, sicut praedixi. » p 161 Cf *Guide* III, 18, p 475.

leading us step by step toward the total unfolding of his unorthodox notion on providence? Before coming latter to his other notion on providence, we make bold to say that Maimonides counts much on man's application of his intellect, practical and theoretical, to his daily living. According to the interpretation of Lévy, providence according to the intellect means:

Simplement ceci: plus l'homme gagne en intelligence, mieux il est à même de se garder du danger, tant de la matière imprévisible que de la violence humaine; plus il gagne en maîtrise sur la nature et sur les hommes. Providence est le nom du Progrès.²⁵³

God has given the human individual a means of getting access to divine providence. Because of this means—the actual intellect, man alone has the ability to cognize even divine realities and is individually and necessarily the proper object of divine providence.

Through the overflow of the intellect that overflowed from Thee, we intellectually cognize, and consequently we receive correct guidance, we draw inferences, and we apprehend the intellect. Understand this.²⁵⁴

To the extent that he receives this divine overflow—*splendor specilais*, he is directly under the protection of divine providence. It is that overflow which stimulates rational thought and elevates man to the region of the intelligibles. Failure to perfect one's intellect, that is failure to make an epistemological progress from the hylic or potential intellect to the actual intellect, and thus not connect to the divine overflow, means lack of providence and exposure to whatever may happen to befall one. It is not God's fault when one falls outside of the care of providence, but the person's responsibility.²⁵⁵ In the state of the absence of providence, the concerned is comparable to "one walking in darkness—*qui ambulat in tenebris*, whose destruction is assured."²⁵⁶ In another passage, Maimonides relegates one who is without this overflow to the level of a mere animal that could be easily done away with.

²⁵³Lévy, René, *La divine insouciance*, (Lagrasse : Editions Verdier, 2008), p 243: «It means simply this : the more man gains in intelligence, the better he is to keep himself from danger from unforeseeable matter as from human violence; the more he gains in control over nature and over men. Providence is the name of progress.»

²⁵⁴*Dux Neutrorum*, lib.II, cap.XIII, fol.46: "Eius expositio est, quod in largitate intellectus qui prevenit a te, intelligemus, et ambulabimus in via recta. » Cf *Guide* II, 12, p 280.

²⁵⁵Ibid. lib III, cap. LII, fol.111: "Ostendit etiam quod nos sumus causatores huius absconsionis faciei. » Cf *Guide* III, 51, p 626: «It is clear that we are the cause of this hiding of the face, and we are the agents who produce this separation.»

²⁵⁶Ibid. lib.III, cap.XIX, fol.82 : « sicut ille qui ambulat in tenebris, et paratus est ut cadat ubique. » Cf *Guide* III, 18, p 476.

As for the ignorant and disobedient, their state is despicable proportionately to their lack of this overflow, and they have been relegated to the rank of the individuals of all the other species of animals: He is like the beasts that speak not. For this reason it is a light thing to kill them, and has been even enjoined because of its utility.²⁵⁷

The divine overflow is continuous and open to everyone. But this privilege is not automatic as man must get himself attuned to this “overflow” in order to enjoy divine providence. He must work hard, avoid over indulgence in material pleasures and perfect himself intellectually by the acquisition of rational virtues, by the mastery of science and metaphysics, and according to the disposition of his matter and training. By rational virtues, Maimonides specifies that they can only be acquired by the theoretical intellect of the rational soul. Among such virtues are ‘wisdom, which means the knowledge of remote and proximate causes; the conception of the first intelligibles that the whole is greater than the part; brilliance and excellent comprehension, that is, the excellent grasp of a thing quickly or in no time.’²⁵⁸ As a result, the extent of one’s intellectual perfection, determines the proportion or intensity of the providence he receives.²⁵⁹ Expectedly, Maimonides would mention the prophets as having a greater proportion of providence because of the excellence of their intellects and their nearness to God. The criticism this conception of providence allows us to draw is the seeming unfairness to the intellectually unsophisticated members of the society. They may actually be morally upright in their observance of the commandments and the law, yet they run the constant risk of being left outside the providential care. This criticism would be correct if we were still to be guided by the traditional notion according to which God, in far too human a manner, gets directly involved in rewarding and punishing the morally just and wicked alike. But Maimonides’s radical conception of God, and His relation to the world, has given us a different way of looking at God and His manner of administering providence such that being outside the overflow of providence is not God’s fault but man’s responsibility. The practical application of this manner of thinking

²⁵⁷Ibid: « Stulti vero et insipientes mali secundum quod sunt diminuti ab illo splendore minoratur eorum gradus, et cantant in ordine cum singularibus aliorum animalium, sicut David dixit : Homo cum in honore esset non intellexit, comparatus est iumentis insipientibus, et similis factus est illis. Et communiter eorum intentio levis est etsi utilitas proveniat ex hoc. » Cf *Guide* III, 18, p 475.

²⁵⁸ Maimonides, “Eight Chapters,” II, p 65.

²⁵⁹*Dux Neutrorum*, lib.III, cap.XIX, fol.82: “Tunc ergo cura specialis in omnibus singularibus speciei hominum non erit aequalis, sed erit in eis praeminentia curae, sicut est ibi praeminentia intellectus humani.” Cf *Guide* III, 18, p 475: “Accordingly divine providence does not watch in an equal manner over all the individuals of the human species, but providence is graded as their human perfection is graded.”

would be seen in his discussion of the *Book of Job*. It is to Maimonides's credit that his notion of providence is very coherent with his concept of God and of the world. As observed by Kravitz, "an unchanging God is related to an unchanging world by an unchanging overflow."²⁶⁰ Thus, providential overflow is a function of the intellect.

But Maimonides seemingly adds a twist to this view of providence when he claims in the latter chapter of the *Guide*, that on the question of providence, a "most extraordinary speculation has occurred to me just now through which doubts may be dispelled and divine secrets revealed."²⁶¹ This discovery is not what has caused so much dispute between scholars but the fact that Maimonides claims in the case of a perfect man, (he has Moses and the patriarchs in mind) this *splendor intellectus*—intellectual overflow which assures providence, protects the individual from all and every harm. He states it thus:

If a man's thought is free from distraction, if he apprehends Him, may He be exalted, in the right way and rejoices in what he apprehends, that individual can never be afflicted with evil of any kind. For he is with God and God is with him.²⁶²

If providence is a function of the intellect, as the earlier chapters 17-18 of the *Guide* has shown, why now talk about providence protecting one even from physical harms as chapter 51 tends to claim? That is the object of contradiction as most commentators say. A major protagonist of this contradiction scheme is Samuel Ibn Tibbon, the official translator of the *Guide* from its Arabic original into *Hebrew*.²⁶³ He not only translated the *Moreh Nebukim*, (the *Hebrew* version of the *Guide*), but eventually became the foremost interpreter of Maimonides.²⁶⁴ In a letter he wrote to Maimonides on the question of providence, though it never seemed he received an answer from Maimonides, Ibn Tibbon talks about "an irreconcilable discrepancy between the statements concerning providence as given in the *Guide* III: 51, which Maimonides claims will dissolve the

²⁶⁰Kravitz, Leonard S, *The Hidden Doctrine of Maimonides' Guide of the Perplexed*, (Lewinston/NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1988), p 190.

²⁶¹*Dux Neutrorum*, lib III, cap.LII, fol.111: « Visum est autem mihi modo ut rememorem rationem quamdam mirabilem quae dubitationes errores solvet, et revelabuntur in ea secreta specialia. » Cf *Guide* III, 51, p 624.

²⁶²*Ibid* : « Ut habeat cogitationem mundam et claram : et ut apprehendat creatorem per vias veras : et qui delectabitur super hoc quod apprehendit. Et isti tali nunquam potest accidere malum quodcumque de numero malorum : quia est cum creatore, et creator cum eo. » Cf *Guide* III, 51, p 625.

²⁶³Diesendruck, Zvi, «Samuel and Moses ibn Tibbon on Maimonides' Theory of Providence,» *Hebrew Union College Annual* 11, (1936), pp 341-366.

²⁶⁴Eisen, Robert, "Samuel Ibn Tibbon on the Book of Job," in *AJS Review*, vol.24, 2, (1999), p 263.

doubts even of the philosophers, and Maimonides's main doctrine as presented in chapters III, 17ff.²⁶⁵ As we have already seen, in the earlier chapters, Maimonides presents an idea of providence that is philosophically sound and acceptable because, it simply says that by means of the intellect, one can be directed towards the avoidance of evil. "But the view as stated in III, 51 is entirely different. How is that saving from earthly mishaps through intellectual perfection to be understood? The only possible way to stop floods, pestilence, etc., from harming the wise, would be through a miracle."²⁶⁶ It seems that of the various types of providence in his interpretation, Samuel Ibn Tibbon thinks that III: 51 refers to a miraculous type of providence reserved for select individuals.²⁶⁷ Whether this miraculous providence is what the text suggests, Maimonides's attitude to miracles, does not seem to affirm it and neither does his overall treatment of providence.

Julius Guttmann is another author who, relying on the observation of Samuel Ibn Tibbon, reports the purported 'contradiction' and justifies it as a trademark of Maimonides. According to Guttmann, Maimonides allowed "opinions which were contradictory to each other to stand in various places in the book, thereby arousing the informed reader to discover his true doctrine."²⁶⁸ Would the fact of calling it an esoteric doctrine, bring further clarity to an already difficult question? We do not think so.

That is not how Charles Touati sees the problem of chapter 51. For him, there is neither a contradiction in what Maimonides has said, nor is there an esoteric teaching. He would rather see the interpretation of Job as a key to deciphering the real intention of Maimonides whose teaching situates the action of providence on two totally different plains: the first is described by Elihu, and the second is by the image of the second Job, whose new ontological reality is such that contingences no longer count, he is filled by the divine presence and no evil can touch him.²⁶⁹ It is to this *Book of Job* that we now turn.

²⁶⁵Ibid. p 346.

²⁶⁶Ibid. p 347; p 350: "The gap, therefore, between the original "philosophical" view and that of the individual miracle, as Samuel understands ch. 51, can hardly be bridged."

²⁶⁷Ibid. p 286.

²⁶⁸ Guttmann, Julius, *Philosophies of Judaism*, translated by David W. Silverman, (New York: 1964) p 433 no 99.

²⁶⁹Touati, Charles, *Prophètes, Talmudistes, Philosophes*, (Paris : Cerf, 1990) p 156 : « dans son monde, toutes les contingences sont supprimées. Il n'a plus rien à réclamer à Dieu puisqu'il est comblé de sa présence. Aucun malheur ne peut plus l'atteindre. » This is the form of providence Maimonides explains in chapter 51 of the third part of the *Guide*. We shall still come to it.

3.0 Maimonides on Evil and Providence in the Book of Job

The suffering of the righteous is central to the Jewish thought and to the *Book of Job* in particular. In a general sense, it can be said that the central theme of that book is the widely acclaimed ‘problem of evil’: how to explain and understand the fact that evil exists and is being suffered by innocent people in a world created by a good and provident God. The exegetical interpretation of this *Book* is central to Maimonides’s theory of providence. Earlier in his introduction to the first part of the *Guide*, Maimonides himself sets out what he calls the double purpose of his Treatise: the first he says is “to explain the meanings of certain terms occurring in the books of prophecy.”²⁷⁰ The goal is to help one who is perplexed decipher the surface meaning of words found in the books of the prophets, from their real esoteric meanings, and to help him by the use of interpretative tools, arrive at their correct signification. And the second is “the explanation of very obscure parables occurring in the books of the prophets, but not explicitly identified there as such. Hence an ignorant or heedless individual might think that they possess only an external sense, but no internal one.”²⁷¹ Hence, the goal of Maimonides is to not only point out parables that have internal messages hidden within them, but also the way to discovering such hidden messages. The proper interpretation of such would lead to a total liberation from perplexity as a result of one’s intellectual training and religious belief. The immediate application of these principles is seen throughout the *Guide* but the one which would occupy our attention now is the book of Job. It is a biblical book that is described by Maimonides as *ratio mirabilis* and translated in the English as “extraordinary and marvelous,” and as “a parable intended to set forth the opinions of people concerning providence.”²⁷² But before setting out identifying the opinions of Job’s friends with the notions of providence, Maimonides engages in an exegetical interpretation of the story of Job and the significance of each of the characters that constitute that story. This he does in view of two objectives: (i) to show that the story contains “extraordinary notions” holding the key to “things that are the

²⁷⁰ *Dux Neutrorum*, lib.I, Prooemium Authoris, fol.2: “Istius libri prima intentio est explanare diversitates nominum quae inveniuntur in libris prophetarum.” Cf *Guide* I, Introduction to the First Part, p 5.

²⁷¹ Ibid: “Commentatur etiam in hoc libro modum secundum: qui est ad exponendum similitudines nimis occultas, quae sunt in libris prophetarum. Et non dicitur manifeste quod sunt similitudines: sed credit insipiens attonitus quod sunt secundum suum planum, et quod non est in eis ratio latens. » Cf *Guide* I, Introduction to the First Part, p 6. Cf Arthur Hyman, “Maimonides as Biblical Exegete,” in Idit Dobbs-Weinstein et al, eds., *Maimonides and His Heritage*, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2009) pp 1-12.

²⁷² *Dux Neutrorum*, lib.III, cap.XXIII, fol.84: « Ratio mirabilis de Iob attinet rationi in qua sumus, scilicet quod est parabola, ad ostendendum opiniones hominum in cura.” Cf *Guide* III, 22, p 486.

mystery of the universe.” (ii) To show that through this interpretation, “great enigmas are solved, and truths than which none is higher become clear.”²⁷³ Would Maimonides be undertaking such measures if he does not think the book holds some esoteric teachings whose meaning would have to be deciphered by careful interpretation? We begin by examining the peculiar character of parables in the interpretation of Maimonides.

3.1 Examining Parables:

Even though Maimonides does not give any explicit definition of parables, from his usage of the word, we could derive that he means parables to be passages, even visions and verses with double meaning—external and internal. To illustrate this, Maimonides quotes the sayings of the sages: *A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver.*²⁷⁴ This saying indicates two layers of meaning a word could have, such that if care is not taken, one could easily be overtaken by the surface—silver setting without taking pains to discover the golden layer beneath. Parables are like that.

Their external meaning contains wisdom that is useful in many respects, among which is the welfare of human societies, as is shown by the external meaning of Proverbs and of similar sayings. Their internal meaning, on the other hand, contains wisdom that is useful for beliefs concerned with the truth as it is.²⁷⁵

From parables, Maimonides means we could learn wisdom for practical life and truths of intelligible, philosophical nature. He labored much in the *Guide* in proving that biblical passages contain such messages of religious, social and theoretical values. As there are two layers of meanings in parables, Maimonides also concedes to two types of parables. The first parable consists of passages where each word has a particular meaning. The words could be equivocal terms or expressions that could have multiple significations as Maimonides have amply

²⁷³Ibid : «sed non sicut quaelibet similitudo, sed talis de qua pendent mirabilia : et quaedam quae mundum premunt, et nascuntur dubitationes multae : et per ea sciuntur multae veritates, post non est finis alius. » Cf *Guide* III, 22, p 486.

²⁷⁴Ibid. lib.I, Prooemium Authoris, fol.3: “Mala aurea cum sculpturis vel picturis argenteum verbum prolatum in ratione sua.” Cf *Guide* I, Introduction to the First Part, p 11.

²⁷⁵ Ibid: “Extrinseca earum sunt sapientia utilis in multis; quorum unum est ornatus officiorum societatis humanae: sicut apparet in planis libri parabolarum et aliorum similium. Et interiora eorum sunt sapientiae in scientia veritatis.” Cf *Guide* I, Introduction to the First Part, p 12.

demonstrated in the lexicographic chapters of the *Guide*.²⁷⁶ To arrive at the correct meaning of such terms, the particular context must come into play. Maimonides gives the biblical passage of Jacob's dream (Genesis 28:12-13) as the best example of this type of parable. The second type of parable is where the meaning of a given passage is understood by the interpretation of the whole passage. The various words in this type of parable are not all significant. Some words are, but others "serve to embellish the parable and to render it more coherent or to conceal further the intended meaning."²⁷⁷ It is not advisable trying to read meaning into every word. An example of this type of parable is the biblical passage of the married harlot. (Proverbs 7: 6-21) We already talked about this parable in our earlier treatment of matter. The parable of Job, a righteous man who inexplicably suffers some horrendous evil, also falls into the parable of the second type. Most of the details do not contribute much to the real message of the parable which is said "*ad ostendem dum opiniones hominum in cura.*" Maimonides takes out the essential from the details and interprets the whole *Book of Job* in only two chapters of the *Guide*;²⁷⁸ at the end of his interpretation he says that he has "summed up all its notions, nothing being left aside except such matters as figure there because of the arrangement of the discourse and the continuation of the parables."²⁷⁹ In the subsequent interpretation that follows, Maimonides duly pursues the apples of gold, lying beneath the settings of silver. We shall try to discover the exegetical meaning of the various "allegorical" characters in the story of Job, and how evil, through its various manifestations in privation and imagination, is consequent upon the absence of providence.

²⁷⁶ Maimonides devotes around forty-two chapters to assembling and interpreting a lexicon of equivocal terms. These chapters are found in the *Guide* I, between chapters 1-50. By the definition of Strauss, "by a lexicographic chapter I understand a chapter that opens with the Hebrew term or terms to be explained in the chapter regardless of whether these terms precede the first sentence or form the beginning of the first sentence, and regardless of whether these terms are supplied with the Arabic article al-or not. The lexicographic chapter may be said to be the normal or typical chapter in the discussion of God's incorporeality." Cf "How to Begin to Study the Guide of the Perplexed," in *The Guide of the Perplexed*, translates by Pines, pp xxiv-xxv.

²⁷⁷ *Dux Neutorum*, lib.I, Prooemium Authoris, fol.3: "sed posita sunt ad ornatum similitudinis, et ad orationem eiusdem vel ad profundationem occultationis rei assimilatae." Cf *Guide* I, Introduction to the First Part, p 12.

²⁷⁸ Ibid. lib III, cap. XXIII-XXV: Cf *Guide* III, 22-24, pp 486-497.

²⁷⁹ Ibid. lib.III, cap.XXIII, fol.86: "et consideraveris in libro Iob: manifestabitur tibi ratio in eo: et invenies quod collegi omnes rationes ipsius:" Cf *Guide* III, 23, p 497.

3.2 Identity and Origin of Job:

Maimonides's discussion of Job begins with the question of the historicity or fictive nature of Job.²⁸⁰ Because no convincing proofs exist to show the existence or non existence in time of Job, Maimonides makes use of his exegetical tools to properly situate the discussion as a parable with a specific goal. The very mention of Satan—a mythic figure, and the fact that it was said to engage in a logical discussion with God, show off “*sine dubio apud quod-libet intelligentem*—in the view of everyone endowed with intellect” the characters of a parable. Without dwelling much on the question of historicity, Maimonides shifts attention to the philosophical value of the parable.

I refer to the assertion that a righteous and perfect man, who was just in his actions and is most careful to avoid sins, was stricken—without his having committed a sin entailing this—by great and consecutive calamities with respect to his fortune, his children, and his body.²⁸¹

Maimonides puts to test, the orthodox assumption that a just and provident God must always reward a just man who has been morally righteous in his observation of the law. The case of Job shows the perplexity and the contradiction in its full force. If by one's actions, reward and punishment are given according to merit, why then does Job suffer inexplicable calamities? What is the cause of his sufferings? By his just actions and moral fortitude, Job merits some reward and not a triple calamity: *adversitates in his quae possidet, et in filiis, et in corpora suo*. It is this contradiction between the facts of existence and what is given as the orthodox view of a provident God that would lead Maimonides to a radical rethinking of divine providence. This radical edge is already seen when Maimonides calls the prologue of the *Book of Job*—I mean the discourse of *Satan*, that of God addressed to *Satan*, and the giving over [of Job to *Satan*]—“a parable.” We have already seen what parable means in Maimonidean understanding. But Maimonides calls our attention to a very important distinction, that this parable is not one like any other but:

²⁸⁰For a deeper research concerning the existence or not of Job, see Françoise Mies, *L'Espérance de Job*, (Leuven: University Press, 2006), pp 209-230; Baruch Spinoza, *Oeuvres. II: Traité théologico-politique*, trad. C. Appuhn, (Paris : Garnier Flammarion, 1995) pp 194-195.

²⁸¹*Dux Neutrorum* lib.III, cap.XXIII, fol.84: “scilicet quod sit homo iustus, perfectus, intelligens, in omnibus operibus suis timens Creatorem suum:et contingunt ei multae tribulationes et adversitates in his quae possidet, et in filiis, et in corpore suo, non pro peccato quod fecerit.” Cf *Guide* III, 22, p 486.

One to which extraordinary notions *and things that are the mystery of the universe* are attached. Through it great enigmas are solved, and truths than which none is higher become clear.²⁸²

What is it that Maimonides is referring to? Would the understanding of these “extraordinary notions” reveal to us the cause of Job’s sufferings? Is it only the understanding of the allegorical figure “Satan,” in this case mentioned three times by Maimonides, which would unlock the mysteries of the universe and reveal to us the correct understanding of providence? Or is it the understanding of the whole parable, including the interventions of Job’s friends and God’s revelation that would reveal things that are the mystery of the universe and solve great enigmas?

3.3 ‘Us’ as an Equivocal Word:

In the parable of a second type, Maimonides mentions that only certain words are significant because they could either be equivocal, meaning so many different things at the same time, or they could be allegorical. Here in this *Book of Job*, Maimonides points to the sensitive equivocal word “Us” and proceeds to interpret it. Faithful to his procedure of establishing the meaning of terms by “a philological method, generally deriving and illustrating their several senses from the Bible,”²⁸³ Maimonides gives three different meanings that the word “Us” could have. First, it means the name of a country that is identified as Job’s home: “There was a man in the land of Us” (Job 1:1);²⁸⁴ second it refers to an individual, that is, to a proper name: “Us his first-born” (Gen. 22:21);²⁸⁵ and thirdly, it refers to an imperative of a verb meaning “to reflect and meditate” [take counsel] (Isa. 8:10).²⁸⁶ Maimonides always prefers the meaning that has got a philosophical sense as it generally designates “the true notion grasped by the intellect.”²⁸⁷ Thus, in reference to the third meaning, Maimonides notes:

²⁸²Ibid : «sed talis de qua pendent mirabilia : et quaedam quae mundum premunt, et nascuntur dubitationes multae : et per ea sciuntur multae veritates, post quas non est finis alius. » Cf *Guide* III, 22, p 486.

²⁸³ Klein-Braslavy, Sara, “Bible Commentary,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Maimonides*, p 247.

²⁸⁴ *Dux Neutorum*, lib.III, cap.XXIII, fol.84: “Vir erat in terra Hus.” Cf *Guide* III, 22, p 486.

²⁸⁵ Ibid: « hoc autem nomen commune: et hoc fuit nomen cuiusdam hominis. » Cf *Guide* III, 22, p 486.

²⁸⁶ Ibid: « Est etiam praeceptum super consilio vel cogitatione. » Cf *Guide* III, 22, p 486.

²⁸⁷ Ibid. lib.I, cap.III, fol.6: “Dicitur etiam tertio modo de veritate rei quae comprehenditur intellectu.” Cf *Guide* I, 3, p 27.

It is as if [Scripture] said to you: Meditate and reflect upon this parable, grasp its meaning, and see what the true opinion is.²⁸⁸

The simple message is that the book holds an inner meaning that careful interpretation and reflection would help to uncover. It is a hallmark of wisdom literature. This Maimonidean reading is confirmed by at least one modern interpreter of Job.²⁸⁹ This interpreter argues that ‘Us’ could be a pun on the noun ‘ezah,’ meaning “counsel or design,” a word that is also related to the root ‘Us,’ “to reflect” or “to meditate.” Because the notion of “counsel” or “design” is a common theme in wisdom literature of which the *Book of Job* is a part, Habel thinks that the association is correct and proper.

3.4 Satan: An Allegorical Figure

Maimonides turns his exegetical gaze on the emblematic figure of *Satan*, as it is the next character that plays a capital role in the story of Job. Satan is associated with three major interventions. In the first place, Satan made two intrusions into the courts of the heavens: (a) is when the *sons of God* came to present themselves before the Lord. (Job 1:6) Maimonides notes that *Satan* is mentioned separately to signify that he comes “without having been for his own sake the object of an intention or having been sought for his own sake,” whereas *the sons of God* who are “those whose presence was the object of an intention presented themselves;”²⁹⁰ (b) in the second intrusion, it is said: “And *Satan* came also among them to present himself before the Lord.” (Job 2:1) The only difference between the first and the second appearance is that this second time around, *Satan* is part of the entourage. Maimonides observes that though the status of *the sons of God* and *Satan* are not identical—*non est una*, they nevertheless, are subject to God’s order and will—*subiectum praecepto ipsius*.

²⁸⁸Ibid. lib III, cap.XXIII, fol.84: “Converte cor tuum ad istam similitudinem et ini consilium cum ea cum cogitationibus tuis: et intellige intentionem ipsius et vide quae sunt cogitationes rectae.” Cf *Guide* III, 22, p 486-7.

²⁸⁹Habel, Norman, *The Book of Job*, (London: S.C.M. Press, 1983), p 86.

²⁹⁰*Dux Neutrorum*, lib III, cap.XXIII, fol.84: « Venerunt filii angelorum ut starent coram Domino. Et venit etiam Sathan inter eos, hoc autem non est ita, dicunt, nisi quia venit ex intentione suae substantiae: nec requisitus propter animam suam: sed quia fuit ens propter intentionem essendi tantummodo venit ille communiter cum venientibus.” Cf *Guide* III, 22, p 487.

For the *sons of God* are more permanent and lasting, while [Satan] also has a certain portion, below them in what exists.²⁹¹

What message does Maimonides want us to get from the text? The understanding of this message will depend upon unlocking the symbols—*beney Elohim* (sons of God) and *Satan*. Earlier interpretations by some medieval commentators like Efodi and Shem Tov render the *beney Elohim* as representative of the forces of nature including the Separate Intellects which are responsible for coming into being in the world of nature.²⁹² Even Solomon Munk, a modern commentator expresses the same view as above.²⁹³ Alvin Reines also sees *beney Elohim* as “the Intelligences and spheres” who are the intended objects of creation.²⁹⁴ For Maimonides, “*elohim*” is an equivocal term designating “the deity, the angels, and the rulers governing cities.”²⁹⁵ The implication of this contextual designation will be seen in the latter part of our interpretation. As for the meaning of *Satan* in these early appearances, most commentators (even without distinguishing between the first and the second intrusions), are agreed that it represents the “principle of privation”—that is, an absence of a given *habitus* that a subject should ordinarily have.²⁹⁶ This is not unconnected with the description that Maimonides has given about the first intrusion of *Satan* among the *sons of God*. Maimonides describes this intrusion as “without having been for his own sake the object of an intention or having been sought for his own sake.” Privation is in itself, a lack that does not exist in itself and neither is it intended in itself. It is never the object of an act. It always exists in a material subject and is the principle of

²⁹¹Ibid : « Filii siquidem angelorum sunt stabiles et perpetui : ipse vero comitat in esse sine illis. » Cf *Guide* III, 22, p 488.

²⁹²Cf Eisen, Robert, *The Book of Job in Medieval Jewish Philosophy*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), p 50.

²⁹³Maïmonide, *Le Guide des Égarés*, ed. and translated by Solomon Munk, (Paris: A Franck, 1855-1866), vol.3, p 162 n.1.

²⁹⁴Reines, Alvin J, “Maimonides’ Concepts of Providence and Theodicy,” in *Hebrew Union College Annual* vol.43, (1972) p 202, n 144.

²⁹⁵*Dux Neutrorum*, lib.I, cap.II, fol.5: “quilibet intelligens linguam hebraicam scit quod hoc nomen heloym aequivocum est Deo, et Angelis, et Iudicibus habentibus Ducatum in villis.” Cf *Guide* I, 2, p 23. We shall discuss this term in detail latter.

²⁹⁶Cf Munk as above, p 165, n.1; Alvin Reines understands Satan as “a composite symbol representing matter and privation” where it could be either one or the other depending “upon which meaning fits better the sense of the parable.” Cf “Maimonides’ Concepts of Providence and Theodicy,” *Ibid*. Charles M. Raffen is of the opinion that “this theory of evil as privation is found by Maimonides to be fully present in the text of Job, implied by the semantic separation of Satan, evil’s representative, from the rest of being,” in “Providence as Consequent upon the Intellect: Maimonides’ Theory of Providence,” *AJS Review*, vol.12, 1, (1987) p 53; Jacob Levinger without paying particular attention to these earlier intrusions of *Satan* in the court of God, globally sees the figure of *Satan* in the story of Job, as representing the privation of Job’s wisdom, in “Maimonides’ Exegesis of the Book of Job,” in Benjamin Uffenheimer and Henning Graf Reventlow, eds. *Creative Biblical Exegesis: Christian and Jewish Hermeneutics Throughout the Centuries*, (1988) pp 81-88.

corruption in the physical world. On the other hand, we have good reason to think just like some modern thinkers, that *Satan* in the second part of the intrusion represents some other sort of evil, this time, the imagination.²⁹⁷ This is in semantic agreement with the description given by Maimonides that even though the *sons of God* and *Satan* appear in the same entourage before God, nevertheless they do not share the same identity and while the former are “more permanent and lasting,” the latter, “has a certain portion below them, in what exists.” Our acceptance of this second meaning will become increasingly clearer when Maimonides, in the latter appearances and involvement of *Satan* in the sufferings of Job, exposes the other significations of this mythic figure and justifies this choice of the imagination by the rational authority of the Sages and the contextual placement of the texts. We shall also realize that this *Satan* is also an “angel” inasmuch as he is found in the crowd of the *sons of God* thus, giving justification to Maimonides’s division of angels into permanent and perishable ones.²⁹⁸ Against our interpretation that this second intrusion is the force of imagination, is the view of our contemporary interpreter of Job in medieval philosophy, Robert Eisen. According to Eisen, “the identity of privation and Satan also explains Maimonides’s reading of the description of Satan’s second arrival in which he comes along with the divine beings who present themselves before God.”²⁹⁹ To argue his point, Eisen quotes the second passage where Maimonides notes that ‘Satan “also has a certain portion” below the divine beings “in what exists,” though his status is not identical to theirs.’ Eisen again buttresses his point by calling attention to Maimonides’s view that matter, though it is the concomitant of privation entailing death and all evils, is good since it is the proper object of the act of God.³⁰⁰ In this way, privation plays a positive function in bringing about God’s purpose for the perpetuation of being. It is as if privation has now become the direct object of God’s act. Hence, Eisen concludes and justifies his interpretation by noting that:

²⁹⁷Cf Rosenberg, Shalom, “On Biblical Interpretation in *The Guide of the Perplexed*,” (in Hebrew) *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought* 1 (1981), pp 85-157, as cited in Robert Eisen, *The Book of Job in Medieval Jewish Philosophy*, p 51.

²⁹⁸*Dux Neutrorum*, lib.II, cap.VII, fol.43: “responsum est quod angelorum quidam sunt stabiles et aeterni: quidam vero pereunt. » Cf *Guide* II, 6, p 264.

²⁹⁹Eisen, Robert, *The Book of Job in Medieval Jewish Philosophy*, p 52.

³⁰⁰*Dux Neutrorum*, lib.III, cap.XI, fol.75: “Etiam existentia huius materiae inferioris secundum rationem et modum suae existentiae et coniunctionis cum privatione ex quo sequitur mors et omnia alia mala: totum istud bonum est in sempiternitate generationis et paermanentiae entium cum variatione accidentium.” Cf *Guide* III, 10, p 440 ; Cf Eisen, Robert, *The Book of Job in Medieval Jewish Philosophy*, p 52.

Maimonides' remarks about Satan's second arrival now make sense. Satan has "a certain portion" beneath the divine beings "in what exists," for without privation there would be no existence.³⁰¹

What we find difficult to accept in this interpretation is the contradiction that is evident between the description of the two intrusions given by Maimonides. In our earlier study, Maimonides has made it clear that privation is never and can never be the primary intention of an act since it does not have any substantial existence. Its only mode of being is by being in another as an accident. The second intrusion; "*And Satan came also among them to present himself before the Lord,*"³⁰² does not in any way imply the presence of an object that cannot exist in itself. Maimonides even signals in his cryptic interpretation, that this "Satan has a certain portion, below them (the sons of God) in what exists." This "certain portion below them" clearly points to the lower degree of existence which this angel, enjoys in the order of existence as against certain other angels who are "more permanent and lasting." Again, to confirm that this angel "Satan" really is lower in the order of existence, Maimonides remarks that it has been given permission to roam over the earth and dominate over all terrestrial things. Privation could fit in here as a ravaging force of nature but unlike every other natural force, it needs the presence of a subject. Our dissatisfaction stems from the fact that Eisen seems intent on harmonizing Maimonides's teaching about evil with the three calamities that Job suffers and basing them only on privation. This is clearly seen in his sometimes forced interpretation of the three types of evil as caused solely by privation. The greatest obstacle to this attempt at harmonization is the third category of evil which is due to vices. Eisen himself acknowledges the difficulty of seeing how Job a morally virtuous man, "could fit into a category of evil caused by excesses with respect to those very vices. I have no solution to this problem."³⁰³ Another obstacle that throws into doubt the solidity of privation as the basic explanation of evil, is the suffering of Job. Why did Job suffer? And why did Adam fall from his pristine state of perfection. These are latter investigations that would better resolve our questions.

³⁰¹ Eisen, Robert, *The Book of Job in Medieval Jewish Philosophy*, p 53.

³⁰² Job 2:1

³⁰³ Eisen, Robert, *The Book of Job in Medieval Jewish Philosophy*, p 55.

Secondly, *Satan* is said to roam about the earth in a way signifying an absence of “relationship between him and the upper world.”³⁰⁴ In his roaming about the earth, *Satan* is forbidden from touching the *soul* of Job. (Job 2:6).³⁰⁵ As an equivocal word, Maimonides has shown that the *soul* in this context means “the form of man,”³⁰⁶ “that notion from which human apprehension derives. It is on account of this intellectual apprehension that it is said of man: *In the image of God created He him.*”³⁰⁷ It is this form of man, his intellect that remains after death.³⁰⁸ Being apart from matter, *Satan* which roams about in the sublunar region of matter has no dominion over the soul.³⁰⁹ Whether it is interpreted as privation or as imagination, one thing is clear: *Satan* will never dominate over the intellect. It may deviate and lead astray as Maimonides would reveal shortly, but it is not in its power to conquer the form of man. Privation does not deviate nor lead astray, it is only imagination that does so.

Thirdly, it is said that Job the righteous was inexplicably given over to *Satan* who brought untold calamities to his person and to his external goods. But the word ‘satan’ is an equivocal word of the second type whose meaning is arrived at by examining its etymology.³¹⁰ One could be led astray if one bases one’s interpretation on its surface meaning. Most prophetic discourses employ this type of equivocal terms. Maimonides explains in one of the passages where the meaning is brought to the fore:

The prophets use in their speeches equivocal words and words that are not intended to mean what they indicate according to their first signification, the word being mentioned because of its derivation.³¹¹

³⁰⁴ *Dux Neutorum*, lib III, cap. XXIII: “Deinde dixit quod iste Sathan diffundebat se super latitudinem terrae nec est aliqua comparatio inter ipsum et ex celsos ullo... » Cf *Guide* III, 22, p 487.

³⁰⁵ Ibid: “Et dedit ei potestatem super terrena et posuit differentiam inter ipsum et animam et dixit, Animam eius serua. » Cf *Guide* III, 22, p 488.

³⁰⁶ Ibid. lib.I, cap.XL, fol.15: “Anima est nomen aequivocum...dicitur etiam de anima rationali quae est forma hominis. Significant etiam illud quod remanet post mortem de homine.” Cf *Guide* I, 41, p 91.

³⁰⁷ Ibid. lib.I, cap.I, fol.5: “Nomen autem quod est celem, convenit formae naturali quae est perfectio rei et essentia: sicut est in homine intellectus humanus. Et propter hoc dictum est ad imaginem Dei.” Cf *Guide* I, 1, p 22.

³⁰⁸ *Dux Neutorum*, lib III, cap. XXIII: “de illo quod remanet de homine post mortem eius : » Cf *Guide* III, 22, p 488.

³⁰⁹ Ibid: “hoc est super quod Sathan non habet potestatem.” Cf *Guide* III, 22, p 488.

³¹⁰ Klein-Braslavy has given a treatment of the two types of equivocal terms found in Maimonides’ bible commentary. Cf “Bible Commentary,” pp 246-252.

³¹¹ *Dux Neutorum*, lib.II, cap.XXX, fol.59: “quod prophetae sicut praediximus utuntur verbis aequivocis in omnibus in quibus non est intentio quae prima facie apparet: sed ponunt verbum illud.” Cf *Guide* II, 29, p 347.

Maimonides puts this to application in many of his interpretations. Among the most common are his interpretations of the story of the *Garden of Eden*, and our current topic of discussion, the story of Job. In both of those stories, Maimonides pays particular attention to the names of mythic figures like “Serpent” [naḥash], “Satan” and “*Sammael*” as is mentioned in the *Chapters of Rabbi Eliezer*, 13.³¹² From their etymology, Maimonides derives a philosophical interpretation. In the case of “Satan,” Maimonides writes:

Know that the word *satan* derives from [the verb “satah,” to turn away, figuring for instance in the verse]: *Steh [turn away] from it and pass on*; I mean to say that it derives from the notion of turning-away and going away. For it is he who indubitably turns people away from the ways of truth and makes them perish in the ways of error.³¹³

Maimonides adds several other hints that would help discover the full signification of the term “satan,” and the global meaning of the parable. He quotes the Talmudic dictum of *Rabbi Simon ben Laqish* saying: “Satan, the evil inclination, and the angel of death are one and the same.”³¹⁴ To further corroborate his interpretation, Maimonides appeals to the Sages of the *Mishnah* who said: “he descends and leads astray, [then] he ascends and accuses, [then] he takes permission and takes the soul.”³¹⁵ If these three actions are one, then it means they are tied together in bringing about the same effect. To confirm the authority of the Sages and the correctness of their interpretations, Maimonides describes their sayings as containing great wisdom: “it clarifies all that is obscure, reveals all that is concealed, and renders manifest most of the *mysteries of the Torah*.”³¹⁶ We know quite well that in another passage, this “evil inclination” is identified with imagination.

³¹²Ibid. cap.XXXI, fol.61: “Debes etiam scire quod exposuit quod coluber fuit equitatus, et eius quantitas sicut cameli: et quod equitatus eius fuit ille qui decepit Evam: et quod ipse fuit Zamael. Hoc autem nomen dicunt praecise de diabolo...quod Zamael est diabolus:” Cf *Guide* II, 30, p 356.

³¹³*Dux Neutrorum*, lib III, cap. XXIII : « Scito quod adversarius dicitur a verbo adversando a via recta: qua ipse est qui retrahit hominem et separat hominem a via recta sine dubio : et facit eum vagari per viam erroris. » Cf *Guide* III, 22, p 489.

³¹⁴Ibid : « Dixit Rabi Symeon, Sathan id est diabolus ipse est creatura mala : et ipse est angelus mortis. » Cf *Guide* III, 22, p 489.

³¹⁵Cf B.T., Baba Bathra, 16a. (*Guide* III, 22, p 489) This particular quotation among many others unfortunately does not appear in the *Dux Neutrorum*. It is one of the reasons for which this edition has been described as neglecting “many cardinal points of the original.” Cf Zevi Diesendruck, “Maimonides and Thomas Aquinas,” p 188.

³¹⁶*Dux Neutrorum*, lib.III, cap.XXIII: “Post haec autem quae dixi audi verbum illud utile quod dixerunt sapientes: quia verbum hoc solvit errores dubitationes: et revelat omnia occulta, et demonstrat plura de absconditis legis. » Cf *Guide* III, 22, p 488-89.

All this follows imagination, which is also in true reality the *evil impulse*. For every deficiency of reason or character is due to the action of the imagination or consequent upon its action.³¹⁷

Compared to the “good inclination,” which is found in man when his intellect is perfected,³¹⁸ the “evil inclination” in this case the imagination, is “produced in the human individual at his birth.”³¹⁹ Thus, the *sons of God* and *Satan* who entered into the courts of God and presented themselves before God, could refer to the natural forces (including the separate intellects), and the faculty of imagination. As if to confirm this correlation Maimonides presents us with a passage in the rabbinic texts where these symbols are seemingly revealed.

Now as they have explained to us that the *evil inclination* is *Satan*, who indubitably is an *angel*—I mean that he too is called an *angel* inasmuch as he is found in the crowd of the *sons of God*—*good inclination* must consequently also be truly an *angel*. Consequently that well-known opinion figuring in the sayings of the *Sages*³²⁰, *may their memory be blessed*, according to which every man is accompanied by *two angels*, one to his right and the other to his left, identifies these two with *good inclination* and *evil inclination*. In the *Gemara Shabbath*, they, *may their memory be blessed*, say clearly with regard to these *two angels* that *one is good and the other evil*.³²¹ See how many marvels are revealed to us by this dictum and how many incorrect imaginings it abolishes.³²²

The good and bad inclinations are very clear: the perfected human intellect and the imagination. No wonder then, Maimonides describes them as both presenting themselves before the Lord, and in the material realm, as accompanying man one to his right, and the other to his left. They both

³¹⁷ Ibid. lib.II, cap.XIII, fol.46: «Haec autem tria contigunt eis: quia sequuntur imaginationem quae est creatura mala vere. » Cf *Guide* II, 12, p 280.

³¹⁸ Ibid. lib.III, cap.XXIII: “Creatura vero bona invenitur in homine post perfectionem intellectus sui.” Cf *Guide* III, 22, pp 489-90. This is a reference to man’s Intellect *in actu*. It is this that permits man access to the overflow of the Active Intellect which ensures divine providence and protection from evil.

³¹⁹ Ibid: “dixerunt quod creatura mala innovatur in homine in hora nativitatis suae.” Cf *Guide* III, 22, p 489. We shall still have the occasion to study “imagination” as one of the internal senses of man. Cf Harry A Wolfson, “Maimonides on the Internal Senses,” in *The Jewish Quarterly Review*, vol.25, n.4, 1935, pp 441-467.

³²⁰ Cf B.T., Hagigah, 16a. Cf B.T. Berakhoth, 60b, and Rashi’s commentary.

³²¹ B.T., Shabbath, 119b.

³²² *Dux Neutrorum*, lib.III, cap.XXIII, fol.85: “Et angelus malus est sine dubio id est Sathan vocatur angelus : quia venit comiter cum filiis angelorum. Oportet etiam ut Creatura bona sit angelus vere. Scitum est etiam ex verbis sapientum qui dixerunt quod cuilibet homini coniunguntur duo angeli : unus a dextris, alter a sinistris : et isti sunt creatura bona et creatura mala. Palam etiam dixerunt in alio loco de istis duobus angelis : unus bonus et alter malus. Vide igitur quod mirabilia revelavit verbum istud et quod cogitationes rectas non abstulit. » Cf *Guide* III, 22, p 490.

are “angels” “for every force charged by God, may He be exalted, with some business is *an angel put in charge of that thing*.”³²³ And then as a seal of confirmation of the interpretation, Maimonides writes:

Thereby they have stated plainly to him who understands and cognizes intellectually that the imaginative faculty is likewise called an angel and that the intellect is called a cherub. How beautiful must this appear to him who knows, and how distasteful to the ignorant.³²⁴

Maimonides signals that Job’s misfortune has its roots in his reliance upon the imagination which, but distorts reality and turns man away from the truth. Why Eisen failed, in his work, to make any mention of Maimonides’s explicit etymological interpretation of ‘Satan,’ remains an enigma. Perhaps he wanted to force Maimonides down the only way of privation as it seems to harmonize more with his discussion of matter, privation and evil.³²⁵ But what he fails to pick up is whether the term “evil inclination” harmonizes more with the discussion of evil in III.10 or with the discussion of the “evil impulse” in II.12 as we have already shown.³²⁶ The analysis of the texts available to us point to the latter as the best interpretation of Satan which as the evil impulse turns man away from truth into error. One does not get providence by associating with the imagination, but rather by associating with the Active Intellect through the means of the human intellect as “it is a lack of intellect that attracts Satan and alienates from the divine providence.”³²⁷ The deeper study of the real Job and the nature of his sufferings would eventually reveal to us the necessity of transcending the realm of matter and getting connected to the realm of thought which assures providence and helps man avoid evil. The full implications of this interpretation would be seen latter in our examination of the fall of Adam.

³²³Ibid. lib.II, cap.VII, fol.43 : « quoniam omnis virtus quam dedit deus super quacunque re : vocatur angelus missus super illa re. » Cf *Guide* II, 6, p 264.

³²⁴ Ibid : Ostenderunt etiam cuilibet intelligenti quod virtus quae videt somnia, vocatur angelus. Intellectus vero vocatur cherub. Quam mirabilis est illa ratio scienti eam : et quam abominabilis est apud insipientes. » Cf *Guide* II, 6, p 264.

³²⁵Ibid. lib.III, cap.XI, fol.75: « omnia mala sunt privationes. » Cf *Guide* III, 10, pp 438-440.

³²⁶Cf Schreiner, Susan E, *Where Shall Wisdom be Found?* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1994) p 217, n 48.

³²⁷ Diamond, James A, *Maimonides and the Hermeneutics of Concealment*, p 95.

3.5 The Perfection of First Job:

By first Job, we mean Job before his encounter with Elihu. It is very well stated in the *Book of Job*, that he was of an exemplary moral perfection. He was just in his actions such that nothing could ever justify the fact that he suffered any type of evil. And it was this undeniable fact of his suffering that prompted questions on God's knowledge and the workings of His providence.

That which in the first place was mainly responsible for plunging them into, and impelling them toward, this opinion is what appears at first sight to be a lack of order in the circumstances of the human individuals and the fact that among the Adamites some excellent individuals are in a sorry and grievous plight whereas some wicked individuals are in good and pleasurable circumstances.³²⁸

By this assertion, Maimonides as we shall find out shortly seems to be questioning two things: the place of morality in the acquisition of divine providence, and the value of morality as the basis of individual perfection. This anticipates the treatment of man's happiness that would come a little latter in this section. With regards to the second, Maimonides notes that morality is "only a preparation for something else and not an end in itself."³²⁹ In other words, it is only an instrument towards the acquisition of a greater good. Thus, when Job is said to be morally just and perfect, he is not said to be ultimately perfect. There is something that is still lacking in Job that could perhaps explain the fact, that he suffers evil. And it is to this important lack that Maimonides turns:

The most marvelous and extraordinary thing about this story is the fact that knowledge is not attributed in it to Job. He is not said to be a *wise or a comprehending or an intelligent man*. Only moral virtue and righteousness in action are ascribed to him. For if he had been *wise*, his situation would not have been obscure for him, as will become clear.³³⁰

³²⁸*Dux Neutorum*, lib.III, cap.XVII, fol.79: "Quod autem fecit eos evagari, et induxit eos in hoc, primo est illud quod apparet in principio cogitationis de malitia ordinis diversitatum hominum: et quod quidam hominum sancti scilicet sunt in afflictione: quidam vero malorum ducunt vitam in delectatione." Cf *Guide* III, 16, p 461.

³²⁹*Ibid.* lib III, cap. LV: « Hac autem species refertur et quasi derivatur ad alio nec est finis substantiae proprie: » Cf *Guide* III, 54, p 635.

³³⁰*Ibid.* lib III, cap. XXIII: « Quod autem magis mirum est in hac ratione quia non dixit de Iob quod erat vir sapiens et intelligens: sed commendavit eum scriptura in bonis moribus et in operibus rectis. Et si fuisset sapiens non fuisset eius ratio dubia, sicut ostendemus postea. » Cf *Guide* III, 22, p 487.

Maimonides singles out the word “wisdom [hokhmah]—*sapientiae*” for a particular attention. Here again, we recall that in Hebrew language, it is an equivocal word that could mean four different things at the same time. Maimonides does well to signal that these ‘four different meanings—*quatuor modis*’ could be applied to wisdom only “in an unrestricted sense.”³³¹ In the first place it is “applied to the apprehension of true realities, which have for their end the apprehension of Him.” Then it is applied to “acquiring arts”; then it is applied to “acquiring moral virtues”; and finally, it is applied to “the aptitude for stratagems and ruses.”³³² It is only “moral virtue” that is applied to Job. Whatever else wisdom is, Job lacks it. He is neither gifted in the practical arts, nor is he gifted in the acquisition of skills that could lead him to rational virtues. And the worst of all, Job is not intelligent. Perhaps, that explains his lack of intellectual perfection which is the highest perfection for a human being. And this highest perfection consists for Aristotle as for Maimonides, in “the conception of intelligibles, which teach true opinions concerning the divine things.”³³³ Job perhaps lacked this intellectual perfection and that is why his views about God and the cause of his sufferings are all wrong. He understands his suffering as a sign that God does not differentiate between the righteous and the wicked, both of whom he treats with contempt.³³⁴ In other words, God is responsible for unjustly afflicting him with sufferings. As for Job’s knowledge of God, two things are noted: it is reported that Job had “no true knowledge and knew the deity only because of his acceptance of authority, just as the multitude adhering to a Law know it.”³³⁵ And then again, Job had known Him “*per viam narrationis*—only through the traditional stories and not by the way of speculation.”³³⁶ In the course of our examination, we shall realize how Maimonides eventually exonerates God of the responsibility of evil. But what matters for the moment is that Job had known God like the ignorant multitude guided by the commonly accepted opinions. Job here represents the philosophically uneducated masses who, by their unquestioning obedience to the

³³¹Ibid. lib III, cap. LV : « Sapientiam vero quae praecise et proprie dicitur... » Cf *Guide* III, 54, p 633.

³³²Ibid. lib III, cap.LV : « Uno modo dicitur de comprehensione veritatum, quarum finis est apprehendere creatorem...Unde artifices sapientes nominantur...Dicitur praeterea de acquisitione morum honestorum...Dicitur insuper de machinationibus et consiliis. » Cf *Guide* III, 54, p 632.

³³³Ibid : « Scilicet intelligibilia per quae acquiruntur credulitates recte in rebus spiritualibus. » Cf *Guide* III, 54, p 635.

³³⁴Ibid. lib.III, cap.XXIII, fol.85: “quod illa ratio est demonstratio super aequalitate iusti et mali apud Creatorem propter utilitatem comparisonis hominis : et quia nihil est in conspectu Domini. » Cf *Guide* III, 23, p 491.

³³⁵Ibid : « quia dixit ea quae sic dixit cum non haberet scientiam : nec sciebat Creatorem nisi ex receptione, sicut scit universitas populi credentis legem. » Cf *Guide* III, 23, p 492.

³³⁶ Ibid. fol.86: « ita cum cognoscebat et sciebat Creatorem, per viam narrationis cognovit: non per viam considerationis et speculationis : » Cf *Guide* III, 23, p 493.

commandments, possess moral virtues, and by their lack of speculative and critical spirit, are said to possess no intellectual virtues. This group is the object of constant critique by Maimonides. It is not surprising that like the multitude, Job conceives God anthropomorphically as a Big Police Man who must protect the just man and punish the wicked. Job's ignorance is hinged on the fact that the idea of God he shares with the multitude "belongs to the class of generally accepted opinions and those adopted in virtue of tradition, not to the class of the *intellecta*."³³⁷ We shall still come to examine Maimonides's arguments showing that the categories of good/evil, unlike those of truth/falsehood, do not have any cognitive values, but depend on generally accepted things decided by tradition and dependent on authority. Job existed on the realm of conventionality which "like its matrix imagination depends on *authority and violence*, that is, on a *political* system with power to enforce 'the normative.'"³³⁸ Because Job lacks this power of demonstrative knowledge, he is deceived into believing like the multitude, that true happiness is to be found in riches—possession, children and health. Lacking the requisite tool for a proper understanding of the Scripture, and placing their faith on the exoteric pronouncements of material wellbeing for the acquisition of moral virtues, they like Job perceive such riches as rewards for being morally virtuous since they obey the commandments. But what Job ignores is that these things are indeed fruits of the imagination. These 'goods' follow from man's understanding of God as a projection of the human imagination.³³⁹ Just as the imagination—the deficiency of reason, has led Job to an erroneous idea of God and the erroneous belief that God is the cause of his sufferings, it is the same "evil inclination" in Job that has led him to false belief that true happiness or perfection consists in the acquisition of material riches. But all hope is not lost because, this "Satan," the "evil inclination," which is responsible for the calamities besetting Job, has not dominated Job's soul. We shall come to realize the transformation that comes to Job the moment he perfects his intellect by the acquisition of rational virtues. Thus it would seem that the person, who is only morally virtuous,

³³⁷ Ibid. lib.II, cap.XXXVIII, fol.62: "Alia vero verba sunt de genere praeceptorum demonstrata et recepta, non de genete intelligibilium. » Cf *Guide* II, 33, p 364.

³³⁸ Faur, José, *Homo Mysticus: A Guide to Maimonides's Guide for the Perplexed*, (New York: Syracuse University Press, Syracuse, 1999) p 61.

³³⁹ Ibid. p 161.

will not enjoy the protection and intellectual guidance that comes from divine providence.³⁴⁰ It is the absence of intellectual apprehension that would provide a breeding ground for evil.

3.6 Job's Friends and Providence:

In our earlier discussion of *Guide III*, 17, we have examined the various discussions on providence and what Maimonides considers his own opinion. In his interpretation of the *Book of Job*, Maimonides juxtaposes the arguments of Job's friends to the different opinions on providence seen in the earlier chapter of the *Guide*. Maimonides notes two common factors in their view of providence. They all agree that God was aware of all that had befallen Job and that God was the cause of Job's misfortunes.³⁴¹ The second common factor is what Maimonides writes thus:

All his friends are also agreed that everyone who does good obtains a reward and that everyone who does evil is punished; and that if you see a disobedient man who is fortunate, in the end this state of affairs will be transformed into its contrary, for he will perish and misfortunes will befall him, his sons, and his offspring.³⁴²

This summary reveals the same misconception concerning God's providence that Maimonides has tried to readapt according to the rules of reality. This view is still based on the generally accepted opinions that do not follow the way of philosophical speculation. Like Job, his friends maintain the false idea that God is the cause of evil. In what follows Maimonides presents the friends' opinions identified with the earlier views, with emphasis on their particularity. A particular attention will be paid to the last of the friends Elihu and why according to Maimonides, his opinion is considered by the other friends as "superior."³⁴³

³⁴⁰Nadler, Steven, "Theodicy and Providence," in *The Cambridge History of Jewish Philosophy*, p 634.

³⁴¹*Dux Neutrurum*, lib.III, cap.XXIII, fol.85: "quod quicquid adversitatis accidit Iob, scitum fuit a Creatore." Cf *Guide III*, 23, p 490.

³⁴²*Ibid*: « Omnes autem socii eius converant in hoc: quod quicumque benefecerit habebit praemium bonum: quicumque vero malefecerit, sustinebit poenam. » Cf *Guide III*, 23, p 491.

³⁴³*Dux Neutrurum*, lib.III, cap.XXIII, fol.86: « illa quae attribuitur Heliu: et idcirco fuit honoratus apud eos. » Cf *Guide III*, 23, p 494.

The opinion attributed to Job is in keeping with the opinion of Aristotle; the opinion of Eliphaz is in keeping with the opinion of our Law; the opinion of Bildad is in keeping with the doctrine of the Mutazila; the opinion of Zophar is in keeping with the doctrine of the Ashariyya. These were the ancient opinions concerning providence.³⁴⁴

The juxtaposition of Job and Aristotle, evokes a lot of question. According to the text, Job thinks that misfortune reaches both the righteous and the wicked indiscriminately. The fact that it happens without distinction could justify aligning this position to that of Epicurus for whom everything happens by chance.³⁴⁵ If we recall that Aristotle holds providence to be a function of the natural laws limited to the protection of species and not to particular individuals, it becomes difficult to reconcile with Job's assertion that God does not distinguish between men "because of His contempt for the human species and abandonment of it."³⁴⁶ Considering that Job and his friends acknowledge God's knowledge and causality of the particular evils afflicting Job, and that Aristotle denies such knowledge of particulars to God, it becomes difficult to understand why their opinions on providence should be taken to be the same.³⁴⁷ However, the similarity between Job and Aristotle could be found in the fact that Job's inexplicable suffering has made him abandon his orthodox view that God rewards and punishes according to one's own virtues and vices respectively. The reality of his sufferings could perhaps have convinced him that God's providence does not take care of individuals. The correspondences with Job's friends and the various opinions on providence are not difficult to make. Briefly we note that Eliphaz represents the opinion of "our law" according to which it is God's justice that Job is being punished for his sins. Bildad represents the Mutazilites according to which God's wisdom permits Job to suffer in order to permit him earn a greater reward. As for Zophar, his views correspond to those of the Asharites since it is according to God's inscrutable will that Job suffers. It is important to remark that out of the five opinions enumerated in the earlier chapter 17 of the *Guide*, Maimonides now mentions only four, neglecting completely the opinion of

³⁴⁴ Ibid: « scito quod opinio quae attribuitur ipsi Iob: similis est opinioni Aristotelis. Opinio autem Eliphaz similis est opinioni nostrae. Opinio vero Baldath, similis est opinioni separatorum. Opinio autem Sophar, similis est opinioni sentientium. Ista autem fuerunt opiniones antiquae in cura Creatoris. » Cf *Guide* III, 23, p 494.

³⁴⁵ Rudavsky, T.M, *Maimonides*, p 147.

³⁴⁶ *Dux Neutorum*, lib.III, cap.XXIII, fol.85 : « quod illa ratio est demonstratio super aequalitate iusti et mali apud Creatorem propter utilitatem comparationis hominis : et quia nihil est in conspectu Domini. » Cf *Guide* III, 23, p 491.

³⁴⁷ Cf Lévy, René, *La divine insouciance: étude des doctrines de la providence d'après Maïmonide* (Largrasse: Editions Verdier, 2008), p 534.

Epicurus. Why is this so? Even Leo Strauss also raised the same question.³⁴⁸ Trying to find an explanation for this omission, we recall that Maimonides had earlier considered Epicurus's opinion as going contrary to the demonstrable principles of existence laid down by Aristotle. In another passage while explaining the opinions on prophecy, Maimonides explicitly says that he will not pay attention to the opinion of Epicurus on the grounds that "he does not believe in the existence of a deity and all the more does he not believe in prophecy."³⁴⁹ Thus, because the opinion of Epicurus is anti God, Maimonides, faithful to the Jewish tradition, considers him apostate and excludes him from further discussion.³⁵⁰ The second thing to observe is the sudden addition of a new opinion, that of Elihu. And the question that we ask is: whose opinion of providence does Elihu represent? What does God's speech to Job mean in the order of providence? To that question and many more, we now turn our attention.

3.7 Providence according to Elihu:

This man is the very last of Job's friends, the youngest and the most perfect in knowledge.³⁵¹ When he came to the scene, Elihu opened an attack on two fronts: he reproved Job for only talking about his moral virtues and for his ignorance concerning the cause of his misfortunes. Then, he attacked the opinions of the other three friends as "senile drivel."³⁵² Apart from these attacks, he repeats what others have said as regards the justice of God, and the blameworthiness of Job concerning his sufferings. But unlike all others, Elihu evidently distinguishes his own idea of providence by an addition of two distinctive features—the "intercession of an angel—*mediatorem angelo*" and the "*narrare qualitates prophetiae*—how of prophecy," an addition that none of the earlier friends discovered nor even thought about.

³⁴⁸ Strauss, Leo, *Maïmonide*, (Paris : PUF, 1988), p 190, n.20 : «L'opinion d'Epicure est évacuée sans mot dire, comme n'étant pas digne qu'on en parle. »

³⁴⁹ *Dux Neutrorum*, lib.II, cap.XXXIII, fol.61: "sed intentio nostra est poenere opiniones illorum qui credunt in creatorem." Cf *Guide* II, 32, p 360.

³⁵⁰ Strauss, Leo, *Maïmonide*, p 28 : «la tradition juive a caractérisé l'apostasie contre la Loi, la révolte contre celle-ci, dans beaucoup de cas, quoique pas dans tous, comme de l'épicurisme. »

³⁵¹ *Dux Neutrorum*, lib.III, cap.XXIII, fol.86 : «illa quae attribuitur Helio : et idcirco fuit honoratus apud eos. Et dixit quod erat minor illis aetate : et maior in scientia : » Cf *Guide* III, 23 p 494.

³⁵² Ibid: « fecit mentionem similiter de opinionibus trium sociorum suorum." This expression is missing from our Latin text. Cf *Guide* III, 23, p 494.

The notion added by Elihu and not mentioned by one of them is that which he expresses parabolically when he speaks of the intercession of an angel. For he says that it is an attested and well-known thing that when a man is ill to the point of death and when he is despaired of, if an angel intercedes for him—regardless of whatever angel—his intercession is accepted and he is raised from his fall. This invalid is accordingly saved and restored to the best of states. However, this does not continue always, there being no continuous intercession going on forever, for it only takes place two or three times. He says: *If there be for him an angel, an intercessor, and so on.*(Job 33:23)... He also makes an addition—prior to speaking of this notion—by beginning to describe the how of prophecy in his dictum: *For God speaketh once, yea twice, yet [man] perceiveth it not. In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon men.* (Job 33:14-15)³⁵³

How do we interpret these features of Elihu's providence or what message Elihu is trying to let us know through Maimonides? And why does Maimonides not juxtapose this with any of the earlier opinions on providence? Could this be Maimonides's own opinion and a confirmation of his earlier view that providence is consequent upon the intellect? The best way to go about this is to follow the modality set down by Maimonides himself. The two important keys to this interpretation are the words "angel" and "prophecy" but the former more so than the latter because the former is an essential key to the understanding of the latter. Maimonides himself does not tell us anything about the identity of this angel, what exactly it does or how this angel comes to intercede for one. What we shall do is try to supply these ellipses by locating "the chapter headings" and by connecting them one with another, and by paying attention to each key word and the sense it brings to understanding the whole of the passage. What we shall do is

³⁵³ Ibid : « Illud autem quod addidit Elihu de quo nullus alius fecit mentionem, est quod assimilavit mediatorem angelo et dixit, Notum est quod homo infirmatur; et appropinquat portas mortis : et certi sunt de eo : et si habuit angelum quemcumque mediatorem, recipietur oratio eius, et ruina eius alleviabitur, et evadet, et revertetur ad bonitatem morum suorum. Sed illud non semper continget : neque recipietur oratio semper : sed duabus vicibus vel tribus sicut dixit. Si fuerit pro eo angelus mediator unus de millibus ut annunciet hominis aequitatem, miserebitur eius, liberat eum ut non descendat in foueam, invenit in quo ei propitiatur. Cum autem descripsit statum eius qui sanatur, et laetitiam ipsius in eo quod revertitur ad salutem, dixit. Ecce haec omnia operatur Deus, duabus vicibus per singulos. In hac autem ratione separavit se Elihu in expositione sua : et addidit etiam narrare qualitates prophetiae, dicens, solum loquitur Deus per somnium in visione nocturna, quando irrui sopor super homines. » Cf *Guide* III, 23, p 495.

neither to inquire into all the details occurring in the parable nor find significations corresponding to them.³⁵⁴

We shall begin by noting that some authors especially Kravitz and Touati regard Elihu's angel as the Active Intellect³⁵⁵ and human intellect³⁵⁶ respectively. But Robert Eisen totally disagrees with this identification. Already, the inability of interpreters to pin it down to one particular angel seems to play in Eisen's favor. According to him, the key to the interpretation is not the mention of angel but the fact that Maimonides notes "*regardless of what angel—his intercession is accepted and he is raised from his fall.*" It is this emphasis which suggests, according to Eisen, that this "angel has an indeterminate identity."³⁵⁷ Making reference to the full passage from where Maimonides takes the citation,³⁵⁸ Eisen singles out "an advocate, one among a thousand," as meaning "that there are many such angels and that as long as the person is saved, it does not matter which one intercedes."³⁵⁹ Thus, because others have identified this angel of intercession, their analysis is incorrect. Eisen is more of the opinion that the identity of this angel remains unknown since "angel is representative of *any* natural force or cause that comes to the aid of an individual in grave danger"—it may be the person's intellect, the Active Intellect, or even a chance event from the natural order that has nothing to do with his intellectual deliberations.³⁶⁰ And the mere fact that this angel intercedes at best two or three times during one's life time, shows the limited nature of man and of even the natural forces since, "all things decay due to privation."³⁶¹ As plausible as this interpretation may be, we think that it infringes on the nature of the second type of parables where Maimonides specifies that the various words are not all significant. Some words are, but others "serve to embellish the parable and to render it more

³⁵⁴Ibid. lib.I, Prooemium Authoris, fol.4: "quum istud deducet te ad alteram duarum viarum: vel enim repellet te ab intellectu rationis similitudinis intelligendae, vel deducet te in labores cogitandi opiniones, quae non habent radicem. Et illa non fuerunt scripta, ut mediteris in illis opiniones. Et accedet tibi grandis labor in verbis vanis et sine fructu. » Cf *Guide I*, Introduction to the First Part, p 14.

³⁵⁵Kravitz, Leonard S, "Maimonides and Job: An Inquiry as to the Method of the Moreh," *Hebrew Union College Annual*, vol.38, (1967) p 157.

³⁵⁶Touati, Charles, «Les deux théories de Maïmonide sur la providence,» in Siegfried Stein and Raphael Loewe, eds., *Studies in Jewish Religious and Intellectual History*, (Alabama: University of Alabama Press, 1979), pp 331-340.

³⁵⁷Eisen, Robert, *The Book of Job in Medieval Jewish Philosophy*, pp 58-59.

³⁵⁸Job 33:19-24

³⁵⁹Eisen, Robert, *The Book of Job in Medieval Jewish Philosophy*, p 59.

³⁶⁰Ibid.

³⁶¹Ibid. p 60.

coherent or to conceal further the intended meaning.”³⁶² Does the addition—*regardless of whatever angel*—which is the decisive tool in Eisen’s interpretation, not serve as a ploy by Maimonides to embellish the parable without adding any significant information? Is that phrase not a part of things not susceptible of interpretation? Why would Eisen pay attention to the number of the intervention of the angel—two or three times—as if Maimonides has taken them literally? Could such not be an allegoric way of referring to a deeper meaning? As a parable of the second type, the key to the understanding should rather be the whole passage and not just a single phrase. On the strength of the meaning that would be derived from the whole passage, we do not find Eisen’s insistence on the non-specific nature of this angel very sustainable.

The clue for determining the “angel” metaphor is scattered in the *Guide* and the surest route to that is by examining its derivation. In the second part of the *Guide*, Maimonides describes the term “angel” as an equivocal word signifying “the intellects, the spheres, and the elements, inasmuch as all of them carry out orders.”³⁶³ For perhaps the first time in his lexicon, Maimonides gives one common meaning for different terms in an equivocation. The common meaning is “carrying out order” or being a “*nuncius*—messenger.”³⁶⁴ Another nuance is added when because “messenger” or “carrying out order,” evokes a corporeal being, Maimonides clarifies by noting that angels can be of two sorts: “some of them are permanent and others liable to perish. And such is the truth of the matter.”³⁶⁵ Thus, though natural elements are angels, they are nevertheless perishable showing they could not carry out certain level of function concerning the divine being. “Angels” of the immaterial type must be envisaged by Maimonides. Perhaps, the best interpretative tool yet provided by Maimonides is the word *Elohim*. Being equivocal, it designates “the deity, the angels, and the rulers governing cities.”³⁶⁶ The context of its usage highly influences in determining the proper meaning it has. In the *Guide* II: 6 Maimonides takes up again the discussion of the word *Elohim* as the figurative designation for both God and the

³⁶² *Dux Neutorum*, lib.I, Prooemium Authoris, fol.3: “sed posita sunt ad ornatum similitudinis, et ad orationem eiusdem vel ad profundationem occultationis rei assimilatae.” Cf *Guide* I, Introduction to the First Part, p 12.

³⁶³ Ibid. lib.II, cap.VIII, fol.43: “Ostendimus iam aequivocationem huius angelus: et quod convenit communiter intellectibus separatis et coelis et elementis ultimis. Et quia quodlibet illorum facit aliquid : » Cf *Guide* II, 7, p 266.

³⁶⁴ Ibid.cap.VII, fol.43: “tu autem iam scis quod angelus interpretatur nuncius: quicumque autem implet visionem vocatur angelus.” Cf *Guide* II, 6, p 262. Angels further connote all individual natural and psychic forces including sexual desire and orgasm (*Guide* II, 6, p 264), causes of animal motion, men, prophets and separate intellects.

³⁶⁵ Ibid: “quod angelorum quidam sunt stabiles et aeterni: quidam vero pereunt. » Cf *Guide* II, 6, p 264.

³⁶⁶ Ibid. lib.I, cap.II, fol.5: “quod hoc nomen heloym aequivocum est Deo, et Angelis, et Iudicibus habentibus Ducatum in villis. » Cf *Guide* I, 2, p 23.

angels in the sense that they both govern cities below them.³⁶⁷ The citation of biblical passages always indicates the specific meaning among others, which Maimonides's usage of equivocal words conveys. In this particular case, Maimonides's *Elohim* refers to a separate intellect as we shall find out from the following passages of Deuteronomy chapter 10 verse 17:

*He is the Elohim of the Elohim—which means, the deity of the angels—and the Lord of lords—that is, the Master of the spheres and the stars, which are the lords of everybody other than themselves.*³⁶⁸

The distinction between the first part of the verse and the final part of it is very significant. In the former, it refers simply to “angels,” whereas the latter refers to “the spheres and the stars.” A major shift occurs when Maimonides centers on “angels” and defines them as incorporeal, that is as “intellects separate from matter.”³⁶⁹ These different angels are thus more permanent because of immaterial nature. He appeals then to the approval of Aristotle who has said the same things but with a different terminology: “for he speaks of separate intellects and we speak of angels.”³⁷⁰ And the final seal of confirmation that angels refer to the separate intellects through whom the deity reaches to the lower world comes from Maimonides himself:

Now our discourse here shall deal only with *angels*, who are separate intellects. For our Law does not deny the fact that He, may He be exalted, governs that which exists here through the intermediation of the *angels*.³⁷¹

Furthermore, Maimonides confirms by way of his cosmology, that the preeminent signification of “angels” is the separate intellects. According to Diamond, the separate intellects “occupy the position of proximity to the originating will of the universe.”³⁷² This is seen clearly in the

³⁶⁷Ibid, lib.II, cap.VII, fol.43: “Scis autem quod eloim est verum iudicium...Ideo vero accommodatum est hoc nomen angelis, et Creatori: quia ipse est iudex super angelos sicut dicit scriptura. » Cf *Guide* II, 6, p 261.

³⁶⁸ Ibid: “Cum autem subiecit Deus deorum hoc est Deus angelorum: et quod postea dixit, Dominus dominorum: hoc est dicere Dominus coelorum et stellarum, qui dominatur omnibus corporibus quae sunt praeter illa.” Cf *Guide* II, 6, p 261.

³⁶⁹Ibid. lib.I, cap.XLVIII, fol.17: “Scias quod Angeli non sunt corpora, sed sunt intelligentiae abstractae a materia corporali.” Cf *Guide* I, 49, p 108.

³⁷⁰Ibid. lib.II, cap.VII, fol.43: “Et hoc idem dixit Aristoteles, et est differentia tantum in nomine: quum ipse vocat eos intellectus abstractos. Nos autem nominamus ipsos angelos.” Cf *Guide* II, 6, p 262.

³⁷¹Ibid : « Nunc autem non loquimur nisi de angelis qui sunt intelligentiae. Lex siquidem nostra non tollit quod Creator sit rector huius universitatis per angelos intermedios.” Cf *Guide* II, 6, p 262.

³⁷² Diamond, James A, *Maimonides and the Hermeneutics of Concealment*, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002) p 58.

Maimonidean tripartite hierarchy of the created universe: “the separate intellects, which are the angels; the second, the bodies of the spheres; the third, first matter.”³⁷³ When it comes to the overflow coming from God, it is the separate intellects that serve as intermediaries between God and the material existents. They fittingly become the bearers of divine providence in the sublunar world. The importance of “angels” in the Maimonidean theory of providence, further illustrates the absence of God’s direct and immediate involvement in the affairs of men. This function belongs to the one of the separate intellects, the Active Intellect whose action turns the human intellect from the state of dormancy to actuality.³⁷⁴ Thus in the case of Elihu’s “intercession of an angel,” we assume that it is a parabolic reference to the Active Intellect.³⁷⁵ Apart from Raffel, another modern interpreter who agrees with the Active Intellect interpretation is Kravitz.³⁷⁶ Would that not mean that Elihu sees providence as also consequent upon the intellect? Does he not concord with Maimonides’ view that a perfected intellect is the only instrument which leads man into an epistemic connection with the permanent divine overflow of providence through the Active Intellect?³⁷⁷ Does that not mean that even if one suffers ill as a result of ignorance which is a privation of knowledge, that he would be “raised from his fall” if he acquires rational and practical virtues? There is nothing yet to suggest that Elihu’s opinion on providence is not that of Maimonides. The likeliest clue to the correctness of this interpretation is given by Maimonides in the latter part of the passage talking about Elihu’s angel of intercession. In that part, Maimonides notes that “this does not continue always, there being no continuous intercession going on forever, for it only takes place two or three times.”³⁷⁸ We tend to agree with the observation of

³⁷³ *Dux Neutrorum*, lib.II, cap.XI, fol.45 : « Prima pars, intellectus separati, et ipsi sunt angeli. Secunda pars, corpora caelorum. Tertia vero pars, materia prima, scilicet corpora variabilia semper, quae sunt infra caelos. » Cf *Guide* II, 10, p 273.

³⁷⁴ *Ibid.* cap.V, fol.42: “Intellectus autem decem est intelligentia agens quae demonstrat super exitu nostri intellectus de potentia ad actum. » Cf *Guide* II, 4, p 257. As the “giver of forms,” the Active Intellect acts as an efficient cause in the production of human knowledge.

³⁷⁵ Cf Raffel, Charles M, “Providence as Consequent upon the Intellect: Maimonides’ Theory of Providence,” *AJS Review*, vol. 12, no. 1, 1987, p 56: “The relevance of the “intercession of an angel” points within Maimonides’ own system to the Active Intellect, but the elliptical reference here is significant both for its obtuseness and its tardiness. In his entire discussion of providence, this veiled reference is the only mention of the Active Intellect.”

³⁷⁶ Kravitz, Leonard S, “Maimonides and Job: An Inquiry as to the Method of the Moreh,” *Hebrew Union College Annual*, vol.38, (1967) p 157: “Thus it would seem that the good angel, the angel of Elihu, and the Active Intellect are one and the same.”

³⁷⁷ Cf Raffel, Charles M, who notes that “The opinion of Elihu, by process of elimination and by tacit identification, seems to represent an extension of Maimonides’ I-view on providence.” In “Providence as Consequent upon the Intellect: Maimonides’ Theory of Providence,” p 53.

³⁷⁸ *Dux Neutrorum*, lib.III, cap.XXIII, fol.86: “Sed illud non semper continget: neque recipietur oratio semper: sed duabus vicibus vel tribus sicut dixit.” Cf *Guide* III, 23, p 495.

Schreiner that this description parallels Maimonides's portrayal of the action by the Active Intellect on the human intellect or "soul."

The human intellects that have studied metaphysics and science become capable of intermittent union with the Active Intellect. In these felicitous moments, the Active Intellect exercises what Maimonides calls "providence" over those individual human beings. Thus the Book of Job confirms Maimonides's belief that providence is "consequent upon the intellect."³⁷⁹

The parabolic reference to the intercession taking place two or three times, finds its proper meaning in the intermittent conjunction that the human intellect does establish with the Active Intellect, a conjunction that assures an overflow of divine providence while any distraction brings about its withdrawal.³⁸⁰ The better the development of the intellect the greater the providential overflow coming to it and watching over the individual. This means the less evil one suffers. Thus, through the interpretation of Elihu's angel, Maimonides confirms still his earlier position that providence is consequent upon the intellect and attached to it, and that evil is a privation of providence.

As to the second added notion, the "how of prophecy," we do not need to go beyond the mechanics of providence to have a suggestion of what the notion could mean. The "how of prophecy" points to the study we have already undertaken on Maimonides's psychology with particular reference to the intellect. The divine overflow overflowing from God through the intermediation of the Active Intellect, given that the moral habit of the individual is improved, must engage the perfection of two faculties, in order to produce the phenomenon of prophecy: the perfection of the rational faculty through study and the perfection of the imaginative faculty through natural disposition. The perfection of the moral habit through a mastery of the bodily forces must also be assured.³⁸¹ Thus, the "angel" who is directly involved with the phenomenon

³⁷⁹ Schreiner, Susan, *Where shall Wisdom be Found?* p 65.

³⁸⁰ Does this conjunction lead to a mystical union with God? This could be an object of a new research. As a guideline to this, consult Gideon Freudenthal, "The Philosophical Mysticism of Maimonides and Maimon," in Idit Dobbs-Weinstein et al, eds., *Maimonides and His Heritage*, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2009), pp 113-152.

³⁸¹ *Dux Neutrorum*, lib.II, cap.XXXVII, fol.64: "Perfectio virtutis rationalis in disciplina et perfectione virtutis imaginativae in natura creationis: et perfectio morum in removendo cogitationem ab omnibus delectationibus corporalibus." Cf *Guide* II, 36, p 369, p 372.

of prophecy is the Active Intellect³⁸² and it will soon be the voice of the “prophetic revelation” that would bring Job to the correct understanding of his suffering. In a work written on Maimonides’s political philosophy, an analysis has shown how the overflow that comes to the various faculties leads to both theoretical and practical perfection.

The divine overflow to the rational faculty produces theoretical perfection; the overflow to the imaginative faculty imparts practical rational perfection. The latter enables its possessor both to arrive at particular judgments necessary for right conduct and to convey to laymen truths about the universe and morality in language and by means of images easy to comprehend.³⁸³

It is the effect of the divine overflow through the Active Intellect, on the rational and the imaginative faculty, which leads to a theoretical perfection by which one apprehends intellectual realities; and to a practical rational perfection by which one achieves moral well being. In the case of a prophet, he extends his all round perfection by exercising governance over others. Thus, if it is correct that providence does not just stop at the intellectual level, but helps in the practical activity of whoever receives it, does it not justify the description of Elihu’s view as “superior” to all other opinions on providence? According to Schreiner, “we can conclude that the Active Intellect is both Elihu’s vision and the voice from the whirlwind.”³⁸⁴

The interpretation that we are supporting that providence is consequent upon the intellect gets a major uplift by the correspondence it creates between Maimonides’s understanding of Elihu’s angel on the one hand, and his interpretation of the angels of the prologue (the divine beings and Satan), on the other. Elihu’s insight joins with the “prophetic revelation that came to Job”³⁸⁵ through which “his error in everything that he had imagined became clear to him.”³⁸⁶ This revelation centers on “the description of natural matters—namely, description of the elements or

³⁸²For a comprehensive study of Maimonides’ view on prophecy, consult the following: H.A Wolfson, “Hallevi and Maimonides on Prophecy,” *Jewish Quarterly Review* 32, (1942), pp 345-370, and vol 33 (1942) pp 49-82; Lawrence Kaplan, “Maimonides on the Miraculous Element in Prophecy,” *Harvard Theological Review* 70, (1977), pp 233-256; Alexander Altmann, “Maimonides and Thomas Aquinas: Natural or Divine Prophecy,” in *AJS Review*, 3 (1978), pp 1-19; Oliver Leaman, “Imagination and the Objectivity of Prophecy,” in his book: *Moses Maimonides*, (Surrey: Curzon Press, 1990), pp 39-64.

³⁸³Galston, Miriam, “Philosopher King v. Prophet,” *Israel Oriental Studies* 8, (1978) p 205.

³⁸⁴Schreiner, Susan, *Where Shall Wisdom be Found?* P 66.

³⁸⁵Cf Job 38-42. This is the section that is normally referred to as the “Voice from the Whirlwind.”

³⁸⁶*Dux Neutorum*, lib.III, cap.XXIII, fol.86: “Silmiliter invenies prophetiam qui venit super ipsum Iob: in qua ostensus est ei error suus in omnibus quae putabat.” Cf *Guide* III, 23, p 496.

description of the meteorological phenomena or description of the natures of the various species of animals, but of nothing else.”³⁸⁷ These are perhaps the natural phenomena through which God “speaks” *once, yea twice, yet man perceiveth it not.*³⁸⁸ An examination of this revelation shows that Job is a man without knowledge.³⁸⁹ He is totally ignorant of the creation of the world, its immensity and complexity that is actually beyond his grasp; he is ignorant of the divine order that governs this world and manages it to perfection; he is ignorant of the proper functioning of the natural elements, the place of animals and the vegetative world in the divine plan; he is ignorant of the fact that man has but a little place in this world ordered by God. Job is a man without knowledge and that’s why Maimonides regrets that “the most marvelous and extraordinary thing about this story is the fact that knowledge is not attributed in it to Job.”³⁹⁰ The long process of this “revelation” could be seen as a period of instruction during which Job became a transformed man. Maimonides notes that the purpose of this “period of instruction” is to show Job that “our intellects do not reach the point of apprehending how these natural things that exist in the world of generation and corruption are produced in time and of conceiving how the existence of the natural force within them has originated them.”³⁹¹ Job also learns the negative knowledge that God is unfathomable. He abandons the realm of imagination for the overflow that comes to a perfected intellect. Having become an intellect *in actu*, Job abandons the false knowledge of God he had acquired by “traditional stories,” for the true knowledge of God “by way of speculation.” At this level of speculation, Job comes to an ontological consciousness: “I had heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth Thee;

³⁸⁷ Ibid: « nec egressus est in ea demonstrationem rerum naturalium vel elementorum, vel signorum quae fiunt in sublimi: vel specierum animalium vel aliarum rerum. » Cf *Guide* III, 23, p 496.

³⁸⁸ Job 33:14-15.

³⁸⁹ For another scholarly interpretation that exposes the ignorance of Job, and has nothing to do with the interpretation by Maimonides, see Matitiah Tsevat, “The Meaning of the Book of Job,” *Hebrew Union College Annual*, vol. 37, (1966), pp 73-106. Some of the conclusions we shall draw from the *Book of Job*, are influenced by this author.

³⁹⁰ *Dux Neutrorum*, lib.III, cap.XXIII: “Quod autem magis mirum est in hac ratione qua non dixit de Iob quod erat vir sapiens et intelligens ... et si fuisset sapiens non fuisset eius ratio dubia, sicut ostendemus postea. » Cf *Guide* III, 22, p 487.

³⁹¹ Ibid, lib.III, cap.XXIII, fol.86: “Intentio vero in omnibus istis est quod genera ista rerum naturalium quae inveniuntur in hoc mundo generationis et corruptionis, scientiae nostra non attingunt ad comprehendendum qualitates et modos suae narrationis: » Cf *Guide* III, 23, p 496. Maimonides actually opened up a debate on what human knowledge can know. One of the major articles on this topic is by Shlomo Pines, “The Limitations of Human Knowledge according to Al-Farabi, ibn Bajja, and Maimonides,” in Joseph A Buijs, ed., *Maimonides: A Collection of Critical Essays*, (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988), pp 91-121.

wherefore I abhor myself and repent of dust and ashes.”³⁹² Maimonides understands the latter part of the statement to mean: “*wherefore I abhor all that I used to desire and repent of my being in dust and ashes.*”³⁹³ In other words, Job regrets his former position—a man who followed authority and tradition—and he equally regrets his ‘being in dust and ashes, that is, his remaining on the level of animality. This is an ultimate confession of a man that has been in intellectual slumber and an acknowledgment that he has all these while, lived in total ignorance. All he had held to be true happiness and correct opinion has come to be the mere fruits of the imagination. Wohlman expresses the same point in her interpretation:

En d’autres termes, Job confesse avoir été victime de son bien et de son imagination au point d’avoir formé son jugement sur les choses et sur lui-même selon une mesure étrangère à la sagesse de Dieu.³⁹⁴

When he is woken from his slumber, he becomes endowed with a new intellectual vision. Earlier in one of the lexicographic chapters, Maimonides states that every “*mention of seeing*, when referring to God,” is used figuratively to denote “the grasp of the intellect,” that is “intellectual apprehension and in no way to the eye’s seeing.”³⁹⁵ Thus, Job has come to the possession of intellectual perfection and to a proper knowledge of God. He realizes the vastness of reality and the transcendence of God.³⁹⁶ Endowed with this new intellectual vision, Job renounces his former error that “God had caused these misfortunes to befall him.”³⁹⁷ If the knowledge of God he has now is quite different from what tradition has taught him, how could his idea of providence still be the same? Job’s awakening leads him to a new reality: the equivocal nature of

³⁹²Ibid: “Auditu auris audiui te : et nunc oculus meus videt te : et idcirco reprehendi me : et consolatus sum in puluere et cinere. » Cf *Guide* III, 23, p 493 ; Job 42: 5-6.

³⁹³ Ibid: « Sententia istorum versuum est secundum rationem in qua dicitur. Idcirco abominatus sum quae desiderabam: ipsemet consolatus sum cum sederem in puluere.” Cf *Guide* III, 23, p 493.

³⁹⁴Wohlman, Avital, *Thomas d’Aquin et Maïmonide : un dialogue exemplaire*, p 253.

³⁹⁵*Dux Neutorum*, lib.I, cap.IV, fol.6: “Scias quod verbum videndi...totum hoc est apprehensio intellectus, et non visio oculorum.” Cf *Guide* I, 4, pp 27-28.

³⁹⁶ Wohlman, Avital, *Maïmonide et Thomas d’Aquin: Un dialogue impossible*, p 75: “La révélation divine a ainsi ouvert devant Job le champ immense de l’activité spécifiquement humaine qui consiste à élargir les limites de la connaissance et à percevoir ainsi la transcendance de Dieu qui ne ressemble en rien à ce qui est.”

³⁹⁷Ibid. lib.III, cap.XXIII, fol.85: “quicquid adversitatis accidit Iob, scitum fuit a Creatore: et quod ipse induxit super Iob mala illa.” Cf *Guide* III, 23, p 490.

terms applied to God and the radical difference between our thinking and His thinking.³⁹⁸ Maimonides finally calls this discovery by Job, the object of the *Book of Job* as a whole.

I refer to the establishing of this foundation for the belief and the drawing attention to the inference to be drawn from natural matters, so that you should not fall into error and seek to affirm in your imagination that His knowledge is like our knowledge or that His purpose and His providence and His governance are like our purpose and our providence and our governance. If man knows this, every misfortune will be borne lightly by Him.³⁹⁹

True knowledge of God, Job eventually learns, assures happiness. This knowledge endows one with a kind of ontological immunity such that, one is never troubled in any way by any misfortune.⁴⁰⁰ We repeat once more how Maimonides describes this new state of awareness:

If a man's thought is free from distraction, if he apprehends Him, may He be exalted in the right way and rejoices in what he apprehends, that individual can never be afflicted with evil of any kind. For he is with God and God is with him.⁴⁰¹

Most earlier and modern commentators are agreed to this second form of providence that Job acquires as a result of his prophetic revelation. Touati describes it as a form of providence where all contingencies have no value, where Job is filled by the divine presence and no evil can touch him.⁴⁰² Reines calls it "ontological providence," which functions in two ways: first by giving man a mode of consciousness or psychic activity that provides him with a life of felicity and

³⁹⁸Ibid, fol.86: "Cura vero illius non est sicut nostra: et modus regiminis eius in creaturis: non est sicut modus nostri regiminis in iis quae regimus." Cf *Guide* III, 23, p 496: "But the notion of His providence is not the same as the notion of our providence; nor is the notion of His governance of the things created by Him the same as the notion of our governance of that which we govern. The two notions are not comprised in the same definition, contrary to what is thought by all those who are confused, and there is nothing in common between the two except the name alone."

³⁹⁹Ibid : « Haec igitur fuit intentio libri Iob : generaliter nobis dare hanc principalitatem in fide nostra, et docere sup istis probationibus cum rebus naturalibus ut non erres et quaeras in cogitatione tua ut sit eius sapientia sicut sapientia nostra: vel eius intentio et eius cura et eius regimen : sicut intentio nostra et cura nostra et regimen nostrum. Cum vero istud sciverit homo, omnis adversitas fit ei levis : » Cf *Guide* III, 23, p 497.

⁴⁰⁰Ibid : « Cum vero scivit Creatorem scientia vera, concessit quod profectus verus, quae est scientia Creatoris, est praesto scienti eum : et nulla tentatio de istis omnibus peruerteret sensum eius. » Cf *Guide* III, 23, pp 492-493.

⁴⁰¹Ibid. lib.III, cap.LII : « Ut habeat cogitationem mundam et claram : et ut apprehendat creatorem per vias veras : et qui delectabitur super hoc quod apprehendit. Et isti tali numquam potest accidere malum quodcumque de numero malorum : quia est cum creatore, et creato cum eo. » Cf *Guide* III, 51, p 625.

⁴⁰²Touati, Charles, *Prophètes, Talmudistes, Philosophes*, p 156 : « dans son monde, toutes les contingences sont supprimées. Il n'a plus rien à réclamer à Dieu puisqu'il est comblé de sa présence. Aucun malheur ne peut plus l'atteindre. »

prevents all suffering; and second by giving man immortality.⁴⁰³ Eisen describes this providence as providing psychological immunity to suffering.⁴⁰⁴ The mechanism behind this providence is the notion of the acquired intellect which we have examined earlier in the section dealing with one of the foundations of Maimonides's teaching on providence. As a fully actualized intellect, the acquired intellect is separate from the body and emanates upon the body.⁴⁰⁵ Altmann interprets this action of emanating upon the body to mean that the human intellect determines the actions performed by man.⁴⁰⁶ It directs man away from danger and ensures his protection "for the thing that necessarily brings about providence and deliverance from the sea of chance consists in that intellectual overflow."⁴⁰⁷ Away from that intellectual overflow, and thus deprived of providence, man suffers. The observation of Guttman corroborates our thinking on the importance of the human intellect and its decisive role in creating a communion with the divine overflow, the communion Job lacked but which he recovered.

By means of this link of communion, man becomes worthy of that guidance in which God shapes his destiny. God warns him of the approach of external dangers, and thus extends his protection. Divine providence does not, therefore, mean interference with the external course of nature, but is transferred to the inner life of man, where it is founded on the natural connection between the human and the divine spirit.⁴⁰⁸

Job arrives at intellectual perfection and a perfect love of God. He realizes the joy of knowing God and the futility of attaching to corruptible material goods that are mere "dust and ashes." As a result, unlike Eliphaz and the other friends, Maimonides notes that Job because of his "correct

⁴⁰³Reines, Alvin J, "Maimonides' concepts of Providence and Theodicy," pp 188-191. For the importance of the intellect in Maimonides' view on immortality, consult Altmann, Alexander, "Maimonides on the Intellect and the Scope of Metaphysics," pp 85-91; for the intricacies involved in Maimonides' treatment of immortality, consult, Kreisel, Howard, *Maimonides' Political Thought*, pp 141-150; earlier on in the same book, Kreisel said: "For Maimonides, immortality results only with the attainment of intellectual perfection, whether the individual be a Jew or a gentile." p 70; Cf Oliver Leaman, *Maimonides*, pp 115-128.

⁴⁰⁴Eisen, Robert, *The Book of Job in Medieval Jewish Philosophy*, p 66.

⁴⁰⁵*Dux Neutrorum*, lib.I, cap.LXXI, fol.32: "intellectus adepti ad hominem qui non est virtutis in corpore, sed est abstractus a corpore abstractione vera: et effundit de splendore virtutis suae super ipsum. » Cf *Guide* I, 72, p 193.

⁴⁰⁶Altmann, Alexander, "Maimonides on the Intellect and the Scope of Metaphysics," p 80.

⁴⁰⁷*Dux Neutrorum*, lib III, cap. LII, fol.111: "quoniam illud quod efficit quod cura dei sit fixa in homine et ut evadat mala quae possunt accidere, est splendor intellectus: » Cf *Guide* III, 51, p 625.

⁴⁰⁸Guttman, Julius, *Philosophies of Judaism*, translated by David W. Silverman, (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1964), p 171.

apprehension,” is singled out for praise by God: “*For ye have not spoken of Me the thing that is right, as My servant Job hath.*”⁴⁰⁹

Job before his encounter with Elihu, has taken possession, children and health, as the ultimate good of man without knowing that these ‘goods’ are attached to matter, which for Maimonides is the source of evil because it prevents access to intellectual perfection which is the source of providence. Under the influence of Aristotle, Maimonides considers evil as privation, that is, the absence of a given *habitus* that a subject should ordinarily have. As privation, evil does not have a substantial existence and could not be a result of a causative agent.⁴¹⁰ Thus, the “evil” which Job has suffered, is according to Maimonides, not substantially evil since such does not exist. What exists is matter, the source of evil. Matter has it in its nature to be receptive, indeterminate, impermanent and corruptible.⁴¹¹ It is the cause of all passing away and deficiency. It never attains perfection because it is always suffering from a lack (privation). Maimonides describes matter figuratively as a “married harlot” who is never satiated in its desire for men.⁴¹² Form here is seen as powerless before the correlative force of matter.⁴¹³ Pursuing his thoughts, Maimonides makes matter responsible for all the evil that befalls man since it is an obstacle, a ‘dark veil’ preventing man from apprehending intellectual realities,⁴¹⁴ and knowing the real world. Thus, sitting in the comforts of his possession, children and health, Job thought he had found happiness whereas he was being led by the imagination, a corporeal faculty in man based on matter. As well put by Maimonides:

He who has obtained these luxuries has not gained thereby an increment in his substance.
He has only obtained a false imagining or a plaything.⁴¹⁵

⁴⁰⁹*Dux Neutorum*, lib.III, cap.XXIII, fol.85: “Non fuisti locutus tecum coram me sicut seruus meus Iob.” Job 42: 7; Cf *Guide* III, 23, p 493.

⁴¹⁰Ibid. lib.III, cap.XI, fol.75: “Post ista igitur omnia quae praemisimus scito quod de Creatore non dicitur praecise quod ipse faciat malum, id est, quod ipse habeat primam intentionem faciendi malum.” Cf *Guide* III, 10, p 439-40.

⁴¹¹ Ibid. lib.I, cap.XXVII, fol.10: “quia materia sicut scis semper recipit ab alio, cum probatur eius substantia: et non est actu, nisi per accidens.” Cf *Guide* I, 28, p 61.

⁴¹²Ibid. lib.III, IX, fol.74: “Quod dulcia sunt verba Salomonis in sapientia sua cum comparat et assimilat materiam mulieri vagae et coniugatae: quia non invenitur materia nisi cum forma ullo modo. » Cf *Guide* III, 8, p 431.

⁴¹³ Dobbs-Weinstein, Idit, “Matter as Creature and Matter as Source of Evil: Maimonides and Aquinas,” in Lenn E. Goodman, ed., *Neoplatonism and Jewish Thought* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992), p 225.

⁴¹⁴*Dux Neutorum*, lib.III, cap.X, fol.75: “Materia paries magnus est ante nos: unde non apprehendimus intelligentiam separatam secundum quod est quamvis sit materia nobilis et limpida.” Cf *Guide* III, 9, p 436f.

⁴¹⁵Ibid. lib.III, cap.XIII, fol.77: “Ille namque qui acquisivit praedicta additamenta non acquisivit aliquod additamentum in substantia sua : sed acquisivit vana quaedam et superflua. » Cf *Guide* III, 12, p 447.

Imagination is a lower level of consciousness that distorts reality and does not offer valid criteria for a proper grasp of reality.⁴¹⁶ Job never applied his intellect and never really understood the nature of his suffering. He was led by imagination and was never in touch with the real world. For Maimonides, the real world can be grasped by reason. The only perfection that Job needed to enjoy divine providence and to understand the workings of the real world is what he mostly lacked, intellectual perfection.⁴¹⁷ It is intellectual perfection that gives man “permanent endurance” under the “divine overflow” and protects man from evil. The implication of this is that all the categories of evil enumerated by Maimonides—metaphysical, social and moral—that we have earlier examined, tend to find their solution. Moral and social evils could be avoided if man makes proper application of his intellect and follows the “governance” that comes from the divine overflow. As to metaphysical evil that entrains to death due to matter, Maimonides tends to suggest that an acquired intellect that reaches conjunction with the Active Intellect, conquers death, since it no longer depends on the material body for its operations. To clarify this, Maimonides says:

After having reached this condition of enduring permanence, that intellect remains in one and the same state, the impediment that sometimes screened him off having been removed. And he will remain in that state of intense pleasure, which does not belong to the genus of bodily pleasures.⁴¹⁸

We understand from Maimonides that this state of “*durabit in sempiternum*—permanent endurance” is not reserved for everybody. It is reserved for “a perfect man” who is “stricken with years and approaches death,” whose apprehension of God “increases very powerfully” that “the soul is separated from the body.”⁴¹⁹ But for he who has not approached death, his acquired intellect could engage in “intermittent conjunction with the Active Intellect.” Maimonides’s idea

⁴¹⁶ Ibid. lib.I, cap.LXXII, fol.35: “hoc vero non cognoscit per illam virtutem: nec est operatio illius virtutis, sicut operatio intellectus: sed est alio modo.” Cf *Guide* I, 73, p 209-10.

⁴¹⁷ Cf Altmann, Alexander, «Maimonides’s «Four Perfections, » *Essays in Jewish Intellectual History*, (Hanover : University Press of New England, 1981), pp 65-76; *Guide* III, 54, pp 634-637.

⁴¹⁸ *Dux Neutrorum*, lib.III, cap.LII, fol.112 : « Et intellectus ille durabit in sempiternum uno et eodem modo sine omni variatione : quoniam ablata sunt impedimenta quae quandoque dividebant inter ipsum et creatorem, et erit status eius in ista magna delectatione, quae non est de genere delectationis corporalis, sicut ostendimus in aggregatione nostra magna, et sicut alii ante nos docuerunt. » Cf *Guide* III, 51, p 628.

⁴¹⁹ Ibid. lib.III, cap.LII, fol.111 : « adeo quod cum homo pervenerit ad aetatem maturam: et appropinquaverit morti tunc augmentabitur apprehensio ista augmento magno : et crescet delectatio et laetitia in apprehensione illa : et intendetur amor apprehensi donec separabitur anima a corpore in ista delectatione. » Cf *Guide* III, 51, p 627.

of happiness, though not given a special treatment, is in line with Aristotle's where happiness consists primarily in the life of contemplation of the divine.⁴²⁰ In the very last chapter of the *Guide*, Maimonides examines what he describes as "*quatuor sunt genera perfectionum quae reperiuntur in homine*" but which we shall simply call "four perfections" and among these four is found Maimonides's centralized teaching on human happiness. Before he finally settles down to the division of four, it is worth noting that Maimonides had earlier divided man's perfection into two major types: the perfection of the body and an ultimate perfection, which is the perfection of the soul.

The first perfection consists in being healthy and in the very best bodily state, and this is only possible through his finding the things necessary for him whenever he seeks them. These are his food and all the other things needed for the governance of the body, such as a shelter, bathing, and so forth. This cannot be achieved in any way by one isolated individual.... His ultimate perfection is to become rational in *actu*, I mean to have an intellect in *actu* this would consist in knowing everything concerning all the beings that it is within the capacity of man to know in accordance with his ultimate perfection.⁴²¹

What we shall finally discover as the four perfections are actually the two enumerated above. The first three would be all that has got to do with man in his corporeal needs and man in his relationship with others. The last is the perfection of man *qua* man and on this perfection lies man's ultimate happiness. Let us examine them briefly.

4.0 Maimonides's Four Perfections and Human Happiness

It is very interesting that Maimonides limits his treatment to 'four perfections' on the strength of the "ancient and the modern philosophers" who "have made it clear that the perfections to be

⁴²⁰Ibid. lib.III, cap.XXIII, fol.85 : « concessit quod profectus verus, quae est scientia Creatoris : » Cf *Guide* III, 23, p 492.

⁴²¹ Ibid. lib.III, cap.XXVIII, fol.89 : « Prima perfectio est ut sit sanus in optima dispositione virium naturalium : quod non potest contingere nisi cum invenit necessaria quando ea requirit scilicet victum et alia corpori necessaria vel utilia sicut Balneum. Istud autem non potest perfici ab uno homine solo... Ultima vero perfectio hominis est ut fiat rationale actu scilicet ut habeat intellectum in actu : et hoc est ut sciat quicquid in potestate est hominis scire de universitate entium secundum perfectionem suam ultimam. » Cf *Guide* III, 27, p 511.

found in man consist of four species.”⁴²² Maimonides’s debt to Aristotle is never in doubt. But Altmann has argued that Maimonides’s treatment is an adaptation taken from Ibn Bajja’s *Letter of Farewell*.⁴²³ A very close reading of Maimonides’s four perfections would reveal four criteria that Maimonides considers very necessary in determining a true human perfection. They include: (A) it must be an end in itself; (B) it must be permanent; (C) it must not be shareable with other persons—in the sense that it cannot be taken away by others; and (D) it must subsist in the individual self and perfect it. We must examine the perfections on the background of these criteria and find their applications in the case of Job—“a righteous and perfect man” who suffered calamities “with respect to his fortune, his children, and his body.”⁴²⁴ We could as well argue that Maimonides’s hierarchy of perfections is meant to streamline and destroy the said evils suffered by Job, in order to bring to light, the importance of intellectual perfection, the only perfection that Job never had.⁴²⁵ Another important fact to note is that Maimonides’s examination of each of the perfections always followed a three-layered pattern. In the first place, he examines the said perfection; then he considers the relation of the said perfection with the individual person possessing it, and finally, Maimonides gives his personal appraisal of the perfection. It has been argued that the four perfections parallel the four senses of the term *sapientia*—wisdom [*hokhmah*] that we have seen above.⁴²⁶

4.1 Material Perfection:

The first of the perfections Maimonides tells us, consists in the “perfection of possessions—that is, of what belongs to the individual in the manner of money, garments, tools, slaves, land and

⁴²²Ibid. lib.III, cap.LV, fol.113: “Philosophi tam primi quam ultimi ostenderunt quod quatuor sunt genera perfectionum quae reperiuntur in homine. » Cf *Guide* III, 54, p 634.

⁴²³ Cf Altmann, Alexander, “Maimonides’s Four Perfections,” in *Essays in Jewish Intellectual History* (Hanover: University Press of England, 1981) pp 65-76; “Ibn Bajja on Man’s Ultimate Felicity,” in *Studies in Religious Philosophy and Mysticism* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1969) pp 73-107.

⁴²⁴*Dux Neutrorum*, lib III, cap. XXIII: “Scilicet quod sit homo iustus, perfectus, intelligens ... contingunt ei multae tribulationes et adversitates in his quae possidet, et in filiis, et in corpore suo.” Cf *Guide* III, 22, p 487.

⁴²⁵ In a little monograph, Kellner has argued that intellectual perfection “is not the highest state open to human beings. This highest state consists of practical action of a certain kind in the world after one has achieved intellectual perfection.” Cf Menachem Kellner, *Maimonides on Human Perfection*, (Atlanta, Georgia: Scholars Press, 1990, (Brown Judaic Studies; 202) p 62. What he fails to address however, is how this position affects the condition of Job who is morally virtuous by his observance of the commandments and who has need for intellectual perfection and union with God.

⁴²⁶ Cf Faur, José, *Homo Mysticus*, p 244 note 228.

other things of this kind.”⁴²⁷ This is a material perfection since it comprises of only material goods.⁴²⁸ These goods do not actually belong to the one who possesses them since they can also be shared by others. Thus, this perfection does not constitute in itself, an end. Between the possessions and the one who has them, there is no ontological relation, since they remain external and add nothing to the being of the possessor. Even the pleasure that comes from such possessions is considered by Maimonides as *delectatio mentis*. Job in his possessions thought he had found happiness. The reality of his delusion became clear to him when all his possessions were taken away from him. How does Maimonides appraise this perfection seeing that it has failed the test of the four criteria? He does that in three heavy sentences: this possession is most defective, it has no permanence and it is purely imaginary.⁴²⁹ Even if the possessions were to outlive the human possessor, it would still add nothing to the essence of the human person. All these possessions could not guarantee the happiness of Job.

4.2 Bodily Perfection:

The second of the perfections is what Maimonides calls “the perfection of the bodily constitution and shape—I refer to that individual’s temperament being most harmonious, his limbs well proportioned and strong as they ought to be.”⁴³⁰ Job before his trials is a vivid image of a corporeal perfection. The importance of good health is not to be denied. But Maimonides sees it as only ‘a corporeal perfection that does not belong to man *qua* man, but *qua* animal.’⁴³¹ Man shares this with animals and in most cases animals possess it better than man. Even though this perfection has a closer connection to the individual self, Maimonides considers it irrelevant to the essence of man. It cannot be an end in itself but only a means to boosting the health of the soul and it is not a permanent good.⁴³²

⁴²⁷ *Dux Neutorum*, lib III, cap. LV, fol.113 : « Haec autem est perfectio divitiarum quae consistunt in pecunia, et in pannis, et in utensilibus, et in servis, et in possessionibus, et in his similibus. » Cf *Guide* III, 54, p 634.

⁴²⁸ Rudavsky, T. M., *Maimonides*, p 192.

⁴²⁹ *Dux Neutorum*, lib III, cap. LV, fol.113 : « Primum genus perfectionis est imperfectius omnibus aliis...inter hanc autem perfectionem et hominem nulla est coniunctio sed delectatio mentis...omnia talia inveniet extra se...quoniam istud non durat. » Cf *Guide* III, 54, p 634.

⁴³⁰ Ibid : « Haec est perfectio compositionis corporis sui et formae suae, et membrorum suorum, cum prima componentia sunt sicut esse debent et membra sua sunt coequalia et robusta sicut oportet. » Cf *Guide* III, 54, p 634.

⁴³¹ Ibid : « quae non convenit homini secundum quod est homo sed inquantum est animal. » Cf *Guide* III, 54, p 634.

⁴³² Ibid: « Haec autem species perfectionis non vocatur finis: quia est perfectio corporalis. » Cf *Guide* III, 54, p 634.

4.3 Moral Perfection:

The third is the perfection of the moral virtues.⁴³³ Maimonides presents Job as the perfect image of a moral perfection since he is described as “a righteous and perfect man.”⁴³⁴ Because it is a perfection that subsists in the individual self, Maimonides considers it to be of a higher value. But its subsistence in the individual is not for the perfection of the individual but for the perfection of the other since it is a perfection that helps an individual in his relation with another.⁴³⁵ Were an individual to live alone, there would be no need for moral perfection and neither would there be any need for practical action. Job enjoyed high praises from his fellow men because he conducted himself in a just and upright manner. Being an instrumental perfection, Maimonides concludes that it is not an end in itself and thus, cannot perfect the individual in anything. Although it fails the test of finality and permanency, (A and B above), nevertheless, Maimonides attaches some importance to the moral virtues as necessary for the acquisition of intellectual perfection.⁴³⁶ This is in the sense where one who engages in intellectual contemplation must be capable of controlling his emotions and directing his thoughts to their objective. The man who possesses the moral qualities of tranquility and quiet can easily ascend to the contemplation of intelligibles.

4.4 Rational Perfection

The fourth and the highest of all perfections consist “in the acquisition of the rational virtues—I refer to the conception of intelligibles, which teach true opinions concerning the divine

⁴³³ Ibid: “Tertia species...est perfectio morum corporalium, scilicet ut sint mores hominis in fine debitae perfectionis.” Cf *Guide* III, 54, p 635.

⁴³⁴ Ibid. lib.III, cap.XXIII, fol.84: “Postea dixit quod ille iustus, rectus et perfectus fuit traditus in manus Sathan.” Cf *Guide* III, 22, p 487.

⁴³⁵ Ibid. lib.III, cap.LV, fol.113: « Haec autem species refertur et quasi derivatur ad alios nec est finis substantiae proprie: quia mores partim respiciunt illum qui habet, partim alios qui sunt extra ipsum et hoc est sicut si perfectio ista morum esset facta ad commodum hominum. » Cf *Guide* III, 54, p 635.

⁴³⁶ Ibid. lib.I, cap.XXXIII, fol.13: “Probatum enim est quoniam complexio corporis est stramentum morum animae, et in nullo homine possunt esse mores intelligibiles, et perfecti: nisi in illo qui eligit mores bonos, et exercet illos, et habet sensum quietum, et pacatum. » Cf *Guide* I, 34, p 76.

things.”⁴³⁷ Job from the beginning does not have true opinions concerning the divine and its relation to the world.⁴³⁸ It is the possession of rational virtues in the contemplation of the divine that Aristotle calls happiness—an activity of the soul.⁴³⁹ The rational virtues can be acquired through the contemplation of intelligibles.⁴⁴⁰ While the other perfections are material and have to do with the body, this perfection has to do with the immaterial part of man, his soul and especially the intellect. Maimonides calls it “the true human perfection.” Unlike others, this is intimately and ontologically connected to the individual self and perfects it. Once possessed, it subsists and endures in the possessor. It involves an activity in man that does not include external actions or moral qualities. Job’s realization of this intellectual consciousness is evidenced by the fact that when “he knew God with a certain knowledge,” according to Maimonides, “he admitted that true happiness, which is the knowledge of the deity, is guaranteed to all who know Him and that a human being cannot be troubled in it by any of all the misfortunes in question.”⁴⁴¹ Aristotle describes the activity of contemplation as the most superior in value, self-sufficient in itself and an end in itself.⁴⁴² Maimonides follows the same trend in qualifying this perfection thus:

This is in true reality the ultimate end; this is what gives the individual true perfection, a perfection belonging to him alone; and it gives him permanent endurance; through it man is man.⁴⁴³

We have earlier seen the place of the intellect in establishing a bond of communication between man and the divine and in the acquisition of divine providence. It is this bond—permanent endurance—that secures man’s immortality. The value is inestimable that Maimonides advises everyone: “you ought to desire to achieve this thing, which will remain permanently with you,

⁴³⁷Ibid. lib.III, cap.LV, fol.113: “Quarta species est hominis perfectio vera et consistit in acquisitione moralium scilicet intelligilia per quae acquiruntur credulitates rectae in rebus spiritualibus. » Cf *Guide* III, 54, p 635.

⁴³⁸ Ibid. lib III, cap.XXIII, fol.84: “non dixit de Iob quod erat vir sapiens et intelligens.” Cf *Guide* III, 22, p 487.

⁴³⁹ NE 1, 9, 1099b25-30.

⁴⁴⁰ *Dux Neutrorum*, lib.III, cap.IX, fol.74: “Finem vero suum ponat illud quod debet esse finis hominis in quantum est homo scilicet ut intelligat intelligibilia solummodo: et eligat ex eis honorabiliora et magis eligenda. Et haec est scientia Creatoris et angelorum, et aliorum operum eius secundum posse suum. » Cf *Guide* III, 8, p 432.

⁴⁴¹*Dux Neutrorum*, lib.III, cap.XXIII, fol.85: Cum vero scivit Creatorem scientia vera, concessit quod profectus verus, quae est scientia Creatoris, est praesto scienti eum : et nulla tentatio de istis omnibus perverteret sensum eius. » Cf *Guide* III, 23, p 492f.

⁴⁴² NE 10, 7, 1177b15-25.

⁴⁴³*Dux Neutrorum*, lib III, cap. LV, fol.113: « Hic autem est ultimus finis qui perficit hominem perfectione vera, et sunt sui solummodo : et dant ei vitam et permanentiam sempiternam, et propter hoc homo vocatur homo. » Cf *Guide* III, 54, p 635.

and not weary and trouble yourself for the sake of others.”⁴⁴⁴ Hence there is the necessity to take care of one’s soul, lest it be dominated by corporeal faculties and needs. But this manner of speaking does not privilege individual immortality. According to Altmann, “the phrase “the thing that survives,” which Maimonides is fond of using, therefore seems to have been deliberately chosen to indicate that what survives is not an individual, personal entity but a “thing,” an objective rather than subjective being, i.e. intellect qua *intelligibilia* rather than qua *intelligens*.”⁴⁴⁵ Care must be taken however, not to interpret Maimonides as if he is completely derogating the importance of the body. He does acknowledge that true human perfection is to be achieved only when the essential conditions are fulfilled, that is, only “after the first perfection has been achieved.”⁴⁴⁶ This last addition is recognition by Maimonides, of the importance of the material and bodily goods for the achievement of intellectual perfection. Before engaging in contemplation, the body must be in perfect equilibrium with itself less the pains of ill health or hunger constitute major distractions to his intellectual activity.

Does man’s intellectual perfection bring him into the direct knowledge of the divine essence? The conjunction of man’s acquired intellect with the Active Intellect leads to man’s highest perfection, and this means that man in intellectual contemplation, could come into contact with the separate intelligences even in this life. Maimonides often repeats that the bond between us and the separate intelligences is the intellect.⁴⁴⁷ The strength or weakness of that contact depends on how much one is ready to render his soul “worthy of it by training of this kind.”⁴⁴⁸ Maimonides describes one whose intellect has entered into conjunction with the object of his apprehension like “one who is in the pure light of the sun.”⁴⁴⁹ But this conjunction with the

⁴⁴⁴ Ibid : « Idcirco studere debes ut acquiras hanc perfectionem quae tua erit, et non studeas neque labores aliis; » Cf *Guide* III, 54, p 635.

⁴⁴⁵ Altmann, Alexander, « Maimonides on the Intellect and the Scope of Metaphysics,” p 87.

⁴⁴⁶ Ibid. lib.III, cap.XXVIII, fol.89: “Sed post acquisitionem primae perfectionis oportet ut acquiratur ultima quae dignior est sine dubio: » Cf *Guide* III, 27, p 511. In other words, bodily constitution plays a major role in man’s acquisition of intellectual perfection. Cf Gad Freudenthal, “The Biological Limitations of Man’s Intellectual Perfection According to Maimonides,” in Georges Tamer, ed., *The Trias of Maimonides*, (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2005) pp 137-149.

⁴⁴⁷ *Dux Neutorum*, lib III, cap. LII, fol.110: “et crescet coniunctio quae est inter te et ipsum et hic est intellectus... » Cf *Guide* III, 51, p 620: “If however, you have apprehended God and His acts in accordance with what is required by the intellect, you should afterwards engage in totally devoting yourself to Him, endeavor to come closer to Him, and strengthen the bond between you and Him—that is, the intellect.”

⁴⁴⁸ Ibid. lib.III, cap.LII, fol.110: « Hunc autem finem sicut mihi videtur, poterit acquirere qui exercuerit animam suam de viris sapientibus in studio disciplinae. » Cf *Guide* III, 51, p 623.

⁴⁴⁹ Ibid : « est sicut ille qui est in luce solis clara : » Cf *Guide* III, 51, p 625.

intelligences cannot be permanent because of the distractions arising from man's material composition.

For it is impossible that it should be achieved while the bodily humors are in effervescence. Yet in the measure in which the faculties of the body are weakened and the fire of the desires is quenched, the intellect is strengthened, its lights achieve a wider extension, its apprehension is purified, and it rejoices in what it apprehends.⁴⁵⁰

What is not very certain though, is that man could arrive at the knowledge of the divine essence through knowing the separate intelligences. Among other things, Maimonides maintains the ontological difference and distance between the separate intelligences and the divine essence, the Necessarily Existent. While the separate intelligences are possible by themselves but necessary by another, the divine essence is necessary by itself and does not admit of possibility in any way whatsoever. This means that the separate intelligences are composed beings and do not enjoy equality with the simple divine essence. Moreover, the divine essence according to Maimonides is unknowable.⁴⁵¹ Hence, it enters within the epistemological principles of Maimonides that man's happiness could consist in the knowledge of the separate intelligences but he could never arrive at the knowledge of the divine essence. To know God entails knowing Him as He really is in His essence. This is how Maimonides presents it in his treatise, *'The Eight Chapters:'*

Car la connaissance parfaite de Dieu consiste à le connaître tel qu'il est dans son essence : sa science, sa puissance, sa volonté, sa vie et tous ses attributs sublimes. Ainsi, nous avons montré que la spéculation en vue de saisir la science de Dieu est pure folie... Si donc l'on nous demande quelle est la nature de sa science, nous répondrons que nous ne pouvons la comprendre, pas plus que nous ne pouvons saisir parfaitement son essence.⁴⁵²

Even after death, is this perfect knowledge of the divine essence possible and in what form? Maimonides does not seem to have any clear response to this question. But going by his

⁴⁵⁰Ibid: "Unitas siquidem est una de vanitatibus opinari quod cogitationes istae clare inveniri possunt in feruore mixturae corporis : qua quanto magis debilitatae fuerint potentiae corporales : et extinguetur ignis concupiscentiae : confortabitur intellectus, et lumen eius effundetur, et apprehensio illius erit clara et polita in eo quod apprehendit. » Cf *Guide* III, 51, p 627.

⁴⁵¹Ibid. lib.I, cap.LVII, fol.22: "Et non appraehendimus nisi essentiam eius non quidditatem ipsius. » Cf *Guide* I, 58, p 135.

⁴⁵² *Le Guide des égarés suivi du Traité des huit chapitres*, p 684.

epistemology, there can never be individual knowledge of the divine essence and hence no individual immortality.⁴⁵³ It does seem that he follows Ibn Bajja on this matter:

Now you know that regarding the things separate from matter—I mean those that are neither bodies nor forces in bodies, but intellects—there can be no thought of multiplicity of any mode whatever...Consequently all are one in number, as Abu Bakr Ibn al-Saigh and others who were drawn into speaking of these obscure matters have made clear.⁴⁵⁴

On the contrary, there could be a conjunction of the intellects with the Active Intellect. What is certain according to Maimonides is that man's intellectual apprehension and thus his ultimate happiness becomes stronger at the separation of matter. He above all, acquires the status of enduring permanence in that state of happiness. For Maimonides, "he will remain permanently in that state of intense pleasure—*magna delectatione*, which does not belong to the genus of bodily pleasures, as we have explained in our compilations and as others have explained before us."⁴⁵⁵ The difficulties or the darkness in Maimonides's explanations concerning the attainment of ultimate happiness, and the nature of man's immortality,⁴⁵⁶ would play into Aquinas's hands as he would shed light to some of Maimonides's darkness, and gladly bring Job to the ultimate happiness of the beatific vision.

⁴⁵³ Hayoun, Maurice-Ruben, *Maïmonide et La Pensée Juive*, p 240 : « L'âme humaine est une malgré la multiplicité de ses facultés. Mais son mode d'immortalité n'est pas forcément individuel car, une fois la matière disparue, il n'y a plus de cause d'individuation et l'âme immortalisée devrait se fondre dans l'ensemble homogène constitué par d'autres âmes. »

⁴⁵⁴ *Dux Neutrorum*, lib.I, cap.LXXIII, fol.37 : "Quod autem debes scire de rebus abstractis : quae nec sunt corpora, nec virtutes in corporibus : sed sunt intellectus abstracti : est quod non oportet ut cogitetur etiam multiplicatio ullo modo...Et idcirco erunt unum numero sicut explanavit Albumazer Maurus, et quicumque alius locutus est in istis profunditatibus. » Cf *Guide* I, 74, p 221.

⁴⁵⁵ Ibid. lib III, cap. LII, fol.112: "Et erit status eius in ista magna delectatione, quae non est de genere delectationis corporalis, sicut ostendimus in aggregatione nostra magna, et sicut alii ante nos docuerunt. » Cf *Guide* III, 51, p 628.

⁴⁵⁶ Alcoloumbre, Thierry, *Maïmonide et le problème de la personne*, p 64 : « Quand l'intellect, pleinement actualisé, parvient à la séparation de la matière et à l'immortalité, on peut alors se demander si c'est encore quelque chose de nous qui subsiste : le « soi-même » qu'on trouve dans l'intellection n'a plus grand chose à voir avec la particularité de chacun ; puisque notre intellection en acte s'identifie avec les intelligibles pensés (et au mieux avec l'intellect actif), on conçoit mal comment Pierre ou Paul qui connaissent le même objet, resteraient après leur mort deux personnes distinctes. »

5.0 Resolving the Purported Contradictions on Providence

Concerning the purported contradiction in Maimonides's treatment of providence, we would rather think that the texts of Maimonides prove the contrary. (a) The motivation that took Maimonides into this study is the lack of order in the circumstances of the human individuals: just people suffer while evil people prosper. Maimonides expresses the same purpose in the earlier chapters of providence-*Guide* III, 16, 17, and 18 and the Job chapters 22-24 as well as in the latter chapter 51.⁴⁵⁷ (b) His purpose for interpreting the various opinions on providence, the *Book of Job* and the controversial chapter 51 are all the same: "through it great enigmas are solved, and truths than which none is higher become clear." Maimonides calls the two passages "extraordinary."⁴⁵⁸ (c) In both the earlier and the latter chapters, providence remains a function of the intellect and even increases or decreases according to the disposition of the receiver.⁴⁵⁹ (d) Maimonides has always maintained that providence according to the intellect assures protection from physical harms.⁴⁶⁰ Thus Maimonides has not said anything contrary to what he has all along made known to us—providence is consequent upon the intellect.

⁴⁵⁷Cf Ibid, lib.III, cap.XVII, fol.79: "Quod autem fecit eos evagari et induxit eos in hoc, primo est illud quod apparet in principio cogitationis de malitia ordinis diversitatum hominum: et quod quidam hominum sancti scilicet sunt in afflictione." Cf *Guide* III, 16, p 461; 22, p 487: "I refer to the assertion that a righteous and perfect man, who was just in his actions and is most careful to avoid sins, was stricken," and lib III, cap. LII, fol.111: "Probatio vero ipsorum super hoc erat, qua vibebant sanctis et iustis accidere magnas occasiones et in his omnibus propalatum est secretum." Cf *Guide* III, 51, p 625: "For their proof for this opinion was the fact that excellent and good men experienced great misfortunes."

⁴⁵⁸*Dux Neutrorum*, lib III, cap.XXIII, fol.84: "Ratio mirabilis de Iob attinet rationi in qua sumus." Cf *Guide* III, 22, p 486: "The story of Job, which is extraordinary and marvelous, belongs to the kind of things we are discussing." And lib III, cap.LII, fol.111: "Visum est autem mihi modo ut rememorem rationem quamdam mirabilem quae dubitationes errores solvet, et revelabuntur in ea secreta specialia." Cf *Guide* III, 51, p 624: «A most extraordinary speculation has occurred to me just now through which doubts may be dispelled and divine secrets revealed."

⁴⁵⁹Cf Ibid.lib.III, cap.XVIII, fol.82: quia cura non erit nisi in eo qui habuerit intellectum. » Cf *Guide* III, 17, p 474: "Providence is consequent upon the intellect and attached to it." And also: ibid. lib.III, cap.XIX, fol.82: "Tunc ergo cura specialis in omnibus singularibus speciei hominum non erit aequalis, sed erit in eis praeeminentia curae, sicut est ibi praeeminentia intellectus humani." Cf *Guide* III, 18, p 475: "Accordingly divine providence does not watch in an equal manner over all the individuals of the human species, but providence is graded as their human perfection is graded." Cf lib III, cap. LII, fol.111: "Quoniam omnis qui sic est aptus, quod super ipsum effusus est intellectus iste, sequetur in ipso cura: et non adhaerebunt ei mala. » Cf III, 51, p 626: "everyone who has rendered himself so worthy that the intellect in question overflows toward him, has providence attached to him;" Ibid: "Sed cum deviaverit ab eo, absconditur ipse a creatore, et creator ab eo: et tunc est expositus omni casui accidenti et omni impedimento quod potest accidere." Cf *Guide* III, 51, p 625: "when however, he abandons Him, may He be exalted, and is thus separated from God and God separated from him, he becomes in consequence of this a target for every evil that may happen to befall him."

⁴⁶⁰Ibid. lib.III, cap.XIX, fol.82: "Ista ratio dicit quod salus quorundam hominum et salvatio ab accidentibus, et aliorum ruina in ipsis accidentibus, non est secundum fortitudinem corporum suorum: et secundum aptitudinem naturalem ... sed hoc est secundum perfectionem et imperfectionem, idest secundum appropinquationem ad Creatorem, vel elongationem ab eo. Et propter hoc illi qui propinqui erant ei, fuerunt in fine curae, sicut dictum est,

6.0 INTERPRETING EVIL AS THE ABSENCE OF PROVIDENCE

The goal of this present chapter is to corroborate what we have been saying in our reading of Job, by some practical application of our theory of providence where the presence of evil or suffering, could be explained as the absence or privation of providence. The subject case is the interpretation of the fall of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. Maimonides would explain that one's protection from evil is assured as long as he perfects his intellect and comes into "epistemic" connection with the divine providential overflow coming through the Active Intellect. He receives some kind of intellectual assistance that directs him away from danger and toward safety. He, who does not perfect his intellect, degrades his ontological status to that of animals abandoned to whatever might happen to them. He like animals is outside of the divine providential overflow.

6.1 The Intellect as the Medium of Divine Providence

The Maimonidean Worldview, as our study all along shows, is a close-knit universe under the ultimate governance of an incorporeal cause, God. Under the influence of the Arabic peripatetics, Maimonides describes this universe as constituted by a hierarchy of emanating incorporeal intelligences, the last of which is the Active Intellect.⁴⁶¹ The sublunar region inhabited by man is the direct work of the Active Intellect which functions by means of "overflow-that is the action of one that is separate from matter."⁴⁶² Thus, if there must be any relationship between God and the world, this must be indirect since passing by the means of the separate intelligences. God's providence, in Maimonides's philosophical thinking, must then be described as a permanent

Pedes sanctorum suorum seruat. Cf *Guide* III, 18, p 476: «It says thereby that the fact that some individuals are preserved from calamities, whereas those befall others, is due not to their bodily forces and their natural dispositions...but to their perfection and deficiency, I mean their nearness to or remoteness from, God. For this reason, those who are near to Him are exceedingly well protected.» Cf *Ibid.* lib.III, cap.LII, fol.111: "Ut habeat cogitationem mundam et claram: et ut apprehendat creatorem per vias veras: et qui delectabitur super hoc quod apprehendit. » Cf *Guide* III, 51, p 625: "If a man's thought is free from distraction, if he apprehends Him, may He be exalted, in the right way and rejoices in what he apprehends, that individual can never be afflicted with evil of any kind. For he is with God and God is with him."

⁴⁶¹*Dux Neutrorum*, lib.II, cap.V, fol.42: "Intellectus autem decem est intelligentia agens." Cf *Guide* II, 4, pp 257-259; 11, pp 273-276. In religious language, the intellects are called 'Angels.' Cf *Guide* II, 6, p 262. 'Aristotle speaks of separate intellects, and "we speak of angels."

⁴⁶²*Ibid.* lib.II, cap.XIII, fol.46: "Hoc autem nomen largitas...quoniam non invenit nomen quod convenientius possit attribui actioni separati." Cf *Guide* II, 12, p 279.

“overflow” that can only be tapped into, by those beings endowed with the intellect. The intensity of this protection depends on the ability of one to perfect one’s intellect. Since it is only human beings that have the intellect and the ability to perfect their intellect, they alone of all the species of creation, form the object of individual providence.⁴⁶³ What this means is that those individual creations that are not endowed with the intellect, do not come under particular divine providence. They are left to chance. However, they benefit from what Maimonides, following Aristotle, has called the general providence, exercised by the means of the laws of nature and aimed at the preservation of the various species of creation. This is Maimonides’s personal teaching on providence, a teaching that is “less disgraceful than the preceding opinions,”⁴⁶⁴ because, it satisfies the two criteria which he sets out for himself: conformity to philosophical thought and conformity to the Law.⁴⁶⁵ What follows next, is the practical application of this theory in Maimonides’s interpretation of the biblical story of the fall of Adam and Eve. It may be advisable to refer back to our earlier treatment of the intellect in order to be able to get a fuller explanation of some of the key terms of this interpretation.

6.2 The Garden of Eden: Original State of Perfection

This first chapter of the first part of the *Guide* serves as a necessary prelude to the chapter that follows and a necessary key to all that would be elaborated by Maimonides on providence. It is also a central key to the interpretation of Maimonides’s view on the origin of humankind, its eventual development to ultimate perfection and the eventual loss of this perfection epitomized by the parable of the fall of man. Maimonides’s interpretation shows this fall as the catalyst that led to moral consciousness and the formation of the human society. The central theme of this chapter is the “intellect.” Other important parts that would help in the proper philosophical understanding of the parable are scattered throughout the *Guide*. Chapter 30 of the second part

⁴⁶³Ibid. lib.III, cap.XIX, fol.82: “Postquam praemisi in ratione curae quod est fixa in specie hominum solummodo inter omnes species animalium.” Cf *Guide* III, 18, p 474.

⁴⁶⁴ Ibid. lib.III, cap.XVIII, fol.81: “Huius autem opinionis quam ego credo, dubitationes sunt pauciores et inconvenientia similiter, quam opinionum quas praemisimus. Est etiam propinquior intellectui et haec est eius explanatio.” Cf *Guide* III, 17, p 471.

⁴⁶⁵ Ibid. fol.82: “Opinio illa convenit cum intellectu et cum versibus legis.” Cf *Guide* III, 18, p 474. “This is the opinion that to my mind corresponds to the intelligible and to the texts of Law.”

will prove to be a treasure mine for all interested in understanding the account of creation. Among the objectives of the *Guide* is to interpret the scripture in such a way as to negate from God all anthropomorphic images, which present God as possessing of corporeal attributes. It is an exercise in reconciling the Jewish tradition with the truths of Aristotelian philosophy.

6.3 Image and Likeness: Meaning and Implications

Maimonides then opens up the discussion by examining the biblical terms image (*selem*) and likeness (*demut*) as contained in the verse spoken by God, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.”⁴⁶⁶ The choice of this passage could not be accidental. Leo Strauss suggests that the unique significance of this passage is because “it suggests to the vulgar mind more strongly than any other biblical passage that God is corporeal in the crudest sense.”⁴⁶⁷ Why Strauss should consider this passage more important than every other passage in the bible attributing corporeal properties to God, is not very convincing. However, we tend to think that it is the very first passage in the bible talking explicitly about corporeality and thus inducing that even God could have corporeal properties. By the fact of its primacy, we consider it proper for Maimonides to begin his interpretation from there. Above all, we agree with Fox that these terms make it possible for Maimonides, “to establish at the very beginning, fundamental truths about the nature of man and the nature of God, truths that he could not establish in the same way were he to begin by considering other anthropomorphic passages in the Bible.”⁴⁶⁸ It is to these truths that Maimonides now turns. He recognizes the equivocal nature of the term “image” which could mean “the shape and the configuration of a thing,” and in certain circumstances, even a body. But the real meaning of image is according to Maimonides:

The natural form, I mean the notion in virtue of which a thing is constituted as a substance and becomes what it is. It is the true reality of the thing in so far as the latter is

⁴⁶⁶ *Dux Neutrorum*, lib.I, cap.1, fol.5: “Faciamus hominem ad imaginem et similitudinem nostram.” Cf *Guide* 1,1, p 21.

⁴⁶⁷ Strauss, Leo, “How to Begin to Study the Guide of the Perplexed,” in Maimonides, *Guide of the Perplexed*, translated by Shlomo Pines, p xxvi.

⁴⁶⁸ Fox, Marvin, *Interpreting Maimonides*, p 162.

that particular being. In man that notion is that from which human apprehension derives.⁴⁶⁹

Maimonides interprets “image” as the “natural form,” that is, the essence of man; that without which a thing could not be what it is. This essence is then called “that from which human apprehension derives.” It is very clear that Maimonides is being faithful to the philosophical tradition dating back to Aristotle, for whom, the defining characteristic of man is his rational capacity. Aristotle calls it the only difference between man and other animals. Thus instead of a physical form, Maimonides turns our mind to an inner meaning, an incorporeal essence that tells us not only about the nature of man, but also of God.⁴⁷⁰ He applies the same approach to “likeness,” which refers to “a likeness in respect of a notion and not with respect to a shape and a configuration.”⁴⁷¹ Thus to say that man is created in the “image and likeness of God,” does not refer to any corporeal likeness or quality between God and man. It refers to an incorporeal property in man, his intellectual apprehension, an incorporeality that is the hallmark of the deity. This intellectual apprehension is what is divine in man and by which he is said to resemble God. Faithful to his Neoplatonic ontology, Maimonides describes this capacity as a conjunction of the divine with man.

It was because of this something, I mean because of the divine intellect conjoined with man, that it is said of the latter that he is *in the image of God and in His likeness*, not that God, may He be exalted, is a body and possesses a shape.⁴⁷²

The above passage only but confirms that man was created as an intellectual being and destined for the life of the intellect. By the means of his intellect, man establishes a communicative link with God by tapping into the overflow of the divine intellect that ensures a permanent connection to divine providence and a flow of knowledge. This communicative link he establishes without having recourse to the senses or the corporeal organs. Thus, that by which man resembles God is

⁴⁶⁹ *Dux Neutrorum*, lib.I, cap.I, fol.5: “Nomen autem quod est celem, convenit formae naturali quae est perfectio rei et essentia: sicut est in homine intellectus humanus.” Cf *Guide* I, 1, p 22.

⁴⁷⁰ Ibid: “Haec est apprehensio intelligibilis quae non indiget aliquo membro vel sensu, assimilavit ipsum creatori qui non est corpus.” Cf *Guide* I, 1, p 23.

⁴⁷¹ Ibid: “In istis etiam et similibus est similitudo in aliqua manerie seu modo: non in figura vel forma.” Cf *Guide* I, 1, p 23.

⁴⁷² Ibid: “Et licet non habeat similitudinem in rei veritate nisi imitatio imaginis, tamen dicitur de homine secundum hunc modum, sed secundum intellectum spirituale qui est coniunctus in eo, et ideo dicitur quod est ad imaginem et similitudinem: non quod creator habeat corpus in quo sit figura.” Cf *Guide* I, 1, p 23.

not even transferrable by biological means. It must be transmitted by means of instruction and learning. This is buttressed by the fact that of all the children begotten by Adam, it is only of Seth that it is said: “And Adam lived a hundred and thirty years and begot a son in his own likeness, after his image and named him Seth.”⁴⁷³ Maimonides tells us that Seth reached human perfection because he was instructed and given understanding by Adam.⁴⁷⁴ His other sons are not described to be in the image of Adam, because lacking instruction and education, their intellectual potentialities were not developed. Lacking this human form—the intellectual apprehension, they belonged to the class of animals. José Faur captures this unique nature of humanity thus:

Although connected to human—a biological organism—Adam’s image is not a biological entity. This leads to a radical concept of humanity. Unlike other species, humanity cannot transmit its fundamental characteristics by means of biological procreation ... A fundamental premise of Maimonides’ anthropology is that Adam’s image is transmitted and developed by means of guidance and instruction ... To develop Adam’s image in a human, the mind must be properly stimulated and guided.⁴⁷⁵

It is not as if learning and instruction were compulsorily reserved only to post Adamic human beings. Even Adam himself received a kind of formation that elevated him above the animal kingdom and brought him closer to the divine nature. The biblical parable talks about God raising man and putting him in the “garden of Eden.” This special act of God on behalf of man shows the elevation, the transformation of man, the ontological change of status benefitted by man over and above the rest of the animal kingdom. But the ‘garden of Eden’ is itself an

⁴⁷³ Gen. 5:3

⁴⁷⁴ *Dux Neutrorum*, lib.I, cap.VII, fol.7: “Seth vero dictum est quod genuit eum Adam ad imaginem et similitudinem suam: quia docuit eum Adam et fecit intelligere: et adeptus est perfectionem humanam.” Cf *Guide* I, 7, p 32. The question that comes to mind is how Adam who had lost his intellectual perfection could beget a son having such intellectual perfection? The basic fact that this is not transferable by biological means facilitates the understanding of the why. Maimonides tells us on numerous occasions that one can always gain this intellectual apprehension by subjecting oneself to training. There is a silent possibility that Adam regained his intellectual perfection at some point in his life. Maimonides relying on the authority of the Midrash notes that: “cum autem invenit gratiam in oculis domini: genuit ad imaginem et similitudinem suam sicut supra dictum est.—When, however, He accorded him (Adam) His favor, he begot a son resembling him, I mean in *his own likeness, after his image*.” Cf *Ibid*: *Guide* I, 7, p 33. But even if he had not, the fact of his losing his perfection and providence that came with it, could not have prevented Adam from providing guidance and instruction to his son Seth. Adam could even have elicited the help of others.

⁴⁷⁵ Faur, José, *Homo Mysticus: A Guide to Maimonides’s Guide for the Perplexed*, (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 1999), p 128.

allegory. The external meaning would conjure up a spatio-temporal place constructed for the preservation and ultimate happiness of man. That is the understanding the philosophically untrained masses would accept. But that is an understanding of the vulgar. To uncover the apples of gold beneath the silver linings, Maimonides appeals to the reading of this chapter in the Midrash where the expression “and put him into the garden of Eden” means that God gave man rest.⁴⁷⁶ Then, to address the vulgar meaning and to present the philosophical interpretation of the passage, Maimonides notes:

Thus they do not make out that this text means that He took him away from one place and put him in another, but that He raised the rank of his existence among the existents that come into being and pass away and established him in a certain state.⁴⁷⁷

From the day of his existence, man is given a higher rank of being not enjoyed by any other existent. It is not as if he acquired an intellect *in actu* at the moment of birth. This stage is reached by a long process of learning and education as Maimonides points out:

Before learning a human is like a beast since human differs from all other animal species by virtue of his logic because he is a “logical animal.” By “logic” I mean the faculty to conceptualize rational matters, the loftiest of those rational matters being the conceptualization of the Oneness of God and all that pertaining to the Divinity.⁴⁷⁸

In other words, man is a being of fully developed intellect whose life is centered on the contemplation of divine realities. The more he engages in cognition, the more he fulfills his calling as man made in the “image” of God. The less he perfects his intellect, the less he shares in humanity’s essential quality of apprehension and essential privilege of special providence. In a metaphor comparing the subjects of a king in the inner chamber of the city and outside the city, Maimonides refers to the subjects outside the city as “all human individuals who have no doctrinal belief, neither one based on speculation nor one that accepts the authority of

⁴⁷⁶ Genesis Rabbah, XVI.

⁴⁷⁷ *Dux Neutorum*, lib.II, cap.XXXI, fol.61: “hoc non intelligitur de locali exaltatione et positione in loco: sed de exaltatione honoris et gradus super omnia entia generabilia et corruptibilia : et dedit ei praeeminentiam super omnes mores aliorum. » Cf *Guide* II, 30, p 357.

⁴⁷⁸ Maimonides, *Pirush ha-Mishnayot*, Introduction, vol. I:42 cited in José Faur, *Homo Mysticus*, pp 15-16.

tradition.”⁴⁷⁹ It is a reference to those whose intellects do not know any form of instruction or guidance. They are outside of the divine intellectual flow and thus almost on the level of irrational animals. Drawing it further, Maimonides says:

To my mind they do not have the rank of men, but have among the beings a rank lower than the rank of man but higher than the rank of the apes. For they have the external shape and lineaments of a man and a faculty of discernment that is superior to that of the apes.⁴⁸⁰

As for those in the inner chamber of the city, Maimonides means those who establish a communicative link with the divine overflow. They attain perfection in the divine science; renounce what is other than He such that even conventionalities like the uncovering of the genitals no longer matter to them; they direct all their intellectual powers toward an examination of intelligible realities with a view to knowing God’s governance of them in whatever way it is possible.⁴⁸¹ This is the state of Adam in the Garden of Eden. In the state of perfect intellection, passional experiences of material nature, no longer count for man “for the thing that necessarily brings about providence and deliverance from the sea of chance consists in that intellectual overflow.”⁴⁸²

⁴⁷⁹*Dux Neutorum*, lib.III, cap.LII, fol.110: “Exponam tibi similitudinem istam quam induxi. Scito igitur quod qui sunt extra civitatem, sunt omnes illi qui non credunt deum : nec ex parte receptionis : » Cf *Guide* III, 51, p 618.

⁴⁸⁰*Ibid*: “Iudicium vero istorum est sicut animalium irrationalium: et secundum me non sunt in gradu speciei hominum: sed sunt in altiori gradu quam sit gradus simiarum. Non enim habet aliquid hominis nisi figuram : plus tamen habent de cognitione quam simiae. » Cf *Guide* III, 51, pp 618-619. It is unnecessary to interpret this passage as evidence of racism in Maimonides. However, we know the existence of some literature exploring the possibility or not of some sort of Jewish racial prejudice against certain races. For recent works arguing for and against this supposed prejudice, consult: Abraham Melamed, *The Image of the Black in Jewish Culture: A History of the Other*, (London and New York: Routledge Curzon, 2003); David M. Goldenberg, “The Development of the Idea of Race: Classical Paradigms and Medieval Elaborations,” in *International Journal of the Classic Tradition* 5, (1991), pp 561-570; *The Curse of Ham: Race and Slavery in Early Judaism, Christianity and Islam*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003).

⁴⁸¹*Ibid*: “Qui vero postquam perfectus fuerit, exercuerit cogitationes suas, et in omnibus actibus suis intenderit in creatorem, et postposuerit omnia alia, et posuit omnia opera intellectus sui in omnibus creaturis ad sciendum ex ipsis creatoris essentiam quo est.” Cf *Guide* III, 51, p 620.

⁴⁸²*Ibid*. fol.111: “quoniam illud quod efficit quod cura dei sit fixa in homine et ut evadat mala quae possunt accidere, est splendor intellectus.” Cf *Guide* III, 51, p 625.

6.4 “Adam” as an Equivocal Term: Meaning and Implications

One of the strengths of Maimonides lies in his ability to methodologically analyze words in order to get their most appropriate contextual signification. He has done it with “image and likeness,” and now he finds it necessary to delineate the various meanings of the term “adam.” In the shortest chapter of the whole of the *Guide*,⁴⁸³ Maimonides designates three senses to the term “adam.” The first sense refers to a single individual:

It is the name of the *Adam the first* man, and is a derivative word; for, as the biblical text states, it is derived from the word *adamah*.⁴⁸⁴

Adamah means “earth” referring to the biblical text in Genesis 2:7, where the formative ingredient of *Adam* is explicitly said to be earth: “And God formed man (adam) from the dust of the earth (*adamah*).” But even “earth” itself is also an equivocal term used in a general and in a particular sense. In a general sense, “it is applied to all that is beneath the sphere of the moon, I mean the four elements,”⁴⁸⁵ that is, earth, water, air (spirit), and fire (darkness). In a particular sense, it refers only to the particular element earth as said in Genesis 1:10, “And God called the dry land Earth.” God’s implication in naming things properly is seen by Maimonides as an imprint of demarcation between that particular thing and so many others probably having the same nomenclature. What would keep our interest however, is the text indicative of the ingredient constituting Adam: “And God formed man (adam) from the dust of the earth (*adamah*).” The term for “forming” has a special connotation. According to Maimonides, the word “forming” (*yesirah*) does not belong to the group of four special words “that occur with reference to the relation between the heaven and God.”⁴⁸⁶ These four words include: to create (*baro*), to make (*‘assoh*), to acquire or to possess (*qanoh*), and God (*El*). Concerning the origin of man, two words are constantly used in the Bible: *making* and *forming*. Why then does

⁴⁸³*Dux Neutorum*, lib.I, cap.XIV, fol.8. Cf *Guide* I, 14, p 40. It is only made up of six lines in the Latin edition, and then only nine lines and seven sentences, in the English translation of Pines edition. It is made up of only six biblical quotations. Regardless of the paucity of numbers, it is one of the capital chapters holding the key to the interpretation of providence and evil.

⁴⁸⁴*Ibid*: “Homo est nomen aequivocum: sicut Adam, quod sumptum est de terra, sicut scriptura demonstrat.” Cf *Guide* I, 14, p 40.

⁴⁸⁵*Ibid*. lib.II, cap.XXXI, fol.60: “Est autem necessarium tibi scire quod terra multipliciter dicitur. Dicitur enim communiter et singulariter. Communiter autem pro omnibus quae sunt sub sphaera Lunae idest quatuor elementis : » Cf *Guide* II, 30, p 350.

⁴⁸⁶This text is one of the so many that are missing in the Latin translation. Cf *Guide* II, 30, p 358.

“forming” (*yesirah*) not belong to these groups of words? And what is the special characteristic of the other words that give them a special place in Maimonides’s interpretation? As to the first question, Maimonides replies:

As for the word *yesirah* (forming), it does not occur in this sense; for it seems to me that *yesirah* is only applied to shaping and forming a configuration or to one of the other accidents, for shape and configuration are also accidents.⁴⁸⁷

The clear message here is that *yesirah* applies to only the material aspect of man. It refers to *adamah*-earth, which accounts for the physical shape and configuration of man. Physical shape and configuration, do not constitute the essence of man and that is why they are correctly designated as accidents and would eventually refer to accidental attributes that man shares with animals. Man considered as *adamah* is little different from mere animals. This basic relationship is confirmed when the only other appearance of the verb *yesirah* with *adamah*, is in the formation of the animal species: “And the Lord God *formed* from the earth all the animals of the field and all the birds of the heaven.”⁴⁸⁸ What Maimonides is saying is that both Adam as *adamah* and the animal species are excluded from the overflow of divine providence since they are products arising out of the formative act-*yesirah* that is devoid of the “relation between heaven and God.”⁴⁸⁹ This reading nourishes our thesis that matter is the source of evil where evil is consequent upon the absence of providence.

On the contrary, the word ‘*assoh* (to make) refers “to the specific forms that were given to them—I mean their natures.”⁴⁹⁰ The meaning becomes clearer when we recall that the definitive quality of man referred to as “image and likeness of God,” is generated by the term ‘*assoh*. “Let us *make* man in our image, after our likeness.”⁴⁹¹ This specific quality of man, as our earlier study above shows, is called his natural form, his essence, that from which human apprehension derives. Thus, while *yesirah* refers to the material aspect of man, ‘*assoh* refers to the formal aspect. By including this word ‘*assoh* among the “four that occur with reference to the relation

⁴⁸⁷ This also is not found in the Latin translation. Cf *Guide* II, 30, p 358.

⁴⁸⁸ Gen. 2: 19.

⁴⁸⁹ Diamond, James A, *Maimonides and the Hermeneutics of Concealment*, p 77.

⁴⁹⁰ Another specific passage not found in the *Dux Neutorum*. Cf *Guide* II, 30, p 358 Pines observes that the “them” in the sentence “probably refers to the heaven and earth.” Ibid. n.95. Nothing prevents such from referring to other creations as well.

⁴⁹¹ Gen. 1: 26: “Faciamus hominem ad imaginem et similitudinem nostra.”

between the heaven and God,” Maimonides is reiterating that Adam as an intellectual being, is endowed with the special privilege of connecting to the divine intellect and enjoying providential care outside of the reach of evil. Thus, Adam as constituted of matter and form has all it takes to decide his destiny: either to choose the “Tree of life” akin to intellectual life with God, or to choose the “Tree of the knowledge of good and evil” that is akin to impoverishment of the intellect and death. This choice we shall see a little bit later.

In its second meaning, Adam is also a term designating “the species.”⁴⁹² For a proper grasp of the message here, Maimonides quotes three different biblical texts apparently showing that man is nothing but mere beast without the spirit of God. The first text in Genesis 6:3 says: “My spirit shall not abide in man.” What does Maimonides interpret this passage to mean? In one of the lexicographic chapters that examines the equivocality of the word ‘air’ or ‘spirit’ (*ruah*), Maimonides has six different contextual significations for the same term. Firstly, it denotes air as one of the four elements; secondly, it denotes the blowing wind; thirdly, it denotes the animal spirit; fourthly, it denotes the “thing that remains of man after his death and that does not undergo passing-away.” Then Maimonides notes that when it concerns God, two significations the fifth and the sixth are meant though the fifth is most generally assumed because of its central importance. The fifth and the sixth indicate respectively that:

It is a term denoting the divine intellectual overflow that overflows to the prophets and in virtue of which they prophecy. ... It is also a term denoting purpose and will. ... In all cases in which the term *air* is applied to God, it is used in the fifth sense, in some of them also in the last sense, which is that of will.⁴⁹³

The verse quoted by Maimonides designates *adam* as “species” and not as “individual.” In that sense, it makes meaning then to see that intellectual overflow does not reach the species as a whole. And moreover, prophetic experience is not a reserve to the majority but to certain individuals. The completion of Genesis 6: 3 gives us a literal answer as to why God’s spirit shall not abide in man: it is because “he too is flesh.” The “flesh” or matter turns up again as the

⁴⁹² *Dux Neutrorum*, lib.I, cap.XIV, fol.8: “Est etiam nomen speciei.” Cf *Guide* I, 14, p 40.

⁴⁹³ *Ibid.* lib.I, cap.XXXIX, fol.15: “Dicitur etiam de splendore spiritualis intellectus qui dabatur prophetis cum quo prophetabant...Dicitur etiam de mente hominis et cogitatione...Et ubicunque spiritus deo attribuitur, est secundum quintam rationem. In quibusdam tamen locis dicitur secundum ultimam acceptionem, id est secundum quod significat voluntatem.” Cf *Guide* I, 40, p 90.

obstacle to divine intellectual overflow getting to man. The other verses, especially of Ecclesiastes 3:19⁴⁹⁴ quoted to explain *adam* as “species,” only underline the common fate that man outside of the divine intellectual overflow shares with animals. The underlying message, according to Diamond, is clear and straight forward:

If the sum total of man is comprised of his “flesh,” then he becomes an integral part of the animal kingdom lacking in the protection of divine governance.⁴⁹⁵

The final designation of the term ‘*adam*’ is multitude as distinguished from the elite.⁴⁹⁶ Maimonides offers some biblical passages to buttress his point. But as usual these passages are chosen at random and must be interpreted according to the lexicon that Maimonides has provided. “The sons of *Elohim* saw the daughters of man,”⁴⁹⁷ and “Nevertheless you shall die as men.”⁴⁹⁸ The first of these passages is a consequence of the already examined passage above where God insists that His spirit shall not abide in man-as *species*. To make sense of the multitudinous signification of *adam*, we have to recourse to the equivocality of the term “*Elohim*” as either the deity, or the angels or the rulers governing cities.⁴⁹⁹ Following Maimonides’s contextual designation of meanings, it is the last of the significations which is represented by *Elohim* in the passage under discussion. Being lower than the rank of the deity and the angels, *Elohim* would come to be identified with the non-cognitive realm of the imagination which, according to Maimonides, is the class of those who govern cities.⁵⁰⁰ To explain the meaning of the word “son” in the passage and related ones, Maimonides transfers the language of procreation into the domain of thought. Just as man could bear a child by biological means, one could also “bear” an offspring by educational means. Thus, Maimonides notes that:

⁴⁹⁴ Ecclesiastes 3:19 “After all, the same fate awaits man and animal alike. One dies just like the other. They are both the same kind of creature. A human being is no better off than an animal.”

⁴⁹⁵ Diamond, James A, *Maimonides and the Hermeneutics of Concealment*, p 72.

⁴⁹⁶ *Dux Neutrorum*, lib.I, cap.XIV, fol.8: “Est etiam nomen universitatis gentium praeter singularia.” Cf *Guide* I, 14, p 40.

⁴⁹⁷ Gen 6:2

⁴⁹⁸ Psalm 82:7

⁴⁹⁹ *Dux Neutrorum*, lib.I, cap.II, fol.5: “dico quod quilibet intelligens linguam hebraicam scit quod hoc nomen *heloyim* aequivocum est Deo, et Angelis, et Iudicibus habentibus Ducatum in villis.” Cf *Guide* I, 2, p 23. We shall still examine this term separately in the section that follows.

⁵⁰⁰ Ibid. lib.II, cap.XXXVIII, fol.64: “Si autem splendor effunditur super virtutem imaginativam solummodo...isti tales sunt rectores civitatum.” Cf *Guide* II, 37, p 374.

Whoever instructs an individual in some matter and teaches him an opinion, has, as far as his being provided with this opinion is concerned, as it were engendered that individual. In this sense the prophets' disciples were called *sons of the prophets*.⁵⁰¹

In this Maimonidean exegesis, “the sons of *Elohim*” in the passage could signify the disciples or followers of the imagination. No other group fits in here more than the multitude. Hence, *adam* as multitude is the unreflective man who gives in to the stirrings of the imagination as against the individual who uses the powers of his rational thought. That is the sense of the biblical passage that Maimonides quotes: “Both the sons of man and the sons of an [outstanding] individual.”⁵⁰² The degradation from the levels of intellectual thought to the inferior levels of knowledge based on convention and generally accepted opinions that we assume among the multitude, is the cause of the absence of intellectual divine overflow.

6.5 The Fall of Adam and the loss of intellectual overflow

The chapter two of the first part of the *Guide* would consist the major text of our interpretation. In this passage, Maimonides places emphasis on the correct exegetical reading of scriptural passages, the philosophical issues they raise and the logical meaning such reading leads to. By so doing, Maimonides remains faithful to his goal: “the explanation of very obscure parables occurring in the books of the prophets, but not explicitly identified there as such. Hence an ignorant or heedless individual might think that they possess only an external sense, but no internal one.”⁵⁰³ The approach Maimonides takes in this interpretation would reveal first the external sense of the parable, falsely understood by the ignorant to be the central message, and then, the internal, philosophical message not found by the ignorant. This eventually, would turn out to be the error of the objector who understands only the external sense of the term *Elohim*.

⁵⁰¹ *Dux Neutorum*, lib.I, cap.VI, fol.6: “Secundum etiam hunc modum, omnis qui docuerit alium aliquid vel promoverit eum ad aliquid, erit quasi fecerit eum nasci. Et idcirco discipuli prophetarum dicti sunt filii eorum.” Cf *Guide* I, 7, p 32.

⁵⁰² Psalm 49:3

⁵⁰³ *Dux Neutorum*, Prooemium Authoris, fol.2: “Commentatur etiam in hoc libro modum secundum: qui est ad exponendum similitudines nimis occultas, quae sunt in libris prophetarum. Et non dicitur manifeste quod sunt similitudines: sed credit insipiens attonitus quod sunt secundum suum planum, et quod non est in eis ratio latens. » Cf *Guide* I, Introduction to the First Part, p 6.

Our approach would be to organize the passage into its constituent structures and then give its interpretation according to the mind of the author.

6.6 Equivocality of the term ‘Elohim:’

The central part of his interpretation of the fall of man, lies in the proper understanding of the term ‘Elohim.’ We know the place of equivocality in the works of Maimonides. This could have been as a result of the multiple meanings particular terms do have even in the Hebrew language and culture. By appealing to what every Hebrew knew, that is the equivocality of the term ‘Elohim,’ Maimonides could be putting into doubt the origin of whoever ignores this basic fact in his interpretation of biblical parables. Thus he notes:

Every Hebrew knew that the term *Elohim* is equivocal, designating the deity, the angels, and the rulers governing the cities.⁵⁰⁴

The authority for this, as Maimonides has done so many times, is *Onqelos the Proselyte*. It is to be noted that his Aramaic version of the Torah is officially accepted as the standard translation approved and quasi-canonized by the rabbinic authorities. Following him, Maimonides insists that in the biblical passage “And ye shall be as *Elohim*, knowing good and evil,”⁵⁰⁵ that it is the last meaning—the rulers governing cities—which is meant. This is the key to the objection and the interpretation that follow.

6.7 The Argument of the Objector:

From Maimonides, we could gather that the objector must have been a “learned man” of a certain standard, whose learning is thrown into doubt by his unbiblical and unphilosophical assumptions. Unbiblical because he thinks that man is made to be like beasts, “devoid of intellect, of thought, and of the capacity to distinguish between good and evil.”⁵⁰⁶ The biblical

⁵⁰⁴Ibid. lib.I, cap.II, fol.5: “dico quod quilibet intelligens linguam hebraicam scit quod hoc nomen *heloyim* aequivocum est Deo, et Angelis, et Iudicibus habentibus Ducatum in villis.” Cf *Guide* I, 2, p 23.

⁵⁰⁵ Gen. 3:5

⁵⁰⁶ *Dux Neutrorum*, lib.I, cap.II, fol.5: “quod prima intentio in creatione hominis fuit, ut esset sicut et caetera animalia sine intellectu et cogitatione: quod non discerneret inter bonum et malum. » Cf *Guide* I, 2, p 23.

text in itself tells us that man was created “in the image of God and His likeness.” He is unique in that which essentially distinguishes him from all other animals, for he is a possessor of intellect. Thus in his pristine state, man had a perfect intellect by which, instead of knowing “good and evil,” he was able to distinguish “truth from falsehood,” which are the proper objects of the intellect.⁵⁰⁷ But in his unphilosophical assumptions, the objector thought that man made to be like beasts, instead seemingly received a gift by his disobedience: the capacity that exists in us to distinguish between good and evil. Then he erroneously notes that it is in virtue of this capacity that “we are constituted as substances.”

Now it is a thing to be wondered at that man’s punishment for his disobedience should consist in his being granted a perfection that he did not possess before, namely, the intellect. This is like the story told by somebody that a certain man from among the people disobeyed and committed great crimes, and in consequence was made to undergo a metamorphosis, becoming a star in heaven.⁵⁰⁸

The objection looks so simple though it puts Maimonides in a very difficult position, because, it doubts not only the truth value of the Torah, but it questions even the soundness of Aristotelian philosophy which singles out the intellect as what distinguishes man from the level of animals. Over and above all, it would destroy the Maimonidean thesis that providence is a function of divine overflow upon the intellect and the other philosophical consequences which follow from that. The objector has failed to distinguish the intellect as the “noblest of the characteristics existing in us,” and instead gives this honour to the capacity in us to distinguish good and evil. By so doing, the objector is making our moral capacity, the distinguishing character of what makes us human. Fox puts this well when he notes about the objector that:

He confuses unique properties with essential properties. Moral capacity may be a unique property of human beings, a property that no other animal shares. It does not follow from

⁵⁰⁷Ibid: “Et per intellectum discernitur inter verum et falsum. Et intellectus fuit in ipso in fine perfectionis. Sed pulchrum et turpe vel bonum et malum invenitur in sensibilibus non in intelligibilibus.” Cf *Guide* I, 2, p 25. For a detailed study of these values, confer Shlomo Pines, “Truth and Falsehood versus Good and Evil. A Study in Jewish and General Philosophy in Connection with the Guide of the Perplexed, 1, 2” in Twersky, Isadore, ed., *Studies in Maimonides*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991), pp 95-157.

⁵⁰⁸ Ibid: “Et haec est admiratio magna quod poena peccati sui det ei perfectionem quam prius non habebat: scilicet intellectum. Hoc autem idem est ac si diceretur quod aliquis homo perpetrat peccatum grande: et inflicta est ei poena, quod mutata creatione factus est stella in coelo.” Cf *Guide* I, 2, p 24.

this that it is an essential defining property, a property without which we are no longer human.⁵⁰⁹

Does Maimonides allow this objection and even the objector to stand? He must find a way of providing the clearest answer possible and discrediting the objector as a possessor of shallow learning.

6.8 Maimonides's Response to the Objector:

We have seen the double nature of the objector's objection, now we shall see Maimonides's response in two parts. The first part he reserves to a searing critique of the objector and the second he reserves to a substantive response to the objection. Maimonides then addresses the objector:

O you who engage in theoretical speculation using the first notions that may occur to you and come to your mind and who consider withal that you understand a book that is the guide of the first and the last men while glancing through it as you would glance through a historical work or a piece of poetry—when in some of your hours of leisure, you leave off drinking and copulating: collect yourself and reflect, for things are not as you thought following the first notion that occurred to you, but rather as is made clear through reflection upon the following speech.⁵¹⁰

There are three major points raised by Maimonides in his critique of the objector. The first major point addresses the shallowness of the objector's arguments or reasoning. This shallowness is evident in the objector's use of the "first notions" that may occur to him. It is the same worry Maimonides expresses with regard to the ignorant masses who accept the literal message of the Scripture without taking the pains to discover the apples of gold under the silver linings. Philosophical enterprise requires better concentration and intense critical reflection. The second

⁵⁰⁹ Fox, Marvin, *Interpreting Maimonides*, p 177.

⁵¹⁰ *Dux Neutrorum*, lib.I, cap.II, fol.5: "Diximus adversario quod malum est cum aliquis speculatur in intentione cogitationum suarum. Et in eo quod sibi videtur sine inquisitione: et putat se intelligere librum qui demonstrat iustitiam prioribus et posterioribus in speculando ipsum in tempore nativitatis suae, exhilaratus a cibo et potu et aliis desideriis secularibus: sicut ille qui speculatur librum historiarum vel canticum aliquod libri canticorum. Sed attende et intellige mirabilia huius rationis: quia non est ita sicut putasti in initio cogitationis: sed est sicut monstrabitur intendenti in hanc rationem. » Cf *Guide I*, 2, p 24.

critique is based on the lack of analytical methodology by the objector in his reading of a book as complex as the Scripture. For Maimonides, the objector uses the method of “glancing through it as you would glance through a historical work or a piece of poetry.”⁵¹¹ The ability to identify words that have multiple meanings bespeaks of an analytical methodology. That is the first thing that Maimonides does by showing that the key term ‘*Elohim*’ is an equivocal term. The objector’s failure to identify this exposes his ignorance and explains his interpretative error. The third critique goes straight to the moral competence of the objector. Maimonides holds moral perfection to be a stepping stone toward intellectual perfection.⁵¹² The mere fact that the objector indulges more often in “drinking and copulating,” reduces him to the level of beasts, devoid of moral and intellectual training.⁵¹³ How could his objection carry any weight? How could he engage in serious philosophical thinking since he is obscured by the attractions of matter?

After an examination of the objector, Maimonides now tries to respond substantively to the objection. Since the hub of the misplaced objection is the issue of the intellect, Maimonides goes straight forward to it. Contrary to the objection that man is made devoid of intellect, Maimonides reiterates that man had been endowed with intellect even before his disobedience. Not losing sight of the fact that divine providence follows man thanks to his perfect intellect, Maimonides notes that:

The intellect that God made overflow unto man and that is the latter’s ultimate perfection, was that which Adam had been provided with before he disobeyed. It was because of this that it was said of him that he was created *in the image of God and in His likeness*.⁵¹⁴

⁵¹¹ Maimonides seems to have a negative attitude to history and poetry. For further research on this, see Salo W. Baron, “The Historical Outlook of Maimonides,” *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research*, 6 (1934-35), pp 5-114; Bernard Lewis, *History: Remembered, Recovered, Invented* (Princeton, 1975), pp 23ff.

⁵¹² *Dux Neutrorum*, lib.III, cap.LV, fol.113: “Haec autem species refertur et quasi derivatur ad alios nec est finis substantiae proprie.” Cf *Guide* III, 54, p 635.

⁵¹³ Ibid. lib.II, cap.XXXVII, fol.63: “De quo dixit Aristoteles quod membrum istud est malum: et bene dixit in hoc ex parte qua vivimus solummodo sicut et caetera animalia non considerato aliquo eorum quae sunt in homine.” Cf *Guide* II, 36, p 371. Maimonides disapproves of such habits when they are “excessive” and approves of them when the goal is the health of the body, so that “the soul finds its instruments healthy and sound in order that it can be directed toward the sciences and toward acquiring the moral and rational virtues.” Cf *Eight Chapters*, ch. 5, in the *Ethical Writings of Maimonides*, edited by Raymond L Weiss with Charles E. Butterworth, (New York: Dover Publications, Inc. 1975) p 75.

⁵¹⁴ *Dux Neutrorum*, lib.I, cap.II, fol.5: “Intellectus quem elargitus est Deus Adam primo, ipse est postrema eius perfectio quae fuit in Adam antequam peccaret: et ratione huius intellectus dictum est de eo : quod creatus est ad imaginem dei : et mediante illo locutus est deus cum eo. » Cf *Guide* I, 2, p 24. The emphasis is Maimonides’s.

We noted earlier that the objector takes the capacity to distinguish between good and bad as the ultimate perfection in man. But Maimonides corrects that impression by insisting that man's ultimate perfection is the intellect and that it has been given to man by God's overflow. In our treatment of divine causality, Maimonides reminds us that the action of one who is not a body, is described as "*largitas*—overflow."⁵¹⁵ A deeper study of how this intellect is developed in man has been done above in the section talking about the Active Intellect. For brevity purposes, we move on with other cogent parts of Maimonides's response. To back up his assertion that man already had intellect before his disobedience, Maimonides reminds the objector that God gave commandments to man on account of his possession of the intellect.⁵¹⁶ Because of his ability to understand, and to make choices from available alternatives of what is understood, he alone of all living things merits to be given a command "for commandments are not given to beasts and beings devoid of intellect."⁵¹⁷ Another thoughtful question that comes to mind, one that Maimonides seemingly neglected, is why does God need to command man and restrict him, even though man is in possession of a perfect intellect?⁵¹⁸ What in essence does that command consist in? And why is man even threatened with death if he were to eat of the forbidden tree? These subtle questions demand an answer since they are presumed in the explanation that Maimonides provides. He had earlier talked about the equivocal term *Elohim*, but he has not given us any background that would eventually lead to a distinction in meanings of *Elohim* and the philosophical implications that follow from it. These latter questions help us in that direction. Fox in his interpretation has provided us with a befitting response to the questions and the underlying assumption that Maimonides may have had. This assumption is the difference between man's perfect intellect and a pure intellect. While the latter is an intellect that is completely separate from matter, the former is an intellect that belongs to man and thus not a purely disembodied intellect.

⁵¹⁵ Ibid. lib.II, cap.XIII, fol.46: "Finis autem omnium istorum est, quod huiusmodi omnia sunt opera, et non corpus: et hoc est quod largitas nominatur. » Cf *Guide* II, 12, p 279. "The meaning of all this is that these actions are the action of one who is not a body. And it is His action that is called overflow."

⁵¹⁶ In the chapter II of his *Eight Chapters*, it is Maimonides' opinion that all transgressions and commandments belong to the lower sentient and appetitive parts of the rational soul. Cf *Ethical Writings of Maimonides*, p 64.

⁵¹⁷ *Dux Neutrorum*, lib.I, cap.II, fol.5: "Et praecepit ei: sicut scriptum est, Praecepit dominus Adae et non datur praeceptum bestiis vel non intelligenti. » Cf *Guide* I, 2, p 24.

⁵¹⁸ Gen 2: 16-17 «You may eat the fruit of any tree in the garden, except the tree that gives knowledge of what is good and what is bad. You must not eat the fruit of that tree; if you do, you will die the same day.»

The fundamental point to remember is that even the first man in his pristine state was not a pure intellect. He was, after all, housed in a body and therefore was potentially subject to the desires and passions of the body. It is a root characteristic of man *qua* man that he is forced to choose what kind of being he wants to be.⁵¹⁹

The endowment of intellect brings with it the responsibility of making a choice of either obeying the commandment of God and remaining in his perfect state, or disobeying and becoming at the instigation of the serpent, ‘like *Elohim* knowing good and evil.’⁵²⁰ It is a choice that would change the direction of his life.

Ce choix fondamental s’effectue entre deux biens: soit le bien selon son imagination et son propre intérêt, celui qui a causé sa chute, telle que la *Genèse* la décrit ; soit le bien qui correspond au désir du créateur, perceptible à la seule intelligence.⁵²¹

In fact, the commandment is to preserve man in his state of intellectual perfection where he is permanently connected to the overflow of divine providence. For the bond that connects him to this providential flow is his intellect. When he remains on the level of cognition, he enjoys metaphysical truths. But if he chooses to disobey the command, he among other consequences, will be downgrading his existence to that of moral judgment which is the domain of *Elohim*, rulers of cities and knowers of good and evil.⁵²² For Klein-Braslavy, the command given by God “is a ban on the pursuit of sensual and imaginative ends and hence on relative moral judgments.”⁵²³ This is the argument totally misunderstood by the objector who failed to identify the equivocal nature of the term *Elohim*. Another subtle but important point missed by the objector is that the promise to be “like *Elohim*” was made by the serpent to the woman Eve. The understanding of both the meaning of serpent and Eve⁵²⁴ in this parable has significant

⁵¹⁹ Fox, Marvin, *Interpreting Maimonides*, p 183.

⁵²⁰ Gen 3: 5

⁵²¹ Wohlman, Avital, *Thomas d’Aquin et Maïmonide : un dialogue exemplaire*, p 254.

⁵²² It is Adam’s choice to disobey the commandment, which would give rise to the development of moral consciousness. This is the argument that Heidi M. Ravven is also making in his: “The Garden of Eden: Spinoza’s Maimonidean Account of the Genealogy of Morals and the Origin of Society,” in *Philosophy & Theology* vol.13, 1, 2001, p 3: “They reinterpret the story to suggest that the development of moral consciousness was precipitated by Adam’s losing his original, Edenic intellectual concentration by succumbing to passionate impulse.”

⁵²³ Klein-Braslavy, Sara, «Bible Commentary,» p 264.

⁵²⁴ Cf Klein-Braslavy, Sara, «Maimonides’ Strategy for Interpreting “Woman” in the *Guide of the Perplexed*, » in J. Hamesse et O. Weijers, eds., *Écriture et réécriture des textes philosophiques médiévaux*, (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers n.v., 2006) pp 291-310.

proportions. We recall from our previous study of this symbol, that serpent is identified with Satan which is the—*creatura mala et angelus mortis*—evil inclination and the angel of death.⁵²⁵ As put by Maimonides:

They mention that the *Serpent* had a rider, that it was of the size of a camel, that it was the rider who led Eve astray, and that the rider was *Sammael*. They apply this name to *Satan*.⁵²⁶

Even though Maimonides has, in keeping with his not divulging the secrets, only been providing us with hints as to the meaning of the passages, it is unmistakable that what happened to Eve are the stirrings of her evil inclination or her imagination.⁵²⁷ She had earlier been presented in the garden with “every tree that was pleasing to the sight and good for food.”⁵²⁸ In the case of Adam through Eve, we see a “transference of meaning” instigated by the imagination such that, instead of perceiving things as they really are, they are seen “as” something else. Ludwig Wittgenstein has aptly discussed this type of transference of meaning. In such cases he notes, the “as” in most cases ‘is not part of the object, but is projected unto the object by the viewer.’⁵²⁹ That is the result of the procession of sense data through the imagination where images are combined together without paying attention to their real nature. Eve associated the fact that the “tree was pleasing to the sight” with “good for food” and therefore “delightful for understanding.” Man is not a disembodied intellect as not to be touched by material impulses. From our earlier exposition, Maimonides tells us that the female is used figuratively to represent matter, in contrast with form, which is represented by the male.⁵³⁰ That is why man is composed of matter and form. In spite of the superior faculty of his intellect, man is still subject to the attractions of matter. According to Berman,

⁵²⁵ *Dux Neutrorum*, lib.III, cap.XXIII, fol.85 : « Sathan idest diabolus ipse est creatura mala : et ipse est angelus mortis. » p 167 Cf *Guide* III, 22, p 489.

⁵²⁶ Ibid. lib.II, cap.XXXI, fol.61: “Debes etiam scire quod exposuit quod coluber fuit equitatus, et eius quantitas sicut cameli: et quod equitatus eius fuit ille qui decepit Evam: et quod ipse fuit Zamael. » Cf *Guide* II, 30, p 356.

⁵²⁷ *Dux Neutrorum*, lib.I, cap.II, fol.5: “Cum vero peccavit et secutus est concupiscentiam suam et desideria carnis: » Cf *Guide* I, 2, p 25. Cf Ibid. lib.II, cap.XIII, fol.46: “Haec autem tria contingunt eis: quia sequuntur imaginationem quae est creatura mala vere. Omnis namque mos defectum patiens, qui est in sermone, vel in aliis operationibus corporis, est operatio imaginationis, vel sequitur ipsam.” Cf *Guide* II, 12, p 280.

⁵²⁸ Gen 2:9

⁵²⁹ Wittgenstein, Ludwig, *Philosophical Investigations*, translated by G. E. M. Anscombe (New York: Macmillan, 1968), 2, xi, 193e-229e. The explanation is given and cited by José Faur, *Homo Mysticus*, p 59.

⁵³⁰ *Dux Neutrorum*, lib.I, cap.XVII, fol.8: “Plato et qui praecesserant eum vocabant materiam foeminam, et formam masculum. » Cf *Guide* I, 17, p 43. «Thus Plato and his predecessors designated Matter as the female and Form as the male. »

The flaw in man is that he is composed of matter and it is matter which prevents him from being a purely disembodied intelligence which is his true identity.⁵³¹

Hence, because of the nature of man, he made a choice that is against the commandment of God and he would consequently die. Man chose to downgrade the level of his existence and thus to change his status. Would he remain connected to the overflow of divine providence? The consequences are too many. Maimonides summarizes what follows thus:

However, when he disobeyed and inclined toward his desires of the imagination and the pleasures of his corporeal senses—inasmuch as it is said: that the tree was good for food and that it was a delight to the eyes—he was punished by being deprived of that intellectual apprehension. He therefore disobeyed the commandment that was imposed upon him on account of his intellect and, becoming endowed with the faculty of apprehending generally accepted things, he became absorbed in judging things to be bad or fine. Then he knew how great his loss was, what he had been deprived of, and upon what a state he had entered.⁵³²

The last sentence in the passage above has all we need to know as for the effects of the disobedience. If Adam had not inclined toward the stirrings of the imagination and the attractions of the corporeal world, he would have remained in the state of intellectual perfection, contemplating metaphysical realities, and enjoying the permanent overflow of divine providence. The bond between him and God would have been ever strong. But once he disobeyed the command, he made a choice to change his status and ontological identity. The first consequence of that choice was the deprivation of intellectual apprehension that he had enjoyed. Adam lost the overflow of divine providence and with it the perfect knowledge and the protection against eventual calamities that excellent men have enjoyed. Ravven thinks that Adam's punishment consisted in "the refocusing of his attention to the bodily faculty that regulates the passions, namely, the imagination."⁵³³ True as that assertion may be, it is even stronger to say that Adam

⁵³¹ Berman, Lawrence, « Maimonides on the Fall of Man, » *AJS Review*, 5, 1980, p 11.

⁵³² *Dux Neutorum*, lib.I, cap.II, fol.5: "Cum vero peccavit et secutus est concupiscentiam suam et desideria carnis: sicut dictum est, Vidit quod esset pulchrum visu et ad vescendum suave: inflicta est ei poena. Scilicet recessit ab eo intelligibilium apprehensio. Et cum praevaricatus est praeceptum quod datum erat ei, mediante suo intellectu: remansit in eo apprehensio sensibilium et profundavit in scientia boni et mali. Et tunc cognovit comperatione eius quod amiserat: et eius quo expoliatus fuerat: et ad quem gradum ascendit. " *Guide I*, 2, p 25.

⁵³³ Ravven, Heidi M, « The Garden of Eden, » p 8.

lost his foremost good, the intellectual apprehension that gave him an epistemological access to the divine, for a passional life that reduced him to the concerns of the body.⁵³⁴ He became relegated to the rank of the individuals of all other species of animals. For the people of this rank of existence, Maimonides says “there is nothing to protect them against whatever may occur; for they are like one walking in darkness, whose destruction is assured.”⁵³⁵ Berman captures the problem that Adam brought to himself and to his generation in this way:

The fall of man consisted in a change of priorities, from an interest in the things of the mind to becoming interested in the things of the body; from being a philosopher, a master of his passions, to becoming a beast in human form, mastered by his passions; from being a solitary thinker, to becoming a ruler of cities being informed by the imagination only.⁵³⁶

The evidence of his relegation is seen in the fact that Adam became like *Elohim* knowing good and evil. A major attack to the objection comes when Maimonides argues that moral categories of good and evil (fine and bad) do not have any cognitive status. He introduces that attack this way:

Through the intellect one distinguishes between truth and falsehood, and that was found in [Adam] in its perfection and integrity. Fine and bad, on the other hand, belong to the things generally accepted as known, not to those cognized by the intellect.⁵³⁷

The distinction Maimonides makes here has set off a whole new level of arguments and inquiries. Truth and falsehood are the categories of reason whose laws are universal and determined by rational principles. They do not depend on conventions or on the opinion of the majority but on demonstrative principles. In one of the texts where he argues for the universality of truth based on rational principles, Maimonides notes:

⁵³⁴ It is a nice point made by Géraldine Roux that Adam’s disobedience «est aussi bien une faute morale qu’une rupture épistémologique.» Cf “L’Idéal d’une croyance rationnelle?” dans Géraldine Roux, ed., *Lumières médiévales*, (Paris : Les auteurs/Van Dieren Editeur, 2009) p 37.

⁵³⁵ *Dux Neutrorum*, lib.III, cap.XIX, fol.82: “nec habent qui faciant eos vitare damnum, sicut ille qui ambulat in tenebris, et paratus est ut cadat ubique.” Cf *Guide* III, 18, p 476.

⁵³⁶ Barman, Lawrence, “Maimonides on the Fall of Man,” p 8.

⁵³⁷ *Dux Neutrorum*, lib.I, cap.II, fol.5: “Et per intellectum discernitur inter verum et falsum. Et intellectus fuit in ipso in fine perfectionis: sed pulchrum et turpe vel bonum et malum invenitur in sensibilibus non in intelligibilibus.” Cf *Guide* I, 2, p 24.

For when something has been demonstrated, the correctness of the matter is not increased and certainty regarding it is not strengthened by the consensus of all men of knowledge with regard to it. Nor could its correctness be diminished and certainty regarding it be weakened even if all the people on earth disagreed with it.⁵³⁸

By thinking like that, Maimonides goes against philosophical pragmatism propounded by Charles Sanders Pierce and his followers, according to whom truth is measured by its practical value.

However, it is interesting to note that on this question of truth, Maimonides follows the basic lines of Aristotle who had earlier made such distinctions between demonstrative and dialectical reasoning.⁵³⁹ Demonstrative reasoning which belongs to theoretical sciences is such that the premises from which the reasoning starts are true and primary. For Aristotle, “things are ‘true and primary’ which are believed on the strength not of anything else but of themselves: for in regard to the first principles of science, it is improper to ask any further for the why and wherefore of them; each of the first principles should command belief in and by itself.”⁵⁴⁰ As for dialectical reasoning, it reasons from opinions that are generally accepted, that is, they are opinions which are accepted by everyone or by the majority, or by the philosophers. What is important is that this does not derive from the principles of reason. In another of his works, Aristotle stipulates that moral categories of fine and bad actions, (good and bad) which political science investigates, “admit of much variety and fluctuation of opinion, so that they may be thought to exist only by convention, and not by nature.”⁵⁴¹ This belongs to the practical sciences. Thus, Maimonides just like Aristotle, places a cognitive status on truth and falsehood, which like first principles, are apprehended immediately by reason. By relegating the categories of good and bad to the generally accepted things, Maimonides underlines the barest level of thought enjoyed by the masses who are not well intellectually developed and thus, cannot cogitate metaphysical realities. Their opinions are guided by conventions and not by demonstrative principles. According to José Faur, “conventionality is governed by a semiological system of binary terms

⁵³⁸ Ibid. lib.II, cap.XVI, fol.48: “Quicquid enim probatur demonstrative, non propalatur veritas eius: nec roboratur in eo veritas per hoc quia in ipsum consentiunt omnes homines: nec minoratur veritas eius, neque debilitatur si contradicerent ei omnes qui sunt in mundo.” Cf *Guide* II, 15, p 290.

⁵³⁹ Aristotle, *Topics* 1, 1, 100a25-100b20.

⁵⁴⁰ Aristotle, *Topics* 1, 1, 100b18-20.

⁵⁴¹ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1, 3, 1094b15-20.

standing in hierarchical opposition to each other.”⁵⁴² Thus, Faur continues, instead of seeing things in themselves, they are seen through binary key-symbols beginning with ‘good/evil’ and leading to ‘pleasant/ugly’, ‘proper/improper,’ and so on. The same applies to Adam after his disobedience such that, instead of becoming like the deity or the angels knowing the intelligibles as promised by the serpent, Adam thanks to his attachment to the imagination became involved in conventions that have no rational demonstration. Instead of remaining in contemplation of divine reality, he reversed according to Kreisel, to a preoccupation with the corporeal world.

Adam in essence experienced a change of identity. His intellect reverted to the state of a hylic intellect, inseparable from the body and the other faculties of the soul.⁵⁴³

Because Adam has undergone a radical change in his ontological status, he became finally interested in making ethical judgments concerning corporeal activities some of which he considers to be good or bad according to the convention. The clearest example is the corporeal condition of Adam and Eve before and after their disobedience. They were both naked before their fall and they never noticed their nakedness and neither was it of any problem to them. They moved freely in the garden in their state of nakedness without being ashamed. Once their ontological status changed as a result of their choice, we notice a similar transference of meaning at the visual level where they knew their nakedness as bad and had to hide away from God.⁵⁴⁴ Maimonides remarks that they didn’t see something different from what they had all along seen. The only difference now is that they knew that they were naked.

For what was seen previously was exactly that which was seen afterwards. There had been no membrane over the eye that was now removed, but rather he entered upon another state in which he considered as bad things he had not seen in that light before.⁵⁴⁵

What happened according to Maimonides was an acquisition of a new mental vision, and not a new physical sight. As a result of this acquisition, they considered their nakedness as bad. All along, this interpretation has been geared towards showing that the disobedience of Adam did

⁵⁴² Faur, José, *Homo Mysticus*, p 61.

⁵⁴³ Kreisel, Howard, *Maimonides’ Political Thought*, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999) p 73.

⁵⁴⁴ Gen 3:7 «And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and covered themselves.”

⁵⁴⁵ *Dux Neutrorum*, lib.I, cap.II, fol.6: “ut faceret te scire, quod idem viderant ante quod post. Non enim erat caecitas in oculis et post aperti sunt. Sed motus fuerat ad alium gradum in quo cognovit malum, quod non cognoverat ante.” Cf *Guide* I, 2, p 25.

not merit him “a perfection that he did not possess before, namely, the intellect.” Contrary to the objector’s argument, Adam’s disobedience reduced him to the level he was never before, that of animals devoid of intellectual apprehension. Maimonides confirms his reading of this passage by corroborating it with the understanding it has in another biblical passage. Adam’s choice in this new passage is interpreted as a “change of objective.” Citing from the book of Job, “He [Adam] changes his face and Thou sendest him forth,”⁵⁴⁶ meaning “when the direction toward which he tended changed, he was driven forth.”⁵⁴⁷ Rejecting the state of providence in the *Garden of Eden*, Adam had to be ejected from the garden.

For *panim*⁵⁴⁸ is a term deriving from the verb *panoh* [to turn], since man turns his face toward the thing he wishes to take as his objective. The verse states accordingly that when man changed the direction toward which he tended and took as his objective the very thing a previous commandment had bidden him not to aim at, he was driven out of the *Garden of Eden*.⁵⁴⁹

Adam’s expulsion from the *Garden of Eden* was a direct result of a change of direction. Turning away from the world of reason and intellectual apprehension, Adam became engrossed in animal life and “endowed with the faculty of apprehending generally accepted things.”⁵⁵⁰ The privileges once enjoyed in the pristine state of intellectual perfection, are all withdrawn from Adam. He had been told before that his disobedience would be comparable to death because it would be like supplanting intellectual life with animal life. This death consists in intellectual impoverishment.⁵⁵¹ Now, Adam realizes the gravity of his loss. He has now to work for his bodily and mental food. He now has to revert to the earth for his sustenance.

Adam’s stature deteriorated to the point that he reverted back to origins (the name is derived from earth, ‘*adamah*’), being forced into a dependence on the *adamah* for his

⁵⁴⁶ Job 14:20.

⁵⁴⁷ *Dux Neutrorum*, lib.I, cap.II, fol.6: “Adam mutante facies suas, emisisti eum.” Cf *Guide* I, 2, p 26.

⁵⁴⁸ The Hebrew word for «face.» cf *Guide* I, 37 pp 85-87 for the equivocal meanings of “face.”

⁵⁴⁹ *Dux Neutrorum*, lib.I, cap.II, fol.6: “quia facies in hebraico dicitur a videre seu aspicere. Et cum Adam immutavit suum aspicere cernendo quod prohibitus erat intueri, eiectus est de paradiso. » Cf *Guide* I, 2, p 26

⁵⁵⁰ *Ibid.* fol.5: “Non errant in eo potentiae per quas intenderet sensibilibus, nec apprehendebat illa.” Cf *Guide* I, 2, p 25.

⁵⁵¹ Diamond, James A, *Maimonides and the Hermeneutics of Concealment*, p 75.

sustenance. The expulsion from *Eden* marks the transition from the contemplative life to an agrarian one, accompanied by an all consuming preoccupation with the soil.⁵⁵²

Cut off from the permanent overflow of the divine providence, Adam is reduced to the level of beasts lacking any power of reason (he is like beasts that speak not) and abandoned to whatever may befall them. He is “like one who is in darkness and has never seen light.”⁵⁵³ Adam’s loss of intellectual apprehension and the accompanying providence is the catalyst for the evil that followed his life. With this, the objection is answered and our thesis that evil is consequent upon the absence or privation of providence, is demonstrated. Man must go beyond his material nature to avoid evil. Maimonides enumerated matter as the primary source of evil and that which is inevitable since it makes up the fabric of man. To go beyond this basic materiality that he shares with animals, “man must move to acquire providence through the exercise of that faculty which is definitive of him as man.”⁵⁵⁴ We remark that the images of the pre-fall Adam and the post-fall Adam are recreated in the story of Job. Lacking intelligence and being led by the imagination, and thus suffering the loss of his children, his possession and his health, Job before his encounter with Elihu and God, represented the post-fall Adam who left the realm of knowledge for the realm of opinion guided by tradition and convention. By a kind of reversal of fortunes, Job eventually awoke from his slumber, and abandoning the realm of opinion, he found the realm of knowledge by the way of intellectual apprehension.⁵⁵⁵ This is what led him to an epistemological connection to the divine overflow and ultimately to divine providence. This is Job in possession of a perfect intellect which Adam had before his fall.

7.0 The Ambivalent Nature of Imagination in the Thought of Maimonides

In his treatment of the soul, Maimonides does not as such single out the faculty of imagination for a particular attention. Yet, throughout the length and breadth of his philosophy, we see the importance, somehow ambivalent, that he attaches to it. This ambivalence is seen in his positive

⁵⁵² Ibid. p 75.

⁵⁵³ *Dux Neutorum*, lib.III, cap.LII, fol.111: “Qui vero nunquam intellexerit creatorem, erit sicut ille qui semper est in tenebris: et nunquam vidit lucem. » Cf *Guide* III, 51, p 625.

⁵⁵⁴ Diamond, James A., *Maimonides and the Hermeneutics of Concealment*, p 77.

⁵⁵⁵ Géraldine Roux has talked of a “double chemin: celui d’Adam passant de la connaissance à l’opinion et l’horizon de perfection, celui d’une opinion se retournant en connaissance.” Cf «L’idéal d’une croyance rationnelle», p 39.

appreciation of the imagination in the realization of dreams, divination and prophecy, and the negative function it plays, in his epistemology and ontology, especially with regards to evil. In the preceding chapter, it has been credited with the fall of Adam and the perdition of humankind. Maimonides will credit it as the medium by which soothsayers, magicians, and politicians perform their craft. The ever-changing position in Maimonides's appreciation of the function and place of the imagination, coupled with our treatment and interpretation of the imagination as a major protagonist in our treatment of evil and providence, make it an obligation for us to examine separately, and to clarify, the nature of this ambivalence. Even though we do not intend to elaborate on it, al-Farabi has provided the leading points that Maimonides tries to develop in his treatment of the imagination and prophecy.⁵⁵⁶

Among the powers of the soul however, two are of special significance: imagination and reason. Even though they are parts of the soul, imagination in itself is a bodily faculty. Being a bodily faculty, Maimonides insists that its perfection "is consequent upon the best possible temperature, the best possible size, and the purest possible matter, of the part of the body that is the substratum for the faculty in question."⁵⁵⁷ These conditions determine whether imagination plays a negative role in obstructing knowledge of the intelligible realities⁵⁵⁸ or a positive role in the acquisition of prophecy. Before we come to this however, Maimonides stipulates three functions of the imaginative faculty:

The actions of the imaginative faculty that are in its nature, such as retaining things perceived by the senses, combining these things, and imitating them.⁵⁵⁹

The nature of the functions tells us about the practical inclination of imagination. When the divine overflow touches a person's rational and imaginative faculties, two types of effects result:

⁵⁵⁶ Pines, Shlomo, « Translator's Introduction » in *Guide I*, pp lxxxviii-xcii.

⁵⁵⁷ *Dux Neutrorum*, lib.II, cap.XXXVII, fol.63: "Tu vero scis quod perfectio virtutum corporalium de quarum universitate est virtus imaginativa, eget bonitate complexionis illius membri in quo est virtus: et quod sit membrum perfecte mensuratum, et habeat materiam mundam et claram." Cf *Guide II*, 36, p 369.

⁵⁵⁸ *Ibid.* lib.II, cap.XIII, fol.46: "Omnis namque mos defectum patiens, qui est in sermone, vel in aliis operationibus corporis, est operatio imaginationis." Cf *Guide II*, 12, p 280.

⁵⁵⁹ *Ibid.* lib.II, cap.XXXVII, fol.63: "Similiter etiam tu scis actiones virtutis imaginativae ratione sensuum, et compositionis eorum, et potentiarum quae sunt in natura ipsorum." Cf *Guide II*, 36, p 370. Reines identifies the three functions of imagination thus : 1. It "produces imaginative representations of the abstract knowledge that the rational faculty conceptualizes;" 2. It "concretizes the abstract knowledge of the rational faculty so that it refers to particular objects individuated in space and time;" and 3. It "produces parables of rational knowledge the rational faculty cannot fully grasp." Cf Alvin J. Reines, "Maimonides' Concept of Mosaic Prophecy," in *Hebrew Union College Annual* 40-41, (1969-70) pp 327-28.

theoretical perfection from the action on the rational faculty and practical perfection from the action of the divine overflow on the imaginative faculty.⁵⁶⁰ Imagination is more closely related to the sense perception and to action than in the function of abstraction. The latter belongs to the intellect. Imagination is very much at home with the combination and separation of ideas and that is why all sort of inexistent things find their place in it.

Thus someone using his imagination imagines a human individual having a horse's head and wings and so on. This is what is called a thing invented and false, for nothing existent corresponds to it.⁵⁶¹

In his earlier examination of this faculty, Maimonides presents it in a very negative light. According to him, "it is manifest that to imagine is a deficiency, whereas it is not manifest that to reflect and gradually to understand is likewise a deficiency."⁵⁶² This deficiency may be related to matter which is the substratum of the faculty of imagination, and this explains the negative image both occupy in the thoughts of Maimonides. Were the imagination to be an instrument of apprehension, Maimonides insists that:

It is in no way able to hold aloof from matter, even if it turns a form into the extreme of abstraction. For this reason there can be no critical examination in the imagination.⁵⁶³

Unlike the words 'thought' and 'comprehension' which referring to 'reflection and understanding,' are ascribed figuratively to God, the imagination is not figuratively ascribed to God. Imagination has no truth value since it is as a result of it that most people get deluded. They hold on to the figments of their imagination and get massively disappointed when what they imagined does not correspond to reality. Maimonides singles out the Mutakallimun for a special attack.⁵⁶⁴ This group does actually confuse the imagination for the intellect.⁵⁶⁵ In their

⁵⁶⁰ Leaman, O, *Moses Maimonides*, p 40.

⁵⁶¹ *Dux Neutrorum*, lib.I, cap.LXXII, fol.35: "sicut si imaginator imaginetur hominem cum capite equi: et quod habeat alas et similia istis: et illa vocatur cogitatio falsa: quia nullo modo convenit essentia rei: » Cf *Guide* I, 73, p 209.

⁵⁶² Ibid. lib.I, cap.XLVI, fol.17: "Pars autem ipsorum demonstrat defectus suos. Alia vero pars reputatur perfectio: sicut apparet in perfectione cogitationis assimilativae." Cf *Guide* I, 47, p 105.

⁵⁶³ Ibid. lib.I, cap.LXXII, fol.35: "talis cogitator nullo modo potest recedere a materia in apprehensione sua: licet spoliaret formam quamcumque in fine spoliationis: et ideo demonstratio non est in cogitatione." Cf *Guide* I, 73, p 209-10.

⁵⁶⁴ For a detailed discussion of this school, confer: Wolfson, Harry A., *The Philosophy of Kalam* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1976).

delusion they consider imagination as the criterion by which one distinguishes between the “possible” and the “impossible.” For them, whatever can be imagined is something possible, whether something existent corresponds to it or not. “On the other hand, everything that cannot be imagined is impossible.”⁵⁶⁶ In other words, imagination does not adhere to the correspondence theory of truth according to which what is in the mind must correspond to reality. Does imagination not constitute a stumbling block to scientific research?

Because theories cannot be corroborated by facts, independent scientific research and experimentation is impossible.⁵⁶⁷

In the second part of the *Guide*, Maimonides continues his attack on the imagination. He tends to continue drawing out the consequences of having imagination in a corporeal substratum. Because it is not endowed with the flights of speculation one can get to with the help of reason, Maimonides thinks that the imagination cannot move beyond material representations.

For just as the imagination cannot represent to itself an existent other than a body or a force in a body, the imagination cannot represent to itself an action taking place otherwise than through the immediate contact of an agent or at a certain distance and from one particular direction.⁵⁶⁸

This is very true when it comes to the representation of God. The multitude is most guilty of anthropomorphic representation of God or even the separate intellects called angels. When the Scripture describes God as giving command to His angels, the multitude and those who do not use the power of reflection understand this to mean that the angels were bodies and that God uses “the instrumentality of letters and sounds.” Maimonides’s contention here is that the imagination does not have any other way of understanding and explaining the action of one who is not a body. Like matter, Maimonides labels the imagination an evil principle since like matter, it prevents one from getting to the truth.

⁵⁶⁵ *Dux Neutrorum*, lib.I, cap.LXX, fol.29: “Ipsi etiam in pluribus locis sequuntur imaginationem, et vocant ipsam intellectum.” Cf *Guide* I, 71, p 179.

⁵⁶⁶ Ibid. lib.I, cap.LXXII, fol.34: “Quicquid vero non ascendit in cor, est impossibile.” Cf *Guide* I, 73, p 207.

⁵⁶⁷ Faur, José, *Homo Mysticus*, p 65.

⁵⁶⁸ *Dux Neutrorum*, lib.II, cap.XIII, fol.46 : « Sicut autem imaginatio non imaginatur ens nisi corpus, vel quod est in corpore : sic etiam non imaginatur essentiam actionis nisi per obviationem agentis, secundum remotionem vel appropinquationem : » Cf *Guide* II, 12, p 279-80.

All this follows imagination, which is also in true reality the *evil impulse*. For every deficiency of reason or character is due to the action of the imagination or consequent upon its action.⁵⁶⁹

On the issue of faith and belief, Maimonides does not hesitate to bring to light the damage that imagination does to the fabric of religious system. He bases this conviction on the problem the attribution of positive attributes to God does to the religious psyche. Such attribution abolishes according to Maimonides, one's belief in the existence of God without being aware of it.⁵⁷⁰ The human attributes of power, knowledge, and good, all condition our conviction of what we think this God should be. Because God should be better than man in all things, man considers God as All-Powerful, All-Knowing, and All-Good, etc. Maimonides has a very specific way of saying it:

Everything that the multitude consider a perfection is predicated of Him, even if it is only a perfection in relation to ourselves—for in relation to Him, may He be exalted, all things that we consider perfections are the very extreme of deficiency.⁵⁷¹

In certain natural situations of difficulty, we expect Him to intervene by His power and goodness as ordinarily a man in possession of such attributes would. Where we do not see the evidence that He is doing so, we question not only His existence but what He represents as God. This is the problem of 'the modern problem of evil' as we have tried to point out earlier in our *status quaestionis* of this thesis. This is the whole evidence of human imagination being projected onto the realm of the divine. To counter this, Maimonides proposes his *via negativa* aimed at divesting man of his imaginative projections and placing him on the path to true knowledge. Our idea of power or knowledge cannot be the same thing with God's own idea of power or knowledge. Because God is categorically different from man, His omnipotence, and omniscience cannot possibly interfere with ours. At least not in the way we think or would expect it. In the language of Isaac Newton:

⁵⁶⁹ Ibid. lib.II, cap.XIII, fol.46 : « Haec autem tria contingunt eis : quia sequuntur imaginationem quae est creatura mala vere. Omnis namque mos defectum patiens, qui est in sermone, vel in aliis operationibus corporis, est operatio imaginationis, vel sequitur ipsam. » Cf *Guide* II, 12, p 280.

⁵⁷⁰ Ibid. lib.I, cap.LVIII, fol.24: “sed dico quod abstulit esse Creatoris de corde suo: nec tamen ipse sentit. » Cf *Guide* I, 60, p 145.

⁵⁷¹ *Dux Neutrorum*, lib.I, cap.XXVI, fol.10: “ Quicquid gentes putat esse perfectionem, attribuitur ipsi, licet non sit perfectio nisi cum refertur ad nos: sed quantum ad ipsum, quae attribuimus quasi perfectiones, sunt in fine defectus.” Cf *Guide* I, 26, p 56.

God suffers nothing from the motion of bodies; bodies find no resistance from the omnipresence of God.⁵⁷²

In fact, Maimonides advises that before rushing to investigate divine matters, one must get free of the tyranny of imagination by the acquisition of true knowledge in the sciences and the total mastery of the corruptions of the material nature.

Man should not hasten too much to accede to this great and sublime matter at the first try, without having made his soul undergo training in the sciences and different kinds of knowledge, having truly improved his character, and having extinguished the desires and cravings engendered in him by his imagination.⁵⁷³

The derogatory language of Maimonides suddenly changes when Maimonides comes to the subject of prophecy. As a bodily faculty, one's imagination can either be healthy or unhealthy. "It is not a thing whose lack could be made good or whose deficiency could be remedied in any way by means of a regime."⁵⁷⁴ If you have a sharp imagination, you have it and for the one who has not got it, there is nothing he can do to acquire it. Because of its affinity to the senses, Maimonides insists that the imagination is at its best when the senses are at rest and this restful position disposes the imagination to receive the divine overflow that brings about veridical dreams and prophecy.

It is then that a certain overflow overflows to this faculty according to its disposition, and it is the cause of the veridical dreams. This same overflow is the cause of the prophecy. There is only a difference in degree, not in kind.⁵⁷⁵

Why the connection between veridical dreams and prophecy? Does the way we dream affect the content of prophecy? Does the manner of our sleeping determine the disposition of the imaginative faculty that it achieves greater heights of action? Maimonides has said that what

⁵⁷² Newton, Isaac, *Principia*. 2 Vols. (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1934) p 545.

⁵⁷³ *Dux Neutorum*, lib.I, cap.V, fol.6: "Quia non expedit homini ut festinet et extendat manum ad rationem istam nobilem et excelsam in initio cogitationis suae, donec exerceat animam suam in scientiis, ut depuret, et examinet mores suos ut sint mundi: et extinguat concupiscentias suas, et desideria cogitabilia." Cf *Guide* I, 5, p 29.

⁵⁷⁴ Ibid. lib.II, cap.XXXVII, fol.63: "In hoc autem non potest esse ut acquiratur quod deficit per stadium aliquod ullo modo." Cf *Guide* II, 36, p 369.

⁵⁷⁵ Ibid: "Tunc enim diffundetur super illam largitas illa secundum suam dispositionem et praeparationem. Haec autem est causa somniorum verorum, et eadem est causa prophetiae: sed est differentia in multo et paucio. » Cf *Guide* II, 36, p 370.

frequently occupies a man's thought while he is awake and while his senses function, normally constitutes the object of the imaginative faculty's action while he is asleep when receiving the overflow of the intellect. It must not be lost to us that the imagination juggles with sensible images, retaining them, combining them and imitating them. In other words, the contents of veridical dreams constitute, according to Leaman, "the status of raw ingredients out of which the prophet constructs a product with significant religious content."⁵⁷⁶ By its innate ability, the imaginative faculty sees the thing as if "it appears to have come to it by the way of external sensation."⁵⁷⁷ Maimonides then proceeds to give a technical and philosophical explanation of the phenomenon of prophecy, and perhaps contrary to what most believers would think, hints that prophecy is a natural acquisition and not a divine gift.⁵⁷⁸ He eventually raises the imaginative faculty to an epistemological tool, what he has all the while denied it. Imagination takes on a very positive image because it now becomes a necessary epistemological tool for the acquisition of prophecy and a means by which God communicates with prophets.⁵⁷⁹

Know that the true reality and quiddity of prophecy consists in its being an overflow overflowing from God ...through the intermediation of the Active Intellect, toward the rational faculty in the first place and thereafter toward the imaginative faculty. This is the highest degree of man and the ultimate term of perfection that can exist for his species; and this state is the ultimate term of perfection for the imaginative faculty. This is something that cannot by any means exist in every man.⁵⁸⁰

In more than one occasion, we have met this situation where it is the Active Intellect that is placed in a position of direct influence over man while God is seen as a very remote agent. It is the Active Intellect that determines the level of overflow on first, the rational faculty and then,

⁵⁷⁶ Leaman, O., *Moses Maimonides*, p 43.

⁵⁷⁷ *Dux Nutrorum*, lib.II, cap.XXXVII, fol.63: "et erit res ipsa comprehensa sicut si veniret ad imaginativam per viam sensuum ab exterioribus. » Cf *Guide* II, 36, p 370.

⁵⁷⁸ Cf Altmann, Alexander, « Maimonides and Thomas Aquinas: Natural or Divine Prophecy? » *AJS Review*, Vol. 3, (1978) pp 1-19. Ravven has boldly argued that "the imaginative character of the prophecy is at least one of its secrets, if not its only one." Cf Ravven, Heidi M., « Some Thoughts on What Spinoza Learned from Maimonides about the Prophetic Imagination Part 1. Moses on Prophecy and the Imagination, » in *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, Vol. 39:2, (April 2001) p 203.

⁵⁷⁹ Faur, José, *Homo Mysticus*, p 69.

⁵⁸⁰ *Dux Nutrorum*, lib.II, cap.XXXVII, fol.63: "Scito quod veritas prophetiae et substantia sua est largitas a Creatore effusa mediante intelligentia agente super potentiam animae rationalis primo, demum super imaginativam virtutem. Et ille est finis gradus hominis et finis perfectionis quae inveniri potest in eius specie: et hoc est finis perfectionis virtutis imaginativae. Hoc autem convenit, sed non cuilibet homini : » Cf *Guide* II, 36, p 369.

the imaginative faculty producing theoretical and practical perfections respectively. Apart from the intellectual excellence of a prophet, it is the imagination that helps him in creating a vivid imagery understandable by the masses, of what comes into the rational faculty by the overflow. It does seem that Maimonides is gradually making human creativity the special product of the conjunction of the rational and the imaginative faculties. However, the two faculties help the prophet in achieving “knowledge of matters that constitute true opinions and general directives for the well-being of men in their relation with one another.”⁵⁸¹ The only person, who perhaps, by a special divine prerogative, achieved the highest level of prophecy, without needing the intermediation of the imaginative faculty, is Moses.⁵⁸² Why this is so, does not constitute the object of our inquiry. What matters however is that man’s highest realization is prophecy. This is achieved when an individual has attained a three-fold perfection: moral, intellectual and imaginative. The perfection of the moral habit is necessary for the prophet who would be also a moral voice in the community. It has earlier been pointed out that this perfection is instrumental since it leads to the acquisition of a higher perfection, that of the intellect. This moral perfection obliges a detachment from material pleasures as such affinity militates against the acquisition of intelligibles.

From the dark ashes of negativity, imagination has risen to become even a major player in determining the various classes of men. Maimonides distinguishes three classes of men based on the power of their imagination: the men of science, the prophets and the governors of cities.⁵⁸³ When the intellectual influx overflows only toward the rational faculty and for whatever reason does not get to the imaginative, we have here philosophers, a class of men of science engaged in speculation. Philosopher-Scientists possess knowledge of the intelligibles. The lack of access to the imaginative faculty could be caused either by the scantiness of the overflow or by the weakness of the imaginative faculty resulting from its natural disposition.⁵⁸⁴ When on the other

⁵⁸¹ Ibid. fol.64: “et non considerabit nisi sententias rectas, et regimina communia hominibus inter se.” Cf *Guide* II, 36, p 372.

⁵⁸² Barman seems to suggest that Adam before his fall could have enjoyed the same level of prophecy as Moses and on this basis, « Adam and Moses were identical, the difference being that Adam, before his fall, represents the ideal for man, not living in society, while Moses represents the ideal for man living in society. » Cf Barman, Lawrence, “Maimonides on the Fall of Man,” p 8, note 22.

⁵⁸³ Ibid. cap.XXXVIII, fol.64: “Sapientes inquirendo et speculando... prophetae...rectores civitatum:” Cf *Guide* II, 37, p 374.

⁵⁸⁴ Maimonides has always insisted on the steadiness of the overflow from the Active Intellect. The scantiness would most probably depend on the non-preparedness of the receiver. Cf *Guide* II, 18, p 300.

hand this overflow gets to both the rational and the imaginative faculties, we have a class of prophets. Prophets thanks to their superior rational and imaginative faculties are apt at combining ‘knowledge of the intelligibles with the knowledge of all that relates to the *sensibilia*.’⁵⁸⁵ If however, this overflow reaches only to the imaginative without passing through the rational faculty, may be by a deficiency in the natural disposition of one’s rational faculty or by a lack of intellectual training, we get the class of governors of cities. Their area of excellence is that which is related to the sensory data. This class also includes legislators, soothsayers, augurs, and dreamers of veridical dreams.

All those who do extraordinary things by means of strange devices and secret arts and withal are not men of science belong likewise to this third class... And they are very much pleased with what they apprehend in these imaginings and think that they acquired sciences without instruction; and they bring great confusion into speculative matters of great import, true notions being strangely mixed up in their minds with imaginary ones. All this is due to the imaginative faculty, to the weakness of the rational faculty, and to its not having obtained anything...⁵⁸⁶

The effect of the overflow on the various faculties could also explain the various grades in the different classes of men. The overflow could be such that it is enough only for the perfection of the individual or it could be of such intensity that the effect even overflows to the benefit of the people. Among philosophers, prophets and the governors of cities, some are more productive and more influential than others. As such it happens that the prophet not only teaches but also governs through the perfection of his imagination; whereas the philosopher-scientist by the use of his high speculation composes theoretical works that remain most of the time beyond the comprehension of the ordinary people. Their works speak for them. It does seem then that in the hierarchy of people as established by Maimonides, politicians and those like them occupy the lowest ladder. Maimonides advises not to pay attention to people of such caliber since they have

⁵⁸⁵ Kreisel, Howard, “The Practical Intellect in the Philosophy of Maimonides,” in *Hebrew Union College Annual*, Vol. LIX, (1988) p 201.

⁵⁸⁶ *Dux Neutorum*, lib.II, cap.XXXVIII, fol.64: “Et qui sciunt facere mirabilia cum inventionibus profundis et artificiis occultis. Et licet non sint sapientes, omnes tamen isti sunt de tertio genere...et anima ipsorum est valde nobilis in oculis eorum, propter illa quae apprehendunt de vanitatibus illis : et opinantur quod apprehenderunt scientias absque doctrina. Immittunt etiam difficultates magnas in scientiis speculativis difficilibus : et confundunt in eis verba veritatis cum verbis vanitatum confusione magna. Haec autem omnia proveniunt ex fortitudine virtutis imaginativae, et debilitate virtutis rationalis : quae non apparet idest non exit ad actum. » Cf *Guide* II, 37, p 374.

not attained the ultimate term of speculative perfection. They possess the most perfect imaginations and are abysmally bereft of intellectual credibility. “Political leadership” according to Faur, “is the exclusive patrimony of people with powerful imagination.”⁵⁸⁷ Prophets are superior to philosophers because of the availability of divine overflow, to their two faculties and the practical use they make of them. The only exception as already noted is Moses, the greatest of the prophets whose communication with God only took place through the reason, that faculty that is the specific characteristic of philosophers.⁵⁸⁸ Heidi Ravven explains that:

The prophet’s use of the imagination makes possible a rational praxis in that in depicting the conclusions of reason pictorially and symbolically, the prophets can apply abstract truth to particular circumstances.⁵⁸⁹

Maimonides’s ambivalence in his use of the imaginative faculty could thus be interpreted as an effort towards generating a new form of intellectual awareness-the sublime heights man could reach by the possession and use of well-developed rational and imaginative powers, and the depths man could descend at the subversion and control of the intellect by the imagination. To get to this height, proper distinctions must be made in man’s epistemological process. Like Aristotle, Maimonides holds the sensory data to be the primary source of knowledge.⁵⁹⁰ How and where this data is processed determines the borderline between truth and falsehood. The sensory data that is processed through the imagination gives a distortion of truth whereby instead of seeing reality for what it is, reality is taken “as” represented by the imagination. That’s how Adam translates the tree’s pleasant sight to mean “delightful for the understanding.” *Gen 3:6*. This is because, lacking the power of abstraction, the imagination retains sensory data and combines them globally with little regard to their distinction and real nature. Thus, by this faculty one “imagines a human individual having a horse’s head and wings and so on. This is

⁵⁸⁷ Faur, José, *Homo Mysticus*, p 165. Cf Pines, Shlomo, « Translator’s Introduction » p. lxxxix where he describes the imagination « as the political faculty par excellence. »

⁵⁸⁸ Kravitz sees a hidden Maimonidean belief who could be suggesting that “the highest level of prophecy is that of being a philosopher.” Cf Kravitz, L. S., “The Revealed and the Concealed: Providence, Prophecy, Miracles, and Creation in the Guide,” Central Conference of American Rabbis, *Journal* (Oct., 1969), p 14.

⁵⁸⁹ Ravven, Heidi M., « Some Thoughts on What Spinoza Learned from Maimonides about the Prophetic Imagination Part 1. Moses on Prophecy and the Imagination,” in *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, Vol. 39:2, (April 2001) p 198.

⁵⁹⁰ *Dux Neutrorum*, lib.I, cap.LXVII, fol.27: “Scias autem quod homo antequam intelligat, est intelligens in potentia. Cum autem intellexerit aliquid sicut formam ligni spoliata a materia quam ipse spoliavit: quia hoc est opus intellectus.” Cf *Guide I*, 68, pp 163-166.

what is called a thing invented and false, for nothing existent corresponds to it at all.”⁵⁹¹ But once the sensory data passes first through the rational faculty, a whole process of distinction takes place. The data is analyzed into its constituent parts; the parts are subjected to a thorough examination; abstraction is made of the intelligibles and they are conceptualized.⁵⁹² It is this that gives rise to a scientific discourse. Faur has shown that where the correct epistemological process takes place, imagination can be very creative and valuable. He uses an example of two groups trying to make man fly. It would be necessary for them to discern what constitutes a “flying bird,” such as wings; and to discover the principle of aerodynamics. Whereas the first group “following ‘sense→imagination→reason’ proceed to fly by putting on wings and jumping from a tall building, those who follow ‘sense→reason→imagination’ first discover the universal principle of aerodynamics, then determine the essential elements required to realize that principle, and finally proceed to design an airplane. Creative thinking not only requires *reason*—the accurate decoding of natural phenomena—but also *imagination*—the ability to associate hitherto disconnected elements by discovering the link that would effectively transform them into a new reality.”⁵⁹³ Reason and imagination must complement each other for man to soar to greater heights where Faur further observes “the mind bypasses standard epistemological procedures and knows by means transcending ordinary rationality.”⁵⁹⁴ This is the height man can reach thanks to the leitmotif of prophecy. Ordinary people endowed with only perfect intellect cannot reach to such heights.

Know that true prophets indubitably grasp speculative matters; by means of his speculation alone, man is unable to grasp the causes from which what a prophet has come to know necessarily follows. This has a counterpart in their giving information regarding matters with respect to which man, using only common conjecture and divination, is unable to give information.⁵⁹⁵

⁵⁹¹ Ibid. lib.I, cap.LXXII, fol.35: “Sicut si imaginator imaginetur hominem cum capite equi: et quod habeat alas et similia istis: et illa vocatur cogitatio falsa: quia nullo modo convenit essentia rei.” Cf *Guide* I, 73, p 209.

⁵⁹² Ibid: “quoniam intellectus qui dissolvit composita, et cognoscit partes illorum, et intelligit illas, et spoliatur in veritate sua et in causis suis:” Cf *Guide* I, 73, p 209.

⁵⁹³ Faur, José, *Homo Mysticus*, p 72.

⁵⁹⁴ Ibid. p 72.

⁵⁹⁵ *Dux Neutorum*, lib.II, cap.XXXIX, fol.65: « Scito etiam quod prophetae veri habent apprehensiones speculativas quarum causas scilicet ex quibus provenit scitum illud non potest homo apprehendere simplici consideratione. Verbi gratia, Ipsi sciunt rationes quas non valet homo per planum suae aestimationis vel considerationis communis facere ipsas sciri. » Cf *Guide* II, 38, p 377.

A healthy perfect imagination is a crucial tool assisting a perfect rational faculty in proper intellection. That is the source of human creativity. Thus Maimonides's ambivalent attitude toward imagination is a perfect ploy in highlighting the double function of that faculty. A deficient, imperfect imagination tied to its material substratum cannot only serve as a veil blocking access to the intelligible realities, but eventually leads to error.

8.0 Evaluation

From the above, we gather that Job's evil is as a result of the privation of providence that he could have acquired through intellectual perfection. Job unfortunately was not intelligent. He was in kind of "intellectual slumber" explained by his attachment to imagination and matter and thus, he was cut off from the guidance that comes through "divine overflow." But when he was woken up by the 'intercession of an angel,'⁵⁹⁶ Job repented in dust and ashes and declared "my eyes have now seen the Lord." Job recognizes finally that God is transcendent, that He is not the cause of evil, and that He is not an object of human imaginative projections. He realizes that God's ways are not our ways, and His purpose and His providence and His governance are not like our purpose, our governance and our providence. This sure knowledge enables man to bear his misfortunes lightly and never to cast doubt on God and His manner of providing for the world.⁵⁹⁷ That is the knowledge that Job lacked and the knowledge that he finally acquired that ended his suffering and placed him firmly under the "divine overflow," the providence of God. According to Faur, Job has shifted from an 'anthropocentric to a theocentric perspective, thus allowing him to participate in the cosmological chorus dance.'⁵⁹⁸ The divine overflow which is

⁵⁹⁶ Ibid. lib.III, cap.XXIII, fol.86: "mediatorem angelo." Cf *Guide* III, 23, p 495: 'Angels' in Maimonidean vocabulary signify the separate intellects. Cf *Guide* II, 6, p 262 "Now our discourse here shall only deal with the angels who are separate intellects; for our Law does not deny the fact that He ... governs that which exists here through the intermediation of the angels."

⁵⁹⁷ Ibid: "Cum vero istud sciverit homo, omnis adversitas fit ei levis: et occasio quae acciderit non adiiciet quaerere adversus Creatorem, utrum sciat an non sciat: et utrum regat an postponat." Cf *Guide* III, 23, p 497. The problem of evil in the way defined by the moderns, does not apply to the *Book of Job*, since the *Book* neither questions the existence and the goodness of God, nor does the experience of evil constitute an argument against Him.

⁵⁹⁸ Faur, José, *Homo Mysticus*, p 161.

providence is permanent. It radiates downward with no specific target and the only means by which man can tap into that flow and thus join in the “cosmological chorus dance,” is by his intellect. It is well put by Altmann who notes:

This entire universe is a system of free-flowing grace as it were, and does not require special acts of divine grace for special purposes. Here grace is abounding at all times, and its reception and efficacy depend solely on the receptivity or disposition of the recipient.⁵⁹⁹

Whoever fails to realize the potentials of his intellect is abandoned and exposed to whatever may happen to befall him. Goodness, virtue or piety does not attract divine providence. Intellectual perfection does. One can acquire intellectual perfection only by knowledge which is established by speculation and confirmed by investigation. “Lacking that knowledge, Job lacked perfection; lacking perfection, Job lacked providence; lacking providence, Job suffered.”⁶⁰⁰ This was the situation of Adam after his fall.

What part then, does suffering play in Maimonides’s interpretation of the *Book of Job*? This is an inspiration that we have taken from Schreiner who paid particular attention to this question in her interpretation of Gregory the Great’s *Moralia in Job*.⁶⁰¹ Because virtue in Maimonides’s reading of the *Book of Job* is not seen as righteousness in action, suffering is not taken as punishment for vice. Virtue for Maimonides is simply intellectual perfection that is, becoming rational *in actu* — knowing all that is within the capacity of man to know.⁶⁰² In the *Book of Job*, suffering could have triggered off Job’s journey towards self discovery, because his old traditional beliefs in the principle of justice, of reward and punishment, have failed to correspond to the reality of his unmerited suffering. For Gregory and for Aquinas as we shall still see, suffering is seen as a process of purgation for attaining perfection and the greater reward which lie ahead. Their interpretation is influenced by their Christian belief in eschatology and the resurrection. On the

⁵⁹⁹ Altmann, Alexander, “Maimonides and Thomas Aquinas: Natural or Divine Prophecy?” p 7.

⁶⁰⁰ Kravitz, Leonard S, *The Hidden Doctrines of Maimonides’ Guide of the Perplexed*, (Lewiston/Queenston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1988) p 228.

⁶⁰¹ Schreiner, Susan E, *Where Shall Wisdom be Found?* pp 22-54; 70.

⁶⁰² *Dux Neutrorum*, lib.III, cap.XXVIII, fol.89: “Ultima vero perfectio hominis est ut fiat rationale actu scilicet ut habeat intellectum in actu: et hoc est ut sciat quicquid in potestate est hominis scire de universitate entium secundum perfectionem suam ultimam.” Cf *Guide* III, 27, p 511. For a study of virtue in Maimonides, see Marvin Fox, “The Doctrine of the Mean in Aristotle and Maimonides: A Comparative Study,” in Marvin Fox, *Interpreting Maimonides*, pp 93-123.

contrary, Maimonides does not see suffering as contributing to the intellectual perfection of Job. He sees suffering as belonging essentially “to the realm of error, matter, Satan, or the imagination,” and thus, “an impediment rather than an avenue to wisdom.”⁶⁰³ Knowledge, as Job’s experience proves liberates from suffering and assures that one enjoys divine providence. According to Wohlman:

L’homme juste jouit de la protection de la Providence quand il devient capable de comprendre la manière dont Dieu est présent à sa vie pour en mesurer les actions. Il découvre la présence de la Providence lorsque, grâce à un usage de la raison conforme à l’épanchement divin, il devient capable de considérer le bonheur et le malheur de sa vie selon la sagesse et la justice de Dieu.⁶⁰⁴

It is now evident why Maimonides had to employ esotericism in his discussions. He employs, from among a group of seven, two major causes of contradictions in his esoteric discussions.⁶⁰⁵ He does this for two reasons: one is pedagogic where the teacher tries by indirect means to let the student arrive at the correct answer; and second is to protect “a secret” from being discovered by the uninitiated while at the same time providing “flash points” that would lead the initiated to its understanding. Maimonides has every reason to employ contradictions as a teaching device because his doctrines on God and His “relation” with the world are for lack of a better choice, “unorthodox.” The doctrines could actually upset a great number of believers for whom God is a loving father, who rewards good and punishes iniquity, who directly involves in a providential care for His people. They would be upset not because what is being taught is false or bad, but because their intellect is incapable of receiving them. Maimonides compares this to “feeding a suckling with wheaten bread and meat and giving him wine to drink. He would undoubtedly kill him, not because these aliments are bad or unnatural for man, but because the child that receives them is too weak to digest them so as to derive a benefit from them.”⁶⁰⁶ Summing up our discussion, we note the following: Contrary to what Scriptural tradition says, God is totally

⁶⁰³ Schreiner, Susan E, *Where Shall Wisdom be found?* p 70.

⁶⁰⁴ Wohlman, Avital, *Thomas d’Aquin et Maïmonide, un dialogue exemplaire*, p 238.

⁶⁰⁵ *Dux Neutorum*, lib.I, Prooemium Authoris, fol.4: “Scias quod causae destructionis vel contrarietatis quae inveniuntur in aliquo librorum, vel in aliqua aggregationum sunt septem.” Cf *Guide I*, Introduction to the First Part, pp 17-18.

⁶⁰⁶ *Ibid.* lib.I, cap.III, fol.12: « Hoc autem non videtur aliter in oculis meis, nisi sic. Sicut si aliquis vellet pascere infantem pane triticeo, et carne, et vino, sine dubio intersiceret ipsum : non quod sunt mali cibi : vel quod non conveniunt naturae humanae : sed propter debilitatem comestoris : quia non potest eos digerere, ut inde proveniat utilitas. » Cf *Guide I*, 33, p 71.

transcendent and does not get involved directly with humans and with the world. Despite not getting directly involved in mundane activities, God is the force behind the stability and existence of all existents in the world. From Maimonides's cosmogony, it is clear that the force of producing and preserving of existents pass through the incorporeal intelligences. By the fact of His divine nature, God cannot enter into any direct relations with His creatures so that He cannot be a "Father" who directly provides for man and guides him. Moreover, He possesses no emotions and thus is absolutely incapable of feeling love and mercy for mankind. The providential care of the world reposes in the hands of the separate intellects and the only means of sharing in it is by individual intellectual perfection and getting epistemically connected to the divine overflow. That is the only way by which man is assured particular providence.

Il s'agit du chemin par lequel l'homme met en œuvre la capacité de sa raison pour devenir intelligent en acte.⁶⁰⁷

However, one who is not connected to that overflow has taken himself outside of the care of providence and is at the mercy of the nature's elements. Consequently, evil is a function of the absence of providence.

Before we put a close to this section, it would be good to examine what Maimonidean providential care does mean in reality. This is because of so much ambiguity as to just what is the nature of the protection provided by the divine overflow. Does it mean that no physical suffering will befall any man under the protection of divine providence as Maimonides seems to suggest—"that individual can never be afflicted with evil of any kind?"⁶⁰⁸ Does it mean exemption from death since providence gives "enduring permanence"?⁶⁰⁹ In his discussion of divine providence, Maimonides does not mean literally any of the above. As he has shown throughout the *Guide*, proper interpretation must always guide our reading of his texts. In the exposition of the forms of evil, Maimonides acknowledges that there is a necessary and unavoidable evil like death, that arises from the forces of generation and corruption—the material nature and against which, nothing can be done. But once the intellect sheds off its

⁶⁰⁷ Wohlman, Avital, *Maïmonide et Thomas d'Aquin : un dialogue impossible*, (Fribourg : Editions Universitaires, 1995), p 78.

⁶⁰⁸ *Dux Neutrorum*, lib III, cap LII : « Et isti tali nunquam potest accidere malum quodcumque de numero malorum : » Cf *Guide* III, 51, p 625.

⁶⁰⁹ Ibid : « Et intellectus ille durabit in sempiternum uno et eodem modo sine omni variatione : » Cf *Guide* III, 51, p 628.

material *habitus*, it could live permanently in what we call immortality. It remains to be seen whether Maimonides believed in personal immortality.⁶¹⁰

One could suffer the loss of his children, his wealth and his health because made of matter, they are perishable. The pre-provident Job bears witness to that fact. Rather with intellectual perfection which gives access to providence, the mind goes beyond the level of *adamah* and imagination, acquires a new ontological status that opens it to a special bond with intelligible realities and cares less about the fleeting pleasures of the mundane order. Even when there is a misfortune, he understands them properly within perspective as the post-provident Job testifies: “but when he knew God with a certain knowledge, he admitted that true happiness, which is the knowledge of the deity, is guaranteed to all who know Him and that a human being cannot be troubled in it by any of all the misfortunes in question.”⁶¹¹ He who is under providential care, has a better grasp of the universal workings of this world and makes more rational and correct decisions about what to do and how to live than the majority who not engaging in speculation, are led by their imaginations and exposed to mere chance. Thus, a person who has perfected his intellect will know not to get on a doomed ship because he knows a storm might be on the way. According to Ivry, “the individual who acts on the basis of correct or incorrect knowledge is responsible for what happens to him in all circumstances.”⁶¹² By the help of his intellectual endowment, man is solely responsible for his destiny. Our interpretation is confirmed by Leaman who says:

The nearer we come to perfecting ourselves, the farther we go from matter, which ultimately is an irrelevance and a hindrance. There is evil in the world, as there is matter, but there is always available to us the option of transcending our material form of existence and coming close to the divine reality through our intellectual thought. This is where God’s providence lies.⁶¹³

⁶¹⁰Blumberg, Harry, “The Problem of Immortality in Avicenna, Maimonides and St. Thomas Aquinas,” in Jacob I. Dienstag, ed., *Studies in Maimonides and St. Thomas Aquinas*, (Ktav Publishing House, Inc., 1975) pp 29-49.

⁶¹¹*Dux Neutorum*, lib.III, cap.XXIII, fol.85: “Cum vero scivit Creatorem scientia vera, concessit quod profectus verus, quae est scientia Creatoris, est praesto scienti eum : et nulla tentatio de istis omnibus perverteret sensum eius. » Cf *Guide* III, 23, p 492-3.

⁶¹²Ivry, Alfred L, “Providence, Divine Omniscience, and Possibility: The Case of Maimonides,” in Joseph A. Buijs, ed., *Maimonides: A Collection of Critical Essays*, (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988), p 184.

⁶¹³Leaman, Oliver, *Evil and Suffering in Jewish Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p 79.

The use of the Bible as an exegetical tool for philosophy has not been wholly welcomed in the scholarly world. Maimonides and other medievals, who undertook such exegesis, have been accused of a “colossal anachronism.”⁶¹⁴ It was Spinoza, a disciple and critique of Maimonides, who ardently noted that “any and all attributions of philosophical sophistication and truth to the Bible and the prophets were fictions.”⁶¹⁵ Whatever be the case, the search for truth knows no boundaries and it is fidelity to the truth that motivates Maimonides in his interpretations, even if such quests would take him into the holy book.

9.0 THOMAS AQUINAS AND THE FOUNDATION OF HIS THEORY

Of all the biblical commentaries he wrote, the commentary on the *Book of Job* is one of the most mature and polished ever composed by Thomas Aquinas. Our central interest in this book is trying to decipher Aquinas’s reading and interpretation of Maimonides’s understanding of God’s providence in the *Book of Job* and how this providence relates to evil or human suffering. The circumstances of this innocent man Job in the biblical *Book of Job*, is a *locus classicus* for what may in general terms be called the problem of evil. How does divine providence work? Does the presence of innocent suffering suggest that divine providence is excluded from the human affairs? How does Aquinas understand suffering and happiness and what philosophical import has it in his interpretation of the *Book of Job*? How does Aquinas’s interpretation differ from that of Maimonides? The effort to interpret Maimonides’s reading of Job, would not lead to a point-by-point account of what the two authors have to say, since Maimonides’s reading of the *Book of Job* is not as exhaustive as to merit such text-by-text evaluation. His commentary in the *Dux Neutrorum* comprises of only two chapters (23-24) at the end of which he claims to “have summed up all its notions, nothing being left aside except such matters as figure there because of the arrangement of the discourse and the continuation of the parables.”⁶¹⁶ In most cases however,

⁶¹⁴Carney Shalom and Shatz David, “The Bible as a Source for Philosophical Reflection,” in Daniel H. Frank and Oliver Leaman, eds., *History of Jewish Philosophy* (London: Routledge, 2003), p 15.

⁶¹⁵Ibid.

⁶¹⁶ *Dux Neutrorum*, lib.III, cap.XXIII, fol.86: “manifestabitur tibi ratio in eo : et invenies quod collegi omnes rationes ipsius : et nihil relictum est ex eis nisi illud quod est colligatio verborum et ornatus parabolarum : » Cf *Guide* III, 23, p 497.

mention would be made of major points where Aquinas visualizes Maimonides by attacking the latter's point and offering what he considers to be the correct interpretation. It is highly probable that Aquinas's motivation to write a commentary on the *Book of Job* may have been influenced by his reading of the *Dux Neutrorum*. Not very satisfied with what he has seen in Maimonides, he might have decided to offer a Christian's account of divine providence. Against the elitist and exclusivist interpretation of providence and human happiness that are the hallmarks of Maimonides, Aquinas will open up providence to every created being rational or irrational. He will make the acquisition of perfect happiness, a divine gift such that even those who are not very intelligent could still arrive at the possession of perfect happiness.

Just like in our treatment of Maimonides, we cannot begin to understand Aquinas's discussion of providence and evil even in the *Book of Job* without a brief layout of the theologico-metaphysical structure that grounds the discussion and without making even if a brief reference, to the influence of Gregory the Great's *Moralia in Job*, on Aquinas. The Thomistic idea of *esse* is at the background of his discussion of the nature of God as *Ipsum Esse Subsistens*, of creation, providence and evil. God according to Aquinas is the Being that Subsists in itself—*Ipsum Esse per Se Subsistens*.⁶¹⁷ It has no need of the other to exist. In the language and thinking of Avicenna, it is the Necessarily Existent that explains the ontological existence of other things.

9.1 Gregory the Great's *Moralia in Job*

Of all the commentaries that have existed on Job, the *Moralia* of Gregory the Great exercised much influence in the early, late and even beyond the 13th century.⁶¹⁸ Within the monastic environments,⁶¹⁹ it was the chosen book for the *lectio divina* and in the Schools, it was widely adopted as the *sacra pagina*.⁶²⁰ This popular choice already shows the bent of the book: the

⁶¹⁷ ST 1a, q.44, a.1 “quod Deus est ipsum esse per se subsistens—that God is the essentially self-subsisting being.”

⁶¹⁸ Grégoire le Grand, *Morales sur Job*: livres I et II, traduction de André de Gaudemaris, (Paris : Cerf, 1952) p 14. Let's just see the evidence of this influence as given by Robert Gillet, in his introductory note to the text : «C'est que sa grande figure a dominé tout le moyen âge, et que les thèmes grégoriens ont imbibé profondément toute la spiritualité de la chrétienté occidentale. »

⁶¹⁹ Smalley, Beryl, *The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages*, (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1964) 3rd ed., p 32.

⁶²⁰ Cf Wohlman, Avital, *Thomas d'Aquin et Maïmonide: un dialogue exemplaire*, p 256; Leclercq, Jean, “The Exposition and Exegesis of Scripture: From Gregory the Great to St. Bernard,” in G.H.W. Lampe, ed., *The Cambridge History of The Bible*, (London: Cambridge University Press, 1969), pp 193-195.

moral uplifting of the people.⁶²¹ Gregory has not commented *stricto sensu* on the *Book of Job* and neither has he given a systematic theological exposition of the book. In fact, his work could best be described “as a group of religious reflections surrounding the book of Job.”⁶²² It is even argued whether Gregory was a “theologian” or not.⁶²³ His major interest, as he himself made known, was to help his readers and listeners in their spiritual journey by the exposition of the spiritual and moral signification of the sacred text. In his dedicatory letter to Leander, he makes known his motivation:

C'est assurément pour me conformer à leur multiples invitations, tantôt par une exégèse littérale, tantôt par l'interprétation plus élevée que donne la contemplation, tantôt par une leçon morale, que j'ai achevé en six volumes cet ouvrage de trente-cinq livres. Dans ce commentaire, je puis paraître souvent sacrifier ce qui touche à l'exégèse littérale pour m'appliquer un peu plus longuement au vaste champ de sens moral et du sens mystique. Mais quiconque parle de Dieu, doit regarder comme nécessaire toute enquête qui rend meilleurs ceux qui l'écoutent, et donc celui-là peut estimer avoir bien ordonné son discours qui, lorsque le demande l'occasion du bien à faire, s'éloigne utilement de son premier sujet.⁶²⁴

In the course of Gregory's interpretation, we shall see that he preempts Maimonides's esotericism, by his insistence that we must go beyond the surface level, to unravel the inner and hidden meanings of the Scriptural text. It is not a surprise that one of his greatest contributions to scriptural exegesis is his almost unyielding emphasis on the allegorical and moral significations of the bible. According to Smalley, “his originality lies in his adaptation and extension of the

⁶²¹ Grégoire le Grand, *Morales sur Job*: livres I et II, p 12.

⁶²² Hester, Kevin L., *Eschatology and Pain in St. Gregory the Great: The Christological Synthesis of Gregory's Morals on the Book of Job*, (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2007), p 10.

⁶²³ Many factors count against Gregory in this debate: his lack of a critical method in exegesis; his lack of originality and his lack of theological speculation. Cf F. Homes Dudden, *Gregory the Great: His Place in History and Thought*, 2 vols. (London: 1905), pp 286-292; Pierre Boglioni, “Miracle et nature chez Grégoire le Grand,” in *Cahiers d'études médiévales, 1: Epopées, légendes et miracles*, (Montréal, 1974), pp 11-102. Certain points also count in his favor: his use of symbolism in exegesis; his interpretation of suffering as a salvific tool and his “distinctive monastic concept of the spiritual life,” and his proper theological unity. Cf Jean Laporte, “Une théologie systématique chez Grégoire?” in Jacques Fontaine, Robert Gillet and Stan Pellistrandi, eds., *Grégoire le Grand*, (Paris, 1986), pp 235-254 ; Claude Dagens, *Saint Grégoire le Grand : culture et expérience chrétiennes*, (Paris : Etudes Augustiniennes, 1977) pp 432-435; Kevin L. Hester, *Eschatology and Pain in St. Gregory the Great*, (Paternoster : Milton Keynes, UK, 2007) pp 6-9.

⁶²⁴ Grégoire le Grand, *Morales sur Job*: livres I et II, (Lettre-Dédicace, 2) p 117.

spiritual senses.”⁶²⁵ For Gregory, the Old Testament is only a prophetic announcement of the New and reveals a consistent move from the lower realities to the higher. His method stood him out and merited him raving reviews from his friends and foes alike.

Before going into the examination of the text, we recognize the difficulty that the commentary presents as it is not a modern man’s idea of a commentary. Its method of explaining the same text in three different ways—according to the literal, the allegorical and the historical sense—renders it most boring and difficult to grasp its essential teaching. It was Cuthbert Butler who notes that “it would be a complete mistake to estimate the *Morals* as a commentary on Job.... They should be read without any attention to the constant allegorizing.”⁶²⁶ Smalley describes Gregory’s exegetical method as “a most annoying system. Everything in St. Gregory’s system is attached, however loosely, to the thread of the text, which precludes any attempt at coherence or logical arrangement.”⁶²⁷ Our goal is not a deeper study of Gregory as it is serving as a step toward a better understanding of our major authors—Maimonides and Thomas Aquinas. However, we shall pay attention to his teaching on suffering and providence. We shall try to make sense out of the otherwise difficult commentary, by paying particular attention to two assumptions, which according to Schreiner, “inform Gregory’s entire interpretation of Job: his metaphysical presupposition that reality is hierarchical, and his assumption that the perception of the true nature of reality is gained only by an inward ascent made possible through suffering.”⁶²⁸ By his personal experience of suffering, Gregory believed that he was chosen by divine providence, to interpret the history of a suffering Job and how, he moved through the fleeting things of this world to the possession of the ultimate reality. This and the historical circumstances of the early and late 6th century which witnessed economic, civil, and ecclesial upheavals, contributed to Gregory’s conviction that the world was coming to an end. It was all these that, perhaps, contributed to the eschatological bent he took into his commentary on Job. This belief in the end serves as a motivation for the cultivation of the spiritual life even by the

⁶²⁵ Smalley, Beryl, *The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages*, p 33.

⁶²⁶ Butler, Cuthbert, *Benedictine Monarchism: Studies in Benedictine Life and Rule*, 2nd ed. (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1919), p 113.

⁶²⁷ Smalley, Beryl, *The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages*, p 34.

⁶²⁸ Schreiner, Susan E., *Where Shall Wisdom be Found?* p 23.

way of asceticism.⁶²⁹ It engenders fear that inspires conversion from one's evil ways and leads to the contemplation of God.

We shall examine Gregory's underlying theological interpretation under the following subheadings: i. his metaphysics of being and ii, his theology of suffering.

9.1.1 His Metaphysics of Being:

Many Gregorian scholars like Robert Gillet, H. Wasselynck, Claude Dagens, Carole Straw, Patrick Catry, and numerous others, confirm the importance of Augustine in Gregory's thoughts. His metaphysics, though not in the same vein as those of renowned metaphysicians like Plato, Aristotle, pseudo-Dionysius, Augustine, Avicenna, etc., are stream-lined from the Augustinian and Neo-Platonic tradition where reality is divided into a hierarchy of existents. The theory of emanation coming down from Plotinus and co, compartmentalized creation into a free-flowing hierarchy of existents, where the highest in the hierarchy is closest to divinity and the lowest in the hierarchy is farthest and less divine. This tradition sees matter as the vilest of things and the cause of all evil. The farther away one is from matter, the closer to holiness and to God. Reminiscent of his tradition, Gregory "associates the body with defilement, pollution, and the irrational desires of animals. A solid, intractable mass, the body is made of clay, the lowest matter."⁶³⁰ Some of these descriptions we find in latter philosophers like Maimonides, who also belong to the exegetical tradition of the medieval ages. Gregory's thought is full of causally-connected copulas like interiority and exteriority,⁶³¹ good and bad, holiness and sinfulness, humanity and divinity, visible and invisible, perfection and imperfection,⁶³² all reflecting this

⁶²⁹ Hester, Kevin L., *Eschatology and Pain in St. Gregory the Great*, p 33.

⁶³⁰ Straw, Carole, *Gregory the Great: Perfection and Imperfection*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), pp 43-44.

⁶³¹ Aubin, Paul, « Intériorité et extériorité dans les *Moralia* in Job de saint Grégoire le Grand, » *Recherches de Science Religieuse*, vol 62/1, (1974), pp 117-166.

⁶³² Dagens, Claude, *Saint Grégoire le Grand*, pp 201-204.

downward-upward movement by which man must rise to his Creator. This Gregorian hierarchy of being is thus expressed by Straw:

The universe is composed of progressive degrees of being, ranging from the perfect spirituality of God to the dull carnality of lifeless matter. Angels, men, beasts, and even plants and rocks have their place along this scale, and visible creation forms “a ladder of contemplation” (*scala considerationis*). Each level increases in rationality and spirituality as it leaves behind matter and emotion, as man climbs to gain knowledge of his Creator.⁶³³

The higher and the lower levels of being exist in a fundamental unity such that, the soul that wishes to discover God, must in a Neo-Platonic language, turn from the external, sensible universe, to the internal, higher realities where God abides. It is a kind of conversion movement so admirably described by Dagens:

Revenir à son cœur, c’est se détourner du monde extérieur, c’est-à-dire de toutes ces choses visibles, qui nous ont charmés et nous ont fait oublier l’invisible.⁶³⁴

In his study of the Scripture, there is much evidence of this hierarchical structure guiding his exegesis. As seen in his dedicatory letter to Leander, Gregory observes three necessary steps towards a proper interpretation of the Scripture, steps which guide his commentary of the *Moralia in Job*. The steps insist that “we should seek first the historical sense, then build the typical sense on this foundation, and lastly deduce from the latter the moral sense.”⁶³⁵ The movement is from what he considers the lowest step to the highest echelon where he opens up the hidden messages of the texts. The historical sense follows from the letter of the text and is less developed by Gregory. The typical sense built on the historical foundation, involves the finding of types of the Church, of Christ and of eternal things. The moral sense on the other hand, illumines the religious life, and the common experience of the faithful.⁶³⁶ With the help of the Scripture, the reader is led from the earthly to the heavenly things in an ever ascending

⁶³³ Straw, Carole, *Gregory the Great: Perfection and Imperfection*, p 33.

⁶³⁴ Dagens, Claude, *Saint Grégoire le Grand*, p 174.

⁶³⁵ Leclercq, Jean, “The Exposition and Exegesis of Scripture: From Gregory the Great to St. Bernard,” in G.H.W. Lampe, ed., *The Cambridge History of The Bible*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), p 185. Cf *Morales in Job*, Lettre-Dédicace, 3, traduction d’André de Gaudemaris, p 118.

⁶³⁶ Smalley, Beryl, *The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages*, p 34; Claude Dagens, *Grégoire le Grand*, p 234.

fashion and each category of readers find in it, something to feed their interests. According to Gregory :

La parole divine a en effet de quoi exercer les gens cultivés par ses mystères et, souvent, de quoi reconforter les simples par de claires leçons; dans son sens manifeste, elle présente de quoi nourrir les tout petits; dans ses profondeurs, elle garde de quoi ravir d'admiration les esprits les plus élevés.⁶³⁷

At the center of Gregory's metaphysics of being, is to be found man in his search for God.⁶³⁸ Around him is constituted the 'fundamental Christian experience of the spiritual life attracted by two major contradictory tendencies: one tendency, sin, which pushes man towards the exterior mundane things, and the other which leads him inwards, towards himself, constituting the first degrees of contemplation.'⁶³⁹ As we shall soon see, it is the original sin that has sown into man, this tendency towards the exterior; Eve saw the fruit of the garden and it seemed very good and attractive to her and she ate it. Since then man's spiritual war has been to find his way back to the interior life, envisaged for him by God before his fall.

9.1.2 His Theology of Suffering:

A distinguishing characteristic of Gregory's hierarchical world inherited from the Neo-Platonists is the interconnectedness between all realities. Unlike Augustine, he minimizes the omnipotence and the transcendence of God. It is not to be argued that the most predominant theme in the *Moralia* is that of suffering.⁶⁴⁰ For Gregory, the mere fact that God directly controls and directs all things including suffering, is a proof of His omnipotence and abiding care of all creatures.

To stress the unity and continuity of all reality is ultimately to emphasize the hand of God in the carnal side of life; that is, in the physical world, in the body, in pain, and in that darker presence known as evil... The devil strikes man with evils, having the full permission of God to vent such wrath. The flesh and particularly its torments become an

⁶³⁷ *Morales sur Job*, Lettre-Dédicace, 4, (traduction d'André de Gaudemaris), p 120.

⁶³⁸ Dagens, Claude, *Saint Grégoire le Gand*, p 433.

⁶³⁹ *Ibid.* p 202.

⁶⁴⁰ Laporte, Jean, "Une théologie systématique ? », p 236 : «Le thème de la souffrance prédomine et, à partir des *Moralia*, semble rayonner sur toute l'œuvre grégorienne et lui servir de base. »

important means of attaining spiritual ends. Now suffering and evil are transformed into partial goods, for they are known to be the discipline of the Father chastening the sons He loves; they are integral and essential parts of God's plan.⁶⁴¹

Gregory was a man who knew what it meant to suffer. He read the suffering Job in the first person, as a man who also suffered in his body, much illness. With an eye of faith, that would be transparent in his commentary, he saw his suffering as a sign of God's predilection: "The Lord corrects everyone He loves, and punishes everyone he accepts as a son." (Heb. 12: 6) For Gregory, suffering is a necessary step toward the possession of eternal goods. He interprets his commentary on Job as a providential choice:

Peut-être fut-ce le dessein de la divine Providence de me faire commenter dans la douleur l'histoire de Job dans la douleur; et de me faire mieux comprendre dans l'épreuve l'âme d'un homme éprouvé.⁶⁴²

Gregory finds in this book, an example of evidential suffering and how it becomes a tool in the "hands" of God for the purification of the just and their ascent towards God. Unlike certain metaphysicians and theologians, to name just Augustine who explains away or denies the reality of evil, Gregory embraces the factuality of evil and is not afraid to name God as being ultimately responsible for evil. The fall of our original parents Adam and Eve, necessitated the punishment of suffering upon all humanity. In his interpretation of the sufferings of Job, Gregory makes use of his allegory and sees Job as the prototypical image of the suffering Christ and the Church and a man for all time. Even the name "Job" according to Gregory, means "the sufferer."

Que le bienheureux Job soit une figure du Rédempteur à venir, son nom même le montre. Job signifie « le Souffrant » et cette souffrance exprime bien la Passion du Médiateur et les travaux de la sainte Eglise, torturée de mille manières par les tribulations de cette vie.⁶⁴³

⁶⁴¹ Straw, Carole, *Gregory the Great*, p 12.

⁶⁴² *Morales sur Job*, Lettre-Dédicace, 5 (traduction d'André de Gaudemaris) p 121.

⁶⁴³ *Morales sur Job*, Préface 16.

The fall of man is the genesis of his sin and suffering, and the tension that exists between his mind and his body. Man made in the image and likeness of God, was required, in the nothingness of his being, to contemplate his God.

Tout homme, du fait même qu'il est homme, doit reconnaître son Créateur. Il se soumettra à sa volonté d'autant plus complètement qu'il aura mieux évalué son propre néant.⁶⁴⁴

Gregory understands this man's "li keness of God" to "consist in innocence or purity"⁶⁴⁵ and describes it as "splendor of innate innocence" and "created for righteousness."⁶⁴⁶ As Maimonides would later explain, the "image of God" for Gregory is primarily in the rationality.⁶⁴⁷ By man's fall into sin, he lost his innocence and thereby his likeness to God. The order whereby the mind should rule the body was usurped and the body started ruling the mind.

The original sin, indeed all sin, is the result of the body ruling over the mind. In the fall it is this betrayal of the right to rule within an established hierarchy that is emphasized. God's right to rule over humanity was ignored and humanity fell into sin.⁶⁴⁸

Because this hierarchy and equilibrium wanted by God have been disrupted, corruption and mutability set in. These soon affect the social order where man's selfish needs surpass those of the others. And thus, "bound to the body and his own needs, the sinner becomes incapable of understanding a truly spiritual way of life with others."⁶⁴⁹ In this state, man lacks the right perspective on life, and does not have the proper relationship with God and neighbor. Instead of getting back to the interior contemplation of God, he dwells on the exterior world of flesh and pleasures. To recover man to Himself, God sends man suffering by way of punishment.

There are two major categories of suffering: external and internal. Every other suffering finds their class within these two. Gregory classifies the sufferings of Job: the loss of his riches, the death of his children, the loss of his health, the curse by his wife and the unjust accusations by his friends,⁶⁵⁰ under these two categories-external and interior sufferings: "au dehors, ce fut un

⁶⁴⁴ *Morales sur Job*, Préface 4.

⁶⁴⁵ Hester, Kevin L., *Eschatology and Pain in St. Gregory the Great*, p 60.

⁶⁴⁶ *Moralia*, 35.16.43 « Ingenitae innocentiae splendore. » « Ad iustitiam condidit. »

⁶⁴⁷ *Moralia*, 22.16.36.

⁶⁴⁸ Hester, Kevin L., *Eschatology and Pain in St. Gregory the Great*, p 62.

⁶⁴⁹ Straw, Carole, *Gregory the Great*, p 111.

⁶⁵⁰ *Morales sur Job*, 2.18.25-26.

assaut furieux, au dedans, des suggestions empoisonnées.⁶⁵¹ Gregory describes the friends of Job who were oppressing and accusing Job falsely, as heretics. Under the pretext of exhorting, they occupy themselves in seducing souls away from God.⁶⁵² Heretics in this case would include all those who attack the just and the innocent in view of spoiling their temporal goods and emptying them of their internal virtues.⁶⁵³ But instead of achieving their aims, heretics sometimes act as ‘instruments’ in the hand of providence toward showing the fidelity of His just ones.

Toutes ces machinations se changent pour le saint homme en mérites accrus. Les blessures mettent à l’épreuve sa patience, les discours exercent sa sagesse. Sur tous les points il résiste avec fermeté, triomphant des désastres avec courage et des paroles avec intelligence.⁶⁵⁴

Job’s suffering leads him to a kind of contemplative vision of his life. He consistently inquires the cause of his suffering and demands answers from God. But instead of getting all the response he needs, he is led by contemplating his sufferings to the realization of the true realities. The possessions of this earthly life—riches, children, health, Job realizes latter, are but ephemeral and do not really count. Job came to this realization only when he lost all that he possessed. Gregory believes that suffering, apart from bringing out heroic virtues of courage and endurance, gives a merited status symbol to the sufferer and attests to the presence of an invisible force. It was the case of Job who has come to the status of a celebrity thanks to his patient suffering.

Cet homme, donc, doué de tant d’admirables vertus, n’était connu que de soi-même et de Dieu. Sans ses épreuves, il nous serait resté inconnu. Sans doute, cette vertu s’exerça pendant sa vie tranquille, mais ce n’est qu’au choc de la souffrance que le parfum s’en répandit... ainsi le parfum qu’exhalent les vertus des saints ne se fait sentir que dans leurs tribulations.⁶⁵⁵

If the status of celebrity is only to be acquired by means of innocent suffering, not so many people would actually aspire to be one. However, Gregory shows in one particular text, that suffering serves numerous purposes: it is punitive as it is a result of justice for sins committed; it

⁶⁵¹ *Morales sur Job*, Préface 9-10.

⁶⁵² *Morales sur Job*, Préface 15.

⁶⁵³ Hester, Kevin L., *Eschatology and Pain in St. Gregory the Great*, p 66.

⁶⁵⁴ *Morales sur Job*, Préface p 11.

⁶⁵⁵ *Morales sur Job*, Préface 6.

is corrective as it gears towards restoring one to the right path; it is preventive of future faults and it inspires a greater love of God in the heart of his creatures.

Il y a diverses espèces d'afflictions : autre celle qui frappe le pécheur pour le châtier sans appel ; autre celle qui frappe le pécheur pour qu'il se corrige ; autre celle qui frappe parfois non pour remédier à des fautes passées mais pour prévenir des péchés futurs ; autre celle qui souvent ne frappe ni pour corriger les fautes passées, ni pour prévenir les fautes à venir, mais pour faire aimer davantage la puissance reconnue du Sauveur, une délivrance inattendue succédant à l'épreuve.⁶⁵⁶

God permits and sometimes sends us suffering as a pathway leading us back to Him. Some of the reasons Gregory gives to justify suffering may appear ridiculous, but they clearly show the monastic environment which nourished his convictions and the Christian faith which animates them. Where suffering is neither for sin committed, nor as a warning against future faults, Gregory insists that it may be necessary in order to show "the merciful power of God who delivers from all evil."⁶⁵⁷ This is the reason he adduces to justify innocent suffering of those who have infirmities from birth. A clear example is the gospel passage of the one born blind but miraculously healed, where Jesus answers that the blindness had not been caused by a past sin or anything like that, but only that God's power might be manifested in him.⁶⁵⁸ A patient sufferer is ultimately rewarded not only in this life, but also in the next. Job and the Church which he symbolizes would eventually know the eternal rewards of temporal suffering.

Il est équitable que Job, après la perte de ses richesses, après la mort de ses enfants, après les souffrances causées par ses ulcères, après ces joutes et ces luttes verbales, soit relevé par une récompense au double. La sainte Eglise, elle aussi, pour les peines qu'elle endure, reçoit dès cette vie une double récompense ... à la fin des travaux de ce monde, ce ne sont pas seulement les âmes, mais les corps qui, eux aussi, atteindront la béatitude.⁶⁵⁹

In a way, Gregory argues that Job is known universally thanks to his patient suffering which brought out of him, heroic virtues of endurance and courage. The experience leads Job to a

⁶⁵⁶ *Morales sur Job*, Préface 12.

⁶⁵⁷ *Morales sur Job*, Préface 12.

⁶⁵⁸ Jn 9 : 2-3

⁶⁵⁹ *Morales sur Job*, Préface 20.

deeper self-knowledge, to freedom and to a better understanding of the workings of providence.⁶⁶⁰ By his sufferings epitomized in his losses, Job learns detachment from the exterior and material world, and attachment to the interior world of contemplation of God.⁶⁶¹ It is this intellectual union with God in contemplation that enriches one's understanding of oneself, of God and of one's place in the hierarchy of existents. At this realization, Job confesses: "I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees Thee." (Job 42:5) Suffering has led to Job's physical, spiritual and intellectual transformation that he now differs "from that which he was before."⁶⁶² To put a fitting close to this section, we note the remarks of Schreiner that suffering "leads to an inner, detached transcendence that is, in essence, a freedom from history, materiality, and exteriority."⁶⁶³ It retraces Gregory's hierarchy of existent: movement from the external to the internal, from the lower to the higher, and from the changeable to the eternal realities. This positive image of suffering as interpreted by Gregory the Great, will again be adopted by Thomas Aquinas in his interpretation of the suffering of Job.

9.2 On the Active Intellect by Arabic Philosophers and St. Thomas Aquinas

The interpretation of the Active Intellect, by the Arabic philosophers of the Peripatetic tradition, is very rich and has far reaching consequences in the history of thought especially in the Medieval Ages. It is well documented that for them, the Active Intellect is an impersonal separate substance that is constantly in act. The implication is that it could sometimes be seen as either a world intellect distinct from God or it could be seen as identical with the Intellect of God.⁶⁶⁴ We do not forget Aquinas's rejection of 'Avicennized Augustinianism' which identifies

⁶⁶⁰ Schreiner, Susan E, *Where Shall Wisdom be Found?* p 28.

⁶⁶¹ For a better appreciation of Gregory's understanding of contemplation, consult the following: A. Ménéger, "La contemplation d'après Saint Grégoire le Grand," *Vie Spirituelle* 9, (1923), pp 242-82; A. Ménéger, "Les divers sens du mot '*contemplatio*' chez saint Grégoire le Grand, » *Vie Spirituelle*, suppl. 59 (1939), pp 145-69, and suppl. 60 (1939), pp 39-56 ; Straw, Carole, *Gregory the Great*, pp 225-35.

⁶⁶² *Moralia* 35.4.5.

⁶⁶³ Schreiner, Susan, E., *Where Shall Wisdom be Found?* p 30.

⁶⁶⁴ Reyna, Ruth, "On the Soul: A Philosophical Exploration of the Active Intellect in Averroes, Aristotle, and Aquinas," in *Thomist: A Speculative Quarterly Review* 36:1, (1972), p 134.

the active intellect with God.⁶⁶⁵ By consequence, man as a substantial being, does not possess an active intellect proper to him as an individual.⁶⁶⁶ The only union that exists between the two is only accidental since it comes only when it is needed for the acquisition of knowledge. On the cosmological level, the implication of a separate Active Intellect, is far reaching for the material world for it means that there is no intelligibility in this terrestrial sphere.⁶⁶⁷ This lack of intelligibility is explained by the fact that whatever intelligibility it has must be poured into it from above. The hylemorphic union of body and soul is at best an aesthetic concoction that carries no importance since its form is poured in from the above and the only thing that survives the union are the thoughts that have come into it from the Active Intellect. Thomas Aquinas quickly traces the influence to Plato and his followers according to whom “the intellectual soul is not united to the body as form to matter, but only as mover to movable.”⁶⁶⁸ Plato had earlier been quoted as describing the soul in the body “as a sailor in a ship”⁶⁶⁹ or “of a clothed man to his garment.”⁶⁷⁰ On the epistemological level, knowledge is not an affair of an individual and he cannot even be said to be a thinking being. This is because all men share in the same intellectual thought flowing from the same Active Intellect. Here, Avicenna and Averroes are very much in evidence.⁶⁷¹ For Avicenna, according to Gilson, human understanding is only but an emanation from the separate Active Intellect,⁶⁷² into the possible intellects belonging to individual souls. Davidson even accuses Maimonides of falling victim to the influence of Avicenna by holding

⁶⁶⁵ Hasse, Dag Nikolaus, *Avicenna's De Anima in the Latin West*, p 190. It is Gilson who first introduced the term ‘*augustinisme avicennisant*’ to represent the Christian thinkers who, “sous l’influence d’Avicenne, empruntent la terminologie d’Aristote pour formuler la théorie augustinienne de l’illumination.” Cf E. Gilson, *Pourquoi saint Thomas a critiqué saint Augustin*, (Paris : Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 1981) p 110. Cf also by the same author : *Les Sources Greco-Arabes de l’Augustinisme Avicennisant*, (Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 1981) p 103: « Nous avons montré d’ailleurs que la critique de l’augustinisme médiéval par saint Thomas supposait l’existence d’une école dont la doctrine combinait...l’influence dominante de saint Augustin au néoplatonisme d’Avicenne. »

⁶⁶⁶ Cf Gilson, Etienne, *Pourquoi saint Thomas a critiqué saint Augustin*, p 42: «en vertu de la cosmogonie d’Avicenne, l’homme ne saurait avoir d’Intellect agent qui lui fût propre, puisque l’Intelligence agente du globe terrestre en tient lieu pour l’ensemble des êtres humains. »

⁶⁶⁷ Lee, Patrick, « St. Thomas and Avicenna on the Agent Intellect, » in *Thomist: A Speculative Quarterly Review* 45:1, (1981) p 50.

⁶⁶⁸ SCG II, 57, 2: « Plato igitur posuit, et eius sequaces, quod anima intellectualis non unitur corpori sicut forma materiae, sed solum sicut motor mobili, dicens animam esse in corpore sicut nautam in navi. »

⁶⁶⁹ Aristote, *De Anima* II, 1, 413a8.

⁶⁷⁰ Plato, *Alcibiades*, I, 129E-130C.

⁶⁷¹ Hayoun, M. R et Libera, Alain de, *Averroès et l’Averroïsme*, (Paris : PUF, 1991) p 93ff.

⁶⁷² Cf Gilson, Etienne, *Les sources gréco-arabes de l’Augustinisme Avicennisant*, p 65. «Ainsi, dans la doctrine d’Avicenne, tout intelligible est reçu du dehors et toute abstraction est une émanation ... »

human knowledge to be derived from the overflow of the Active Intellect.⁶⁷³ However, in our earlier discussion of the Active Intellect, we have tried by textual evidence, to show that Maimonides holds the human intellect as a power of abstraction. But the impression still hangs on his teaching that the *intellect in actu* existing in us, “derives from an overflow of the Active Intellect.”⁶⁷⁴ It goes back to saying that if abstraction in man is done with the help of the *intellect in actu* derived from an overflow of the Active Intellect, it follows that human thought is from above. For Averroes, not only the Active Intellect, but even the possible intellect, is separate and one for all men.⁶⁷⁵ His interest lies not in explaining how this could be, but, according to Zedler, in trying to keep “the intellect free of matter to preserve its function of knowing.”⁶⁷⁶ Thomas Aquinas directly accuses Averroes of holding that “the possible intellect, by which the soul understands, has a separate existence from the body, and is not the form of the body.”⁶⁷⁷ On the ontological level, we could say that man is not a distinct subsistent being since he shares in the same intellect such that there is no difference between Socrates and Plato except in their material composition. If the Active Intellect is an existent entity totally separate from the soul, the whole idea of individual immortality is at best an imaginary concept.⁶⁷⁸ This leads to the belief that there is nothing that is personal and individual about man after death. Moreover, there would be, outside of God, various other independent principles responsible for man, for his intellectual activities and for the sublunar world. It is on this note that Thomas Aquinas warns of the dangers of this theory:

One must also take into account the fact that if the intellect is asserted to be a separate substance other than God, then there follows a consequence which is opposed to our faith,

⁶⁷³ Davidson, H, *Moses Maimonides*, p 371: «The conception cannot help striking today’s reader as bizarre. Maimonides is saying that when a human being thinks an abstract thought, the thought is not formed by the person himself but comes to him, fully fashioned, from outside.”

⁶⁷⁴ *Dux Neutrorum*, lib.II, cap.V, fol.42: “Et est ex splendore intelligentiae abstractae : » Cf *Guide* II, 4, p 258.

⁶⁷⁵ Averroes, *Long Commentary on the De Anima of Aristotle*, Book 3, comm. 5, p 322. Cf also SCG II, 73, 1: “Ex praemissis autem evidenter ostenditur non esse unum intellectum possibilem omnium hominum qui sunt et qui erunt et qui fuerunt: ut Averroes, in III de Anima fingit.” Cf Alain de Libera, *Penser au moyen âge*, (Paris : Seuil, 1991), p 397: “Chez Averroès, l’intellect possible est, comme l’intellect agent, réellement séparé de l’homme. »

⁶⁷⁶ Zedler, Beatrice, *Saint Thomas Aquinas, On the Unity of the Intellect Against the Averroists* (De Unitate Intellectus Contra Averroistas), translated from the Latin with an Introduction by Beatrice H. Zedler, (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Marquette University Press, 1968) p 3.

⁶⁷⁷ SCG II, 59, 7: « Ex his autem motus est Averroes et quidam antiqui, ut ipse dicit, ad ponendum intellectum possibilem, quo intelligit anima, esse separatum secundum esse a corpore, et non esse formam corporis. »

⁶⁷⁸ Avicenna holds the active intellect to be eternal and separate from the human soul. Yet he holds that the human soul is immortal. Cf *Avicenna’s Psychology*, an English translation of *Kitab Al-Najat*, Book II, Chapter VI, translated by F. Rahman, (Westport (Conn.: Hyperion Press Inc.) p 58: “We say that the soul does not die with the death of the body and is absolutely incorruptible.”

namely, that our final perfection and happiness consists in the union of our soul, not with God ... but rather in union with another separate substance.⁶⁷⁹

As for the separateness of the Active Intellect, Maimonides is fully in agreement. This intellect plays much part in his theories, which we have seen, of providence and the phenomenon of prophecy.⁶⁸⁰ Being a separate intellectual substance, the Active Intellect dispenses the overflowing gifts of providence and prophecy on those prepared to receive them. Given that the requisite intellectual and moral dispositions are fulfilled, the phenomenon of prophecy is a result of the “overflow” from the Active Intellect upon first the rational intellect of man and then, on his imagination. It is when this is done, that “this individual will only apprehend divine and most extraordinary matters, will see only God and His angels, and will only be aware and achieve knowledge of matters that constitute true opinions and general directives for the well-being of men in their relations with one another.”⁶⁸¹ Providence, on the other hand, is a function of the divine overflow from the Active Intellect, on perfected rational intellect of man. This activity of “*splendor spiritualis*—divine overflow” from the Active Intellect makes it clear that God is far from being directly involved with the human world and the human affairs. These are the theories that pose a great danger to the Christian faith. Thomas Aquinas rejects not only the metaphysical edifice—the theory of emanation—that produces the Active Intellect, and other diverse creatures, but also the numerous consequences arising from such.

This opinion also cannot stand. First, because it would have the divine power limited to one effect which is the first intelligence. Secondly, because it makes other substances besides God to be the creators of other creatures Moreover, this opinion like those already mentioned would imply that the beauty arising from the order of the universe is

⁶⁷⁹ Aquinas, *Quaestiones de Anima*, a.5: « Considerandum etiam est, quod si intellectus agens ponatur aliqua substantia separata praeter Deum, sequitur aliquid fidei nostrae repugnans: ut scilicet ultima perfectio nostra et felicitas sit in coniunctione aliquali animae nostrae, non ad Deum, ut doctrina evangelica tradit dicens: *haec est vita aeterna, ut cognoscat te Deum verum*; sed in coniunctione ad aliquam aliam substantiam separatam. » The English quotation is taken from *Questions on the Soul*, translated by James H. Robb, (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Marquette University Press, 2009) p 86.

⁶⁸⁰ *Dux Neutorum*, lib.II, cap.XXXIII, fol.61. Cf *Guide* II, 32, pp 360-363.

⁶⁸¹ Ibid. cap.XXXVII, fol.64: “apprehendet rationes spirituales valde mirabiles: et non videbit nisi Creatorem et angelos eius : et non consierabit nisi sententias rectas, et regimina communia hominibus inter se. » Cf *Guide* II, 36, p 372.

the result of chance, since it ascribes the diversity of things not to the intention of an end, but to the determination of the active causes in respect of their effects.⁶⁸²

Thomas Aquinas has thus to prove the uniqueness of the individual person, and the immortality of each individual soul. He still has to show that God is directly responsible for His creation and the diversity and order existing therein. And he has to make sure that that factor by which man is able to engage in abstraction and thus in intellection, is found in man. These specifications will bring radical differences in the way Aquinas interprets, among other things, prophecy and providence, and tries to reconcile as nobody has ever done, Plato and Aristotle.

What does Aristotle actually say of the human soul? And how does Aquinas read this teaching to fit into the Christian vision of man and of life? The major text of Aristotle, which has generated so much diverse interpretations on the issue of the Active Intellect, is found in the *Book III* of the *De Anima*. Let us look closely at those eternal but clouded words of Aristotle:

Now in all nature there is for each genus something that is its matter (and it is this that is all those things in potentiality), and something that is their cause, productive of them in virtue of bringing them all about-as for instance, a skill stands towards the matter it uses. No less in the soul, then, must these different features occur. And indeed there is an intellect characterized by the capacity to become all things, and an intellect characterized by that to bring all things about, and to bring them about in just the way that a state, like light, does. (for in a way, light also makes things that are potentially colours colours in actuality.) Now, this later intellect is separate, unaffected, and unmixed, being in substance activity ... It is further, in its separate state that the intellect is just that which it is, and it is this alone that is immortal and eternal ... while the intellect that is affected is perishable, and in any case thinks nothing without the other.⁶⁸³

Aquinas's objective would essentially be to show how the agent intellect, though spiritual in nature, still gets involved with material things; and how this agent intellect, is a part of the

⁶⁸² Aquinas, *Quaestiones disputatae de potentia dei*, q.3, a.16: "Sed haec etiam positio stare non potest. Primo, quia ponit potentiam divinam terminari ad unum effectum, qui est intelligentia prima. Secundo, quia ponit alias substantias praeter Deum esse aliarum creatrices, quod esse impossibile in alia quaestione, art. 4, ostensum est. Sequitur etiam ad hanc positionem, sicut et ad primas, quod decor ordinis universi sit casualis, ex quo rerum diversitatem non adscribit intentioni finis, sed terminationi potentiarum activarum ad suos effectus. »

⁶⁸³ Aristotle, *De Anima III*, 5 (430a10-25) translated, with an introduction and notes, by Hugh Lawson-Tancred, (London: Penguin Books, 1986).

human soul and a form of the body.⁶⁸⁴ The Arabic peripatetic philosophers, even though they were not the first interpreters of the text, recognize that the human soul passes from potency to act, and that this passage is effected by an agent in act. Instead of seeing this agent as a part of the human soul, they take it as a separate substance that is totally distinct from the human soul and called it the Agent or Active Intellect. Like his Arabic predecessors, Maimonides identifies the existence of the Active Intellect “by the facts that our intellects pass from potentiality to actuality and that the forms of the existents that are subject to generation and corruption are actualized after they have been in their matter only in *potentia*.”⁶⁸⁵ But he failed to see why this intellect should be a part of the human soul.

The central bone of contention is the nature of the intellect, the power of human understanding and it is by drawing the full implications of this, that Thomas Aquinas makes a breakthrough in his quest to reconcile Plato and Aristotle and, thus proves that a human being is a complete, substantial entity. In his *De Unitate Intellectus Contra Averroistas*, Aquinas forcefully notes:

For it is clear that this individual man understands; for we would never raise a question about the intellect unless we understood; and when we do raise a question about the intellect, we do not ask about any other principle than that by which we understand.⁶⁸⁶

To demonstrate this truth, Aquinas must set about establishing three conclusions: 1) “that the intellective soul is the substantial form of a human being; 2) that this intellective soul, is a subsistent intellectual form, but of such a lowly type that a need for union with a body is rooted deep within its nature, and 3) that consequently it can neither be separate in existence from the body nor one in number for all human beings.”⁶⁸⁷ To avoid ambiguity that may arise from the framing of the last condition, we understand Robb to be saying that the human intellect (agent and possible) can neither be separate in existence from the body nor can it be one in number for

⁶⁸⁴ Lee, Patrick, “St. Thomas and Avicenna on the Agent Intellect,” p 51.

⁶⁸⁵ *Dux Neutrorum*, lib.II, cap.V, fol.42: “Intellectus autem decem est intelligentia agens quae demonstrat super exitu nostri intellectus de potentia ad actum, omne autem quod exit de potentia ad actum, habet extractorem extra ipsum necessario. Necesse est autem ut extractor sit eiusdem generis cuius et extractum. » Cf *Guide* II, 4, p 257.

⁶⁸⁶ *De Unitate Intellectus contra Averroistas* cap.3, line 27-31: “Manifestum est enim quod hic homo singularis intelligit: numquam enim de intellectu quereremus nisi intelligeremus; nec cum querimus de intellectu, de alio principio querimus quam de eo quo nos intelligimus. » The English text is from the *On the Unity of the Intellect Against the Averroists*, 3, #62 translated by Beatrice H. Zedler, (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Marquette University Press, 1968), p 48.

⁶⁸⁷ Robb, James H., “Literary and Doctrinal Matters,” in Thomas Aquinas, *Questions on the Soul*, translated by James H. Robb, p 21.

all human beings. The explanations that follow will bring this understanding to light. This demonstration is a fight that Aquinas is taking to both the separatists—who say that the intellectual soul is complete in itself and independent of the body, and the materialists—who deny that the intellectual soul is self-subsistent and thus, always in need of the body.⁶⁸⁸

That the soul is the form of the body preserves the unity of the human being both in its being and its operation. Plato did not ascribe to this opinion. There are, according to Aquinas, two requirements to be met before a thing becomes another's substantial form: first, the form must be the principle whereby a thing exists and is called a being; second, the form and matter be joined together in the unity of one act of being in which the composite substance subsists.⁶⁸⁹ By his own definition, “form is by its nature act, and through it things exist in act.”⁶⁹⁰ The soul is the form inasmuch as it gives life to the body and makes it a being in act and this particular thing.⁶⁹¹ It is the form that puts a thing in its proper species. Because it is rationality that formally constitutes a human being, St. Thomas Aquinas concludes that it is the rational or intellectual soul that is the form of a human being.⁶⁹² This human being is a composite of matter and form. But when it comes to its operation as an intellectual soul, it is somehow separate from matter in that, it does its intellection without needing matter. Aquinas explains that this is because the determinate nature of the bodily organ would impede knowledge of all bodies.⁶⁹³ This operation of understanding intelligible species *per se*, without needing a corporeal organ shows the intellectual soul as an entity which subsists *per se*. In the quotation above, Aristotle describes this intellect as “separate, unaffected and unmixed, being in substance activity and it is this alone

⁶⁸⁸ Ibid. p 21. The “Separatists” are those who “insist that the soul is a subsistent being, complete in nature and independent of its body. The second type of argument would be adduced by men whom we shall refer to as “Materialists.” By materialists, however, in this context, we do not mean simply those men who said the soul is a body; we include also those who taught that the human intellectual soul is merely a material form and who would consequently deny its self-subsistence.”

⁶⁸⁹ SCG II, 68, 3: «Ad hoc enim quod aliquid sit forma substantialis alterius, duo requiruntur. Quorum unum est, ut forma sit principium essendi substantialiter ei cuius est forma: principium autem dico, non factivum, sed formale, quo aliquid est et denominatur ens. Unde sequitur aliud, scilicet quod forma et materia convenient in uno esse... Et hoc esse est in quo subsistit substantia composita, quae est una secundum esse, ex materia et forma constans. »

⁶⁹⁰ SCG II, 30, 11: « Forma autem, secundum id quod est, actus est: et per eam res actu existunt. »

⁶⁹¹ SCG II, 58, 6: « Quaelibet autem forma substantialis facit ens completum in genere substantiae: facit enim ens actu et hoc aliquid. » Cf Aristotle, *De Anima* II, 2, 414a.

⁶⁹² *Quaestiones de Anima* a.1, sed contra 1: « Sed homo est homo in quantum est rationalis. Ergo anima rationalis est propria forma hominis. »

⁶⁹³ ST 1a, q.75, a.2 « Et similiter impossibile est quod intelligat per organum corporeum, quia etiam natura determinate illius organi corporei prohiberet cognitionem omnium corporum. »

that is immortal.”⁶⁹⁴ Plato, as well, recognizes this intellect to be self-subsistent and immortal because it engages in auto movement.⁶⁹⁵ The only problem with Plato, and for which Aquinas disagrees with him is in the fact that he considers the intellective soul as the complete human being. For Plato, the human being is only but a soul using a body, such that the relation they have is that of a man wearing his garment or a sailor in his ship.⁶⁹⁶ The implication is that, the human being that understands is only the soul and not the composite of soul and body. Another implication is that the union of soul and body becomes a mere accident such that, at death, there is no real substantial corruption.⁶⁹⁷ Thomas Aquinas relying on Aristotle, totally and completely rejects the conclusion of Plato’s theory. But the intellective soul also engages in other “operations common to it and the body, as fear, anger, sensation, and the like; for these operations occur through some transmutation in a determinate part of the body, and therefore, obviously are operations of soul and body together. It necessarily follows that the soul and the body make up one single being.”⁶⁹⁸

Aquinas however, brings more precision to the separateness of the intellective soul. In its power as an active principle that understands, the intellective soul is separate and does not need the participation of any corporeal organ. But when it comes to the objects of its knowledge, the intellective soul necessarily requires phantasms which are intelligible forms existing in material things. This is explained by the fact that the power of knowledge is proportioned to the thing known.

Wherefore the proper object of an angelic intellect, which is entirely separate from a body, is an intelligible substance separate from a body. Whereas the proper object of the human intellect, which is united to a body, is a quiddity or nature existing in corporeal

⁶⁹⁴ Aristotle, *De Anima* III, 5 (430a 15-25).

⁶⁹⁵ Plato, *Phaedrus*, 254c-246A .

⁶⁹⁶ Plato, *Alcibiades*, I (129E-130C).

⁶⁹⁷ *Quaestiones de Anima* a.1: “Et praeterea, si anima esset in corpore sicut nauta in navi, sequeretur quod unio animae et corporis esset accidentalis. Mors igitur, quae inducit eorum separationem, non esset corruptio substantialis; quod patet esse falsum. »

⁶⁹⁸ SCG II, 57, 6: “Quamvis autem animae sit aliqua operatio propria, in qua non communicat corpus, sicut intelligere; sunt tamen aliquae operationes communes sibi et corpori, ut timere et irasci et sentire et huiusmodi: haec enim accidunt secundum aliquam transmutationem alicuius determinatae partis corporis, ex quo patet quod simul sunt animae et corporis operationes. Oportet igitur ex anima et corpore unum fieri, et quod non sint secundum esse diversa.”

matter; and through such natures of visible things it rises to a certain knowledge of things invisible.⁶⁹⁹

Just as the intellective soul which is immaterial is in potentiality to determinate species, phantasms which are actual images of certain species are immaterial in potentiality. In other words, the intellective soul must be possessive of powers enabling it to touch what is material while elevating what is material into immateriality. That power by which the intellective soul is receptive of material species is called the possible intellect. Now, this power of the intellective soul, that enables the phantasms received from the senses to be actually immaterial by a process of abstraction, is called the active intellect.⁷⁰⁰ This is true, because each particular individual thinks its own thoughts as a subsistent being, and no form can exist apart from the matter that it informs and specifies. It is in this that the mode of the soul's very existence can be known. By its operation, it transcends material things; "but insofar as a soul by nature acquires its immaterial knowledge from what is material, it is clear that the fulfillment of its nature cannot be achieved apart from union with a body."⁷⁰¹ Thus, the intellective soul can neither be one for all men, nor exist outside of the body. In the hierarchy of intelligences, according to Aquinas, it is the human soul which holds the lowest rank by its mode of understanding. This is because, the intellectual soul is said to be on the borderline of things corporeal and incorporeal since "it is an incorporeal substance and yet the form of a body."⁷⁰²

Thus, instead of remaining a *dator formarum* of Maimonides and Avicenna of the Peripatetic tradition,⁷⁰³ the Active Intellect becomes in the interpretation of Aquinas, a part of the soul having an epistemological function of helping man achieve understanding in the true sense of it.

⁶⁹⁹ ST 1a, q.84, a.7: "Unde intellectus angelici, qui est totaliter a corpore separatus, obiectum proprium est substantia intelligibilis a corpore separata; et per huiusmodi intelligibilia materialia cognoscit. Intellectus autem humani, qui est coniunctus corpori, proprium obiectum est quidditas sive natura in materia corporali existens; et per huiusmodi naturas visibilium rerum etiam in invisibilium rerum aliqualem cognitionem ascendit."

⁷⁰⁰ ST 1a, q.79, a.4, ad 4: "Anima intellectiva est quidem actu immaterialis, sed est in potentia ad determinatas species rerum. Phantasmata autem, e converso, sunt quidem actu similitudines specierum quarundam, sed sunt potentia immaterialia. Unde nihil prohibet unam et eandem animam, in quantum est immaterialis in actu, habere aliquam virtutem per quam faciat immaterialia in actu abstrahendo a conditionibus individualis materiae, quae quidem virtus dicitur *intellectus agens*; et aliam virtutem receptivam huiusmodi specierum, quae dicitur *intellectus possibilis*, in quantum est in potentia ad huiusmodi species."

⁷⁰¹ *Quaestiones de Anima* a.1: "in quantum vero immaterialem cognitionem ex materiali est nata acquirere, manifestum est quod complementum suae speciei esse non potest absque corporis unione. »

⁷⁰² SCG II, 68, 6: « Et inde est quod anima intellectualis dicitur esse quasi quidam horizon et confinium corporeorum et incorporeorum, in quantum est substantia incorporea, corporis tamen forma. »

⁷⁰³ *Dux Neutrorum*, lib.II, cap.XIII, fol.46: "Et idcirco probatur quod operator formae, idest *dator formae*, est forma necessaria et est separata." Cf *Guide* II, 12, p 278. Emphasis is ours.

For Aquinas as for Aristotle, it is the phantasm which provides the content of our knowledge, but the agent intellect only abstracts intelligible species from the phantasms which by being of material order, cannot directly act on the potential intellect.⁷⁰⁴ To properly explain the process of human knowledge, Aquinas following Aristotle, admits of two parts of the intellective soul: the passive part generally called the “possible,” “the material” or the “potential” intellect and the agent intellect. At the completion of abstraction, the agent intellect delivers the intelligible forms or species abstracted to the possible intellect, where they are received and preserved. The act of intellection or understanding is complete only when the intelligible species have been used to form an intention of the thing understood.⁷⁰⁵ It is this understood intention, which is the likeness of the external thing that is the terminus of intelligible operation.⁷⁰⁶

The mere fact that the Arabic philosophers of the Peripatetic tradition and Maimonides interpret the Active Intellect as a unique, separate intelligence means that it is just one for all men. Averroes made it the rallying theme of his theory, even though he somehow interpreted it as “form for us.”⁷⁰⁷ Avicenna made it the source of the human knowledge without which, man does not understand. Maimonides made it the one necessary intellectual conduit for the acquisition of prophecy and providence. Their reasoning permitted them to do so, because they did not see the active intellect as a necessary part of the human soul. But Thomas Aquinas correctly rejects this reading for the reasons we have noted above. And thus, he responds by saying:

If the active intellect were not something belonging to the soul, but were some separate substance, there would be one active intellect for all men. And this is what they mean

⁷⁰⁴ ST 1a, q.84, a.6: “Non tamen ita quod intellectualis operatio causetur in nobis ex sola impressione aliquarum rerum superiorum, ut Plato posuit, sed illud superius et nobilius agens quod vocat intellectum agentem, de quo iam supra diximus, facit phantasmata a sensibus accepta intelligibilia in actu, per modum abstractionis cuiusdam. Secundum hoc ergo, ex parte phantasmatum intellectualis operatio a sensu causatur.”

⁷⁰⁵ SCG I, 53, 3-4

⁷⁰⁶ For a detailed explanation of Aquinas’s theory of human cognition, consult Eleonore Stump’s “The Mechanism of Cognition,” in her work: *Aquinas* (London: Routledge, 2003) pp 244-276.

⁷⁰⁷ Cf Taylor, Richard C., « The Agent Intellect as “form for us” and Averroes’s Critique of al-Fârâbî,” *Proceedings of the Society for Medieval Logic and Metaphysics*, Vol. 5, (2005), pp 18-32 <http://www.fordham.edu/gsas/phil/klima/SMLM/PSMLM5/PSMLM5.pdf>. Aquinas also credits Alexander of Aphrodisias with interpreting the agent intellect as a “form for us.” Cf SCG III, 42, 3: “Cum autem intellectus possibilis non possit intelligere substantias separatas, secundum eius opinionem, ut iam dictum est; intendit quod intelligemus per intellectum in habitu substantias separatas, inquantum intellectus agens, qui ab ipso ponitur substantia separata, fiet forma intellectus in habitu et nobis ipsis”---“Now, since according to his opinion the possible intellect cannot understand separate substances ... he thought that we will understand separate substances through the habitual understanding, in so far as the agent intellect, which he supposes to be a separate substance, becomes the form of the habitual understanding and a form for us ourselves.”

who hold that there is one active intellect for all. But if the active intellect is something belonging to the soul, as one of its powers, we are bound to say that there are as many active intellects as there are souls, which are multiplied according to the number of men.⁷⁰⁸

Understood in this way, the doctrine of personal immortality is safeguarded, since the soul is not only capable of separate subsistence, but is multiplied according to the number of individual men. In this light, Herrera is correct to observe that “the Islamic theories of the Active Intellect presented a direct threat to Christian belief and St. Thomas’s exertions helped to prevent the mischief which further dissemination could have caused.”⁷⁰⁹ And finally, Aquinas not only assures the individual person as a substantial composite of the body and soul, but he confirms that this individual man knows by the powers of his intellectual soul intrinsic in him and not by some separate substance. “The conclusion remains then” as Aquinas says, “that the agent intellect is united with man in substantial being.”⁷¹⁰

9.3 The Notion of *Esse* as the Act of Being

There is nothing so original and yet so difficult to grasp as the Thomistic notion of *esse*. This difficulty is explained by the misinterpretations and misunderstandings of this concept due to the “difficulties of terminology particularly embarrassing in French and English.”⁷¹¹ Aquinas found at his disposal two distinct terms: one ‘*ens*’ designating ‘a being,’ the other *esse*, designating the very ‘act of being.’ French has usually but one word ‘*être*’ which means both ‘being’ and that what exists. Recently the term ‘*étant*’ has become a part of French philosophical language expressing ‘being.’ In English, both *ens* and *esse* generally refer to ‘being’ though scholars like

⁷⁰⁸ ST 1a, q.79, a.5 : “Si enim intellectus agens non esset aliquid animae, sed esset quaedam substantia separata, unus esset intellectus agens omnium hominum. Et hoc intelligunt qui ponunt unitatem intellectus agentis. Si autem intellectus agens sit aliquid animae, ut quaedam virtus ipsius, necesse est dicere quod sint plures intellectus agentes, secundum pluralitatem animarum, quae multiplicantur secundum multiplicationem hominum.» Cf also *Compendium Theologia*, c.86;

⁷⁰⁹Herrera, Robert A., “An Episode in Medieval Aristotelianism: Maimonides and St. Thomas on the Active Intellect,” in *Thomist: A Speculative Quarterly Review* 47, (1983) p 337.

⁷¹⁰ SCG III, 42, 7: « Relinquitur igitur quod intellectus agens sit cum homine unum secundum esse substantiale. Erit igitur vel anima humana, vel pars eius, et non aliqua substantia separata, sicut Alexander ponit. » In the English translation, it appears in number 10 of the same chapter.

⁷¹¹Gilson, Etienne, *The Christian Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas*, translated by L.K. Shook, (Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1956), p 29.

Anthony C. Pegis, try designating these terms differently by referring to ‘*ens*’ as ‘a being’ and *esse* as ‘being.’⁷¹² Without going into this embarrassment caused by translations, we take the precautionary measure, just like Gilson, of rendering ‘*esse*’ by ‘act of being.’ Though Aquinas did not use the Latin term ‘*existentia*’ to mean ‘*esse*,’ today it seems acceptable to also render ‘*esse*’ as ‘existence’ or simply as ‘being.’

As rightly observed by Gilson and noted by Caputo,⁷¹³ the discovery of *esse* as the central principle and theme of Thomistic metaphysics was occasioned by Aquinas's attempt to come to grips with the doctrine of creation, and particularly, the mode of immaterial substances or what Aquinas calls ‘Angels’ in Christian terminology. Gilson has argued and rightly so that it was Maimonides’s metaphysical interpretation of *Exodus* 3:14 that led Aquinas to the discovery of the metaphysics of *esse*.⁷¹⁴ What is the difference between God and the spiritual substances and how can a spiritual substance be purely spiritual and yet imperfect? An explanation which has the influence of Augustine located spiritual or ethereal matter in angels, thus the principle of potency making them imperfect.⁷¹⁵ Aquinas rejected this ‘spiritual matter’ solution for an Aristotelian-inspired solution. In matter and form composite, it is the form which constitutes the composite as substance.⁷¹⁶ Thus understood, to explain a being as substance is to say why this being is “what it is” and not what makes it exist. According to Blanchette:

Matter and form as ontological principles, pertain only to the order of essence and not to the order of existence. They account for things that come to be and cease to be in their substance, and not in their ‘be’ or in the act of their being.⁷¹⁷

In relation to *esse*, form ceases to appear as the ultimate determination of the real.⁷¹⁸ Over and above form which makes a being to be such a being belonging to a given determined species, we

⁷¹² Cf Saint Thomas Aquinas: *Summa Contra Gentiles, Book One: God*, translated with Introduction and Notes by Anthony C. Pegis, (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1975) p 50.

⁷¹³ Caputo, J.D., *Aquinas and Heidegger: An Essay on Overcoming Metaphysics*, (New York: Fordham University Press, 1982) pp 122-123.

⁷¹⁴ Gilson, Etienne, “Maimonide et la Philosophie de l’Exode, » in *Studies in Maimonides and St. Thomas Aquinas*, p 281 : « Maimonide a certainement mis Thomas d’Aquin sur la voie royale de la métaphysique de l’*esse*, mais saint Thomas seul l’a parcourue jusqu’au terme. »

⁷¹⁵ Caputo, J.D., *Aquinas and Heidegger*, p 123.

⁷¹⁶ Gilson Etienne, *The Christian Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas*, p 32.

⁷¹⁷ Blanchette, Oliva, *Philosophy of Being: A Reconstructive Essay in Metaphysics*, (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 2003) p 334.

⁷¹⁸ Gilson Etienne, *The Christian Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas*, p 33.

must therefore place *esse* or the act of being which makes the substance thus constituted an existent being. As St. Thomas says:

Accordingly, in things composed of matter and form, neither the matter nor the form nor even being itself can be termed that which is. Yet the form can be called that by which it is, inasmuch as it is the principle of being; the whole substance itself, however, is that which is. And being itself is that by which the substance is called a being.⁷¹⁹

Hence, the substance exists only by the virtue of a further, supreme determination, its act of being. Thus Aquinas introduces in concrete substances two metaphysical compositions. The first is that of matter and form as constituting the very substantiality of the substance; and the second is that of the substance with its act of being posing the substance into existence.⁷²⁰ It is this distinction that Gilson describes as “*l'événement philosophique le plus important qui se soit produit depuis la fin de la philosophie grecque.*”⁷²¹ Aquinas underlines form here, as a potential principle and insists that there is an act of being even of form itself. It is in this sense that *esse* becomes the purest idea of an act without any determinations whatsoever.

Wherefore it is clear that *being* as we understand it here is the actuality of all acts, and because of that is the perfection of all perfections ... But nothing that is outside the range of being can be added to *being*: for nothing is outside its range except *non-being*, which can be neither form nor matter. Hence *being* is not determined by something else as potentiality by act but rather as act by potentiality.”⁷²²

Thomas Aquinas would guard his conception of ‘*esse*’ as ‘*actus essendi*’-act of being, because of the consequent conception of the ontological difference or the real distinction between essence

⁷¹⁹ SCG II, 54, 6: « Unde in compositis ex materia et forma nec materia nec forma potest dici ipsum quod est, nec etiam ipsum esse. Forma tamen potest dici quo est, secundum quod est essendi principium; ipsa autem tota substantia est ipsum quod est; et ipsum esse est quo substantia denominatur ens. »

⁷²⁰ SCG II, 54, 9: “In substantiis autem compositis ex material et forma est duplex compositio actus et potentiae : prima quidem ipsius substantiae, quae componitur ex materia et forma ; secunda vero ex ipsa substantia iam composita et esse, quae etiam potest dici ex quod est et esse ; vel ex quod est et quo est. »

⁷²¹ Gilson, Etienne, « Maïmonide et la Philosophie de l’Exode, » in *Studies in Maimonides and St. Thomas Aquinas*, p 279 : « la distinction introduite par saint Thomas d’Aquin entre deux ordres d’actualité, celui de la forme, qui correspond à la spécification des êtres et celui de l’esse qui correspond à leur existence. »

⁷²² De Pot. q.7, a.2, ad.9 : « Unde patet quod hoc quod dico esse est actualitas omnium actuum, et propter hoc est perfectio omnium perfectionum... Nihil autem potest addi ad esse quod sit extraneum ab ipso, cum ab eo nihil sit extraneum nisi non-ens, quod non potest esse nec forma nec materia. Unde non sic determinatur esse per aliud sicut potentia per actum, sed magis sicut actus per potentiam. »

and *esse* in creatures. It is this difference that explains created beings. *Esse* is the first and final perfection of things, which grants reality and perfection to things and inserts them into the universal order. It is the intimate act of existence which is at the heart of every reality. In the case of spiritual substances however, Aquinas found a new composition of act and potency which has nothing to do with matter. Angels are composed of form and the act of being where the former is to the later as potency to act. It is this that constitutes their excellence. Angels like material beings are totally dependent on God from whom they receive *esse*.

Every excellence in any given thing belongs to it according to its being ... for a thing is said to be more or less excellent according as its being is limited to a certain greater or lesser mode of excellence.⁷²³

Esse is the fullness and foundation of all beings. Though it is identical with all beings insofar as they are perfections, it is their perfection and transcends them insofar as they pose a limit to its infinity. As the act of being, “*esse* infuses into all finite forms of the real a presence which actualizes them from within at their most profound and intimate depth, fulfilling them but surpassing also their grasp so that it is never consumed or exhausted even by their ensemble.”⁷²⁴ It is not simply an ‘inner efficient energy which simply poses something into being, but it is that source which continually nurtures ‘what is’ in all its diverse activity’ such that outside of *esse*, there is non-being. It is with this metaphysical tool of ‘*esse*’ that Aquinas criticizes and interprets his predecessors, especially Maimonides. This latter following Avicenna had described “existence” as an accident⁷²⁵ and thus cannot be “a constitutive principle of created being.”⁷²⁶ In a stroke of genius, Aquinas interprets this Maimonidean accident as *actus essendi*, and makes it an ontological principle of being on the basis of which an analogical relationship could exist between God and creatures.

En ce sens, c’est chez Thomas d’Aquin seul, que la théologie dégagée de l’*Exode* par Maïmonide a engendré une philosophie proprement dite et donné naissance à la

⁷²³ SCG I, 28, 2 : « Omnis enim nobilitas cuiuscumque rei est sibi secundum suum esse... Sic ergo secundum modum quo res habet esse, est suus modus in nobilitate: nam res secundum quod suum esse contrahitur ad aliquem specialem modum nobilitatis maiorem vel minorem, dicitur esse secundum hoc nobilior vel minus nobilis. »

⁷²⁴ O’Rourke, F., *Pseudo-Dionysius & the Metaphysics of Aquinas*, (Leiden: E J. Brill, 1992) p 177.

⁷²⁵ *Dux Neutorum*, lib.I, cap.LVI, fol.21: “Scitum est quod in omnibus entibus causatis accidit ea ut essent quod est aliud quam sua substantia. » Cf *Guide I*, 57, p132.

⁷²⁶ Burrell, David B., “Aquinas’s Debt to Maimonides,” in Ruth Link-Salinger, ed., *A Straight Path: Studies in Medieval Philosophy and Culture*, (Washington: The Catholic University of America, 1998) p 43.

métaphysique nouvelle, où « la substance intégrale de l'être » est totalement actuée par son acte propre d'exister.⁷²⁷

It is the presence of *esse* in creation that permits Aquinas to insist on God's direct knowledge of and involvement in creation and in providence, as against Maimonides whose God seems to have a limited knowledge of the world, an indirect providence over human beings, and a lack of interest in the affairs of the non intellectual creation.

9.4 The Notion of Creation

In our discussion above, we noted the observation of Caputo that what prompted Aquinas's discovery of *esse* was his attempt to come to grips with the doctrine of creation, and particularly, the mode of being of immaterial substances.⁷²⁸ While the discussion of the mode of being of immaterial substances would wait for another time, our interest as in Maimonides is in the idea of creation as it is a major tool towards an understanding of divine providence. What does it mean to create? It could be expressed variously. Creation according to Aquinas is the production of the whole substance of a thing.⁷²⁹ "To create is to make something from nothing."⁷³⁰ In a more appropriate way, Aquinas calls it "the production of the whole being,"⁷³¹ and it is solely the action of God. The radical implication of making *esse* the terminal act of creation, is that beings remain intimately and ontologically dependent on the Creator for the whole period of their existence. God does not make things to be through an intermediary of intelligences, but is the direct giver of *esse*. According to Brian Davies, "creation is not an event in time: it is the making to be of things in time for all the time that they exist."⁷³² Without *esse*, nothing exists.

Now since God is very being by His own essence, created being must be His proper effect ... Now God causes this effect in things not only when they first begin to be, but as

⁷²⁷ Gilson, Etienne, « Maïmonide et la Philosophie de l'Exode, » in *Studies in Maimonides and St. Thomas Aquinas*, p 281.

⁷²⁸ Caputo, J. D., *Aquinas and Heidegger*, p 122.

⁷²⁹ ST 1a, q.45, a.2, ad.2: "Sed in creatione ... producitur tota substantia rerum"

⁷³⁰ ST 1a, q.45, a.1: « creare est aliquid ex nihilo facere. » "it is made from nothing—i.e., it is not made from anything"—as if we were to say, "He speaks of nothing," because he does not speak of anything." Cf ST 1a, q.45, a.1, ad. 3: "et est sensus, fit ex nihilo, idest non fit ex aliquo; sicut si dicatur, iste loquitur de nihilo, quia non loquitur de aliquo. »

⁷³¹ ST 1a, q.45, a.4, ad.3: « Nam creatio est productio totius esse »

⁷³² Davies, Brian, *Aquinas*, (London: Continuum, 2002), p 75.

long as they are preserved in being; as light is caused in air by the sun as long as the air remains illuminated.⁷³³

A systematic examination of the works of Aquinas reveals a triadic structure of creation into the production, the distinction and the governance of creatures.⁷³⁴ This structure only but shows the logical way of explaining one single act of creation that draws forth from the Divine Essence. By arguing for creation, Aquinas rejects the theory of a necessary emanation that he has seen in the readings of Maimonides and the Arabic peripateticians. He affirms that the will of God is the cause of the *esse* of things, and “*non per necessitate naturae*” as certain people esteem.⁷³⁵ In the triadic structure of creation, the influence of Aristotle and Neo-Platonism is very manifest. In the production of creatures, God manifests Himself as the *causa efficiens*; in the distinction of creatures, He manifests as the *causa exemplaris*; and in the governance of creatures as the *causa finalis*. Thus we have God as the efficient, the exemplary, and the final cause of creation. This triadic structure concerns the relation of the Creator to creatures. By denying the material and formal cause any part in creation, Aquinas is making a bold confirmation of the Christian faith that God creates everything including matter *ex nihilo*, that is, out of nothing by the free decision of His will.⁷³⁶ Maldamé also adds that the fact that God is described as neither a material nor a formal cause is a victory against two extreme ideologies: monism—which reduces reality to the one principle of matter and pantheism—where God is everything and everything is God.⁷³⁷ However, by this triadic structure, Aquinas combats three extreme theories that hit hard at the foundation of Christian metaphysics and faith. By calling God ‘*causa efficiens*,’ Aquinas moves

⁷³³ ST 1a, q.8, a.1: “Cum autem Deus sit ipsum esse per suam essentiam, oportet quod esse creatum sit proprius effectus eius ... Hunc autem effectum causat Deus in rebus, non solum quando primo esse incipiunt, sed quandiu in esse conservantur; sicut lumen causatur in aere a sole quandiu aer illuminatus manet.”

⁷³⁴ ST 1a, prologue q.44. Cf Rudi A. Te Velde, *Aquinas on God: The Divine Science of the Summa Theologiae*, p 125.

⁷³⁵ ST 1a, q.19, a.4: “quod necesse est dicere voluntatem Dei esse causam rerum, et Deum agere per voluntatem, non per necessitatem naturae, ut quidam existimaverunt.” Who are these ‘quidam existimaverunt’ if not the philosophers who teach the theory of emanation?

⁷³⁶ Cf Maldamé, Jean-Michel, *Création et Providence : Bible, science et philosophie*, (Paris : Les Editions du Cerf, 2006) p 72 : «L’expression «à partir de rien» récuse deux conceptions présentes dans la philosophie grecque. La première exclut tout substrat préalable. La création n’est pas une transformation ; c’est une production totale de l’être. Dire «à partir de rien» exclut également que la création soit une activité interne à la vie de Dieu. Ce n’est pas une partie de Dieu qui s’aliénerait pour devenir le monde, ni un aspect de l’être divin qui se séparerait de l’unité primitive.»

⁷³⁷ Maldamé, Jean-Michel, *Création et Providence*, p 106: «Dire que Dieu est la cause première de tout ce qui est, c’est dire qu’il l’est au sens de la causalité efficiente et finale—mais pas les deux autres. Ceci exclut le monisme et le panthéisme, qui considèrent Dieu comme cause matérielle (toute chose serait divine par nature) ou formelle (Dieu serait l’âme du monde). »

against “pure Aristotelianism” which by positing an eternal world denies that the world is a creative work of a free-creating God.⁷³⁸ We recall in our treatment of the origin of matter, that Maimonides considered three theories—that of Our Law, of Plato and Aristotle for whom the world exists by virtue of necessity.⁷³⁹ By “*causa finalis*,” Aquinas moves against “theological materialism” which denies a spiritual aspect of man and his eschatological goal.⁷⁴⁰ Providence and the fulfillment of man’s natural desire to see God in the beatific vision are manifestations of God as the *causa finalis*. By ‘*causa exemplaris*,’ Aquinas insists on the fact that God has an idea of each complete human individual in its distinctiveness and thus moves against the metaphysics of emanation of the Arabic peripateticians, Moses Maimonides and their followers, who dangerously posited that humanity shares only in one intellect, the Active Intellect, the giver of forms and knowledge to man. This theory if allowed to stand, totally negates the substantial nature of the individual person, and also denies individual immortality.

Under the production of creatures, Aquinas talks of agent-effect relationship and here he is guided by two principles: every agent acts through a form (*omne agens agit secundum formam*) and every agent acts for the sake of an end (*omne agens agit propter finem*). Creatures as effects, receive a determinate form from the agent and as such, the agent is understood as the cause. In creation, God makes a gift of *esse* to the creature which receives according to the limitations of its nature. As *Causa Efficiens*, He presupposes nothing in His act of creation, unlike creatures which produce by the use of an already existent matter. In the second article of question 44, Aquinas clearly stipulates that even prime matter, is created by the universal cause of things.⁷⁴¹ He is the cause of the being of things in any way at all. God as the *Causa Efficiens* explains the radical ontological contingency of creatures. Aquinas makes appeal to God as *Ipsium esse per se subsistens* in order to show that *esse* comes from that in which it exists essentially. Because *esse* does not belong to creatures essentially, they are said to exist by participation.

⁷³⁸ Cf Yaffe, Martin D., « Interpretive Essay » in Thomas Aquinas, *The Literal Exposition on Job*, translated by Anthony Damico, (Atlanta, Georgia: Scholars Press, 1989) p 6.

⁷³⁹ *Dux Neutorum*, lib.II, cap.XXVI, fol.55: “Credulitas autem antiquitatis mundi secundum sententiam Aristotelis: quae est per viam necessitatis, et quod eius natura non mutatur omnino...ista inquam opinio destruit fundamenta legis: et negat omnia signa et miracula: et contradicit eis...Si vero credatur in antiquitate mundi secundum sententiam secundam quam exposuimus scilicet sententiam Platonis, qui dicit quod coeli sunt generabiles et corruptibiles:..responsio vero super omnibus huiusmodi quaestionibus est, quia sic ipse Creator voluit: vel sic ordinavit eius sapientia, secundum quod mundus factus est voluntate in ista forma.” Cf *Guide* II, 25, p 328.

⁷⁴⁰ Cf Yaffe, Martin D., « Interpretive Essay, » p 6.

⁷⁴¹ ST 1a, q.44, a.2: “Et sic oportet ponere etiam materiam primam creatam ab universali causa entium.”

It must be said that everything in any way existing is from God. For whatever is found in anything by participation, must be caused in it by that to which it belongs essentially, as iron becomes ignited by fire. Now it has been shown ... that God is the essentially self-subsisting Being Therefore all beings apart from God are not their own being, but are beings by participation.⁷⁴²

The idea of participation helps Aquinas in defeating definitively, the danger of pantheism arising from the flowing out of beings from the first cause, by emanation. It helps to understand the distinction and the ontological distance between God and creatures. While God is His own Being, creatures are beings by participation; that is, they are caused by God. By the fact of this creative causality, creatures are at the same time said to be like God ‘*unde et Deo recte similis dicitur*’—possessing *esse* that is from God and unlike God—since they possess limitedly what belongs to God essentially.⁷⁴³ According to Caputo, “the beings which God creates are like Him; they are similitudes of Him, not in the sense of shadowy imitations, but in the sense of being intrinsically but imperfectly what He is intrinsically but perfectly.”⁷⁴⁴ These two modes of being bring out clearly the radical nature of a creature in the sense that in him is found a real distinction between essence and *esse*. It is this real distinction that Fabro calls the “key to the entire Thomistic system.”⁷⁴⁵ The whole issue of this distinction hinges on two distinct points: 1) “Pure perfection (*perfectio separata*) can only be one, and *esse* is the first perfection and the act of all acts; hence subsisting *esse* is only one and this is God whose essence is to be. 2) All creatures are beings by participation, inasmuch as their essence participates in the *esse* which is the ultimate act of all reality; hence the essence of creatures is related to *esse* as potency to act.”⁷⁴⁶ In the entire Thomistic system then, the metaphysical principle of participation is derived from the notion of causality which establishes participating beings in an ontologically causal dependence

⁷⁴² ST 1a, q.44, a.1: “quod necesse est dicere omne quod quocumque modo est, a Deo esse. Si enim aliquid invenitur in aliquo per participationem, necesse est quod causetur in ipso ab eo cui essentialiter convenit; sicut ferrum fit ignitum ab igne. Ostensum est autem supra, cum di divina simplicitate agregetur, quod Deus est ipsum esse per se subsistens ... Relinquitur ergo quod omnia alia a Deo non sint suum esse, sed participant esse.”

⁷⁴³ SCG 1, 29, 5: “Et sic creatura habet quod Dei est: unde et Deo recte similis dicitur.”—“Thus the creature has what belongs to God and, consequently is rightly said to be like God.”

⁷⁴⁴ Caputo, John D., *Heidegger and Aquinas*, p 142.

⁷⁴⁵ Fabro, C., “The Intensive Hermeneutics of Thomistic Philosophy: The Notion of Participation,” in *The Review of Metaphysics*, Vol. 27, (1974) p 467.

⁷⁴⁶ Fabro, C., “The Intensive Hermeneutics of Thomistic Philosophy” p 467.

upon that which is being essentially. Participation is a linguistic tool by which the language of creation becomes very understandable.

Distinctio is associated with God's wisdom which, as the *prima causa exemplaris omnium rerum*, contains in itself the idea of all things.⁷⁴⁷ We shall come to realize that here, Aquinas is simply attacking Maimonides and those in his tradition, who, after an hierarchy of intelligences, posits the Active Intellect, and calls it the "giver of all forms."⁷⁴⁸ If this hierarchy were to be true, it means that there are different causes for different effects, and the theory of emanation "does not assign one cause to the entire diversity of things."⁷⁴⁹ Aquinas considers this hierarchy of intelligences, as secondary agents and denies that they be responsible for the distinction of things.⁷⁵⁰ By ideas, Aquinas understands the forms of different things which cause distinction of things. "It is by their forms that things are distinguished into species."⁷⁵¹ To distinguish it from the platonic universe of ideas existing apart from the agent, Aquinas in this model presents God as having the ideas of all things, in His unique intellectual essence. Following St. Augustine, the ideas are seen by Aquinas as "the master forms, which are contained in the divine intelligence."⁷⁵² By distinction of things into species, God intends that His goodness be represented by created things, to the extent that is possible. And by their diversity, God manifests His goodness. This diversity in things proceeds from the divine intellect and not the Active Intellect of the Maimonidean tradition.

If the distinction of the parts of the universe and their order, furthermore, is the proper effect of the first cause, being the ultimate form and greatest good in the universe, then the distinction and order of things must needs be in the intellect of the first cause; for in

⁷⁴⁷ ST 1a, q.44, a.3: "Et ideo oportet dicere quod in divina sapientia sunt rationes omnium rerum, quas supra diximus ideas, id est formas exemplares in mente divina existentes."

⁷⁴⁸ *Dux Neutorum*, lib.II, cap.VII, fol.43: "Et hoc est angelus: vel quod omnes formae sunt ab intelligentia agente quae est *angelus*, qui vocatur *princeps mundi*: qui tamen ab alio habet: de quo sapientes semper faciunt mentionem." Cf *Guide* II, 6, p 264.

⁷⁴⁹ SCG II, 42, 2: "Haec igitur positio toti rerum diversitati non unam causam assignat, sed singulas causas determinatis effectibus: totam autem diversitatem rerum ex concursu omnium causarum procedere ponit."

⁷⁵⁰ SCG II, 42, 1: "Ex eisdem etiam ostendi potest quod rerum distinctio non causetur ex ordine secundorum agentium."

⁷⁵¹ SCG II, 40, 3: "Distinctio autem rerum secundum speciem est per formas."

⁷⁵² ST 1a, q.44, a.3: "Sed ideae, secundum quod Augustinus libro octoginta trium quaest; dicit, *sunt formae principales, quae divina intelligentia continentur*."

things brought into being through the causality of an intellect, the form engendered in the things made proceeds from a like form in that intellect.⁷⁵³

The ideas of all things in the divine mind include the idea of matter. In one text, Aquinas explains that the intelligible species “is the principle of all the principles which enter the composition of things, whether principles of the species or principles of the individual.”⁷⁵⁴ In our earlier treatment of divine knowledge, we made reference to God’s work and the artisan’s art. Whereas God is the cause of all the principles that enters into His work, the artisan is the cause only of the form of his work and not the matter which has been prepared by nature. The divine exemplars are productive even of matter. But the exemplars, of themselves, do not bring into reality anything. There must be the mediation of the divine will by which what exists in ideas is given an ontological existence.

The third part of the triadic whole is what Aquinas calls the governance of creatures. In simple language, this is what is termed providence—the ordering of all things to their end. It is here that God manifests as the end of all things.⁷⁵⁵ What then is providence? And how does Aquinas read providence in the *Book of Job*?

9.5 Aquinas on Providence

In the earlier *De Veritate*, Aquinas treats providence principally from the point of view of divine attributes.⁷⁵⁶ But such an imbalanced treatment raises some problem concerning the realization of what is in the mind of God: if providence is God’s care of creatures, how does it translate into reality situated in time?⁷⁵⁷ Perhaps, this is what Aquinas wishes to forestall in the *Summa*

⁷⁵³ SCG II, 42, 6: “Si distinctio partium universi et ordo earum est proprius effectus causae primae, quasi ultima forma et optimum in universo, oportet rerum distinctionem et ordinem esse in intellectu causae primae: in rebus enim quae per intellectum aguntur, forma quae in rebus factis producitur, provenit a forma simili quae est in intellectu.”

⁷⁵⁴ ST 1a, q.14, a.11, ad.1: “Sed species intelligibilis divini intellectus, quae est Dei essential, non est immaterialis abstractionem, sed per seipsam, principium existens omnium principiorum quae intrant rei compositionem, sive sint principia speciei, sive principia individui. Unde per eam Deus cognoscit non solum universalialia, sed etiam singularia.”

⁷⁵⁵ ST 1a, q.44, a.4: “Sic ergo divina bonitas est finis rerum omnium.”

⁷⁵⁶ De ver., q.5, a.1, obj.1: “Quaestio est de providentia. Et primo quaeritur ad quod attributorum providentia reducatur. Et videtur quod tantum ad scientiam...”

⁷⁵⁷ Some of these observations have been raised by Jean-Pierre Torrell in his “Introduction,” in Thomas d’Aquin, *Questions Disputées sur la Vérité. Question V: La Providence (De providentia). Question VI: La Prédestination (De praedestinatione)*. Traductions par Jean-Pierre Torrell et Denis Chardonnes (Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 2011) pp 28-29.

Theologiae where he takes a different outlook and a more practical approach to the question of providence. Aquinas discusses the whole issue of providence in three different sections and in three different contexts of the *prima pars*, and as such, gives a three-fold conception of providence. The first context found in ST 1, q.2-26, could be said to be purely theological where the major concern of Aquinas is the unity of the divine essence. The questions examine among others whether and how God is provident. Providence is discussed as an eternal reality in God whose wisdom and will orders things to their final end. This is equivalent to universal providence that is manifested through the fixed laws guiding reality. God is seen as solely responsible for providence. The second context comprises questions 103-119 and is purely cosmological as it examines the created order of the universe. In this consideration, providence is seen as existing in the temporal order and involves the mutual responsibility of God and creatures. Providence is here presented as God's action of governance in the world of space and time. This is the context of particular providence where God is intimately and personally involved in a caring context. By this, Aquinas rejects the Aristotelian dictum that providence stops only at the level of the species and does not extend to the individuals. The third context is in between the earlier two, in his treatise on creation in questions 44-49, where Aquinas emphasizes providence as God's preservation of creatures who are ontologically dependent on Him for all the duration of their existence. These various conceptions will be manifest in Aquinas's reading of the *Book of Job* where he affirms the presence of providence in human affairs against the denial of such by earlier philosophers. These latter especially Democritus and Empedocles attributed the majority of occurrences in nature to chance.⁷⁵⁸ Aquinas however acknowledges that a better thinking by the later philosophers has proved that all "things were ordained and governed by some supereminent intelligence."⁷⁵⁹ This is the closest that Aquinas gets to giving an academic definition of providence in his exposition of the *Book of Job*. Another place is where Aquinas argues that natural things lacking their own proper intelligence be directed to their end by some "superior intelligence."⁷⁶⁰ It is this organization by a "superior

⁷⁵⁸ Aquinas, *Expositio Super Job ad Litteram*, prologus, lin.15-17, p 3: "posterorum etiam quidam, ut Democritus et Empedocles, plurima casui attribuebant. » We shall simply refer to this work as *Super Job*. Cf *The Literary Exposition on Job*, translated by Anthony Damico, (Atlanta, Georgia: Scholars Press, 1989) p 67. All English references are to this edition.

⁷⁵⁹ *Super Job*, prologus, lin.22-23, p 3: "haec omnia a quodam intellectu supereminente ordinata gubernarentur." Cf *The Literary Exposition on Job*, p 67.

⁷⁶⁰ *Super Job*, cap.9, lin.111-119, p 59: Nec autem irrationabiliter ea quae naturaliter contingunt divinae virtuti attribuit: cum enim natura agat propter finem, omne autem quod ad finem certum ordinatur vel se ipsum dirigit in

intelligence” that Aquinas understands in the section of the revelation to Job making reference to God’s creation. The absence of an academic definition of providence is filled up in the other works notably the *Summa Theologiae* to which we now turn in detail.

Aquinas understands divine providence firstly as a divine plan ordering things to their end (*ratio ordinis rerum in finem*). God does this ordering through His knowledge and will. Things that do not know their end must be directed as the arrow is directed to its target by the archer. So, the whole working of nature is directed by some sort of knowledge.

It has also been shown that God knows all things, both universal and particular. And since His knowledge may be compared to the things themselves, as the knowledge of art to the objects of art, all things must of necessity come under His ordering; as all things wrought by art are subject to the ordering of that art.⁷⁶¹

Secondly, Aquinas understands providence as government. God as creator gives *esse* to things and brings them to order. This imposition of order on created things is called governance.⁷⁶² Since nothing can exist without being created, so nothing can exist without being governed by God. It is the execution of the order in the mind of God.

Wherefore, as there can be nothing which is not created by God, so there can be nothing which is not subject to His government...Wherefore, as there can be nothing that is not ordered to the Divine goodness as its end ... so it is impossible for anything to escape from Divine government.⁷⁶³

The final meaning of providence in the reading of Aquinas is preservation, and it is intimately connected to creation. By creation, things ontologically depend on God. If God does not preserve a thing by His providence, it ceases to exist. “For the being of every creature depends on God, so

finem vel ab alio dirigente in finem ordinatur, necesse est quod res naturalis, quae finis notitiam non habet ut se in ipsum dirigere possit, ab aliquo superiori intelligente ordinetur in finem. » Cf *The Literary Exposition on Job*, p 167.

⁷⁶¹ ST 1a, q.22, a.2: “Similiter etiam supra ostensum est quod Deus omnia cognoscit, et universalia et particularia. Et cum cognitio eius comparetur ad res sicut cognitio artis ad artificia, ut supra dictum est, necesse est quod omnia supponantur suo ordini, sicut omnia artificia subduntur ordini artis. »

⁷⁶² ST 1a, q.103, a.1: “Unde ad divinam bonitatem pertinet ut, sicut produxit res in esse, ita etiam eas ad finem perducatur. Quod est gubernare.”

⁷⁶³ ST 1a, q.103, a.5: “Unde sicut nihil potest esse quod non sit a Deo creatum, ita nihil potest esse quod eius gubernationi non subdatur...Unde cum nihil esse possit quod non ordinetur in divinam bonitatem sicut in finem...impossibile est quod aliquod entium subtrahatur gubernationi divinae.”

that not for a moment could it subsist, but would fall into nothingness were it not kept in being by the operation of the Divine power.”⁷⁶⁴ Providence is all encompassing. Nothing escapes it.

In trying to explain how evil exists under the care of a provident Creator, Aquinas like Maimonides, affirms two forms of providence—particular and universal providence. It is in the exercise of these forms of providence that evil is permitted for the good of the whole. Particular providence cares for individuals of all species as far as possible but universal providence might allow for some defect in one individual in order to preserve the good of the whole. For if God would prevent all evil, many good things would be lacking, there would be no generation since corruption will not take place, and lions would never survive given the lack of preys to feed on.⁷⁶⁵ Moreover, providence as an eternal plan of God preserves rather than corrupts nature, and as such does not prevent corruption, deficiency and evil from being found in nature. It was Avicenna, according to the interpretation of Steel, who reasoned that evil “is a necessary concomitant of the material conditions that are required for the existence of this world. Those conditions are themselves not evil, but they have such a manner of existence as to allow the evil of privation.”⁷⁶⁶ One of the preferred examples of Avicenna is fire which would always burn a habit even if that habit belongs to a religious leader.⁷⁶⁷ That is its end and that is the plan God has put in place for it. By insisting that providence covers even corruptible nature, Aquinas is criticizing Aristotle and Maimonides⁷⁶⁸ both for whom corruptible things lacking a rational power, are not under divine providence.

⁷⁶⁴ ST 1a, q.104, a.1: “Dependet enim esse cuiuslibet creaturae a Deo, ita quod nec ad momentum subsistere possent, sed in nihilum redigerentur, nisi operatione divinae virtutis conservarentur in esse;”

⁷⁶⁵ ST 1a, q.22, a.2, ad 2: “Si enim omnia mala impedirentur, multa bona deessent universe, non enim esset vita leonis, si non esset occisio animalium ; »

⁷⁶⁶ Steel, Carlos, «Avicenna and Thomas Aquinas on Evil,” in Jules Janssens et al, eds. *Avicenna and His Heritage*, (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2002) p 180.

⁷⁶⁷ Steel, Carlos, “Avicenna and Thomas Aquinas on Evil,” p 180.

⁷⁶⁸ *Dux Neutrorum*, lib.III, cap.XVIII, fol.81: « Ego credo quod cura specialis est in hoc mundo inferiori, qui est sub sphaera Lunae: et est coniuncta in singularibus speciei hominum tantummodo. Species autem illa, scilicet hominum, ita se habet quod omnes diversitates singularium suorum et ea quae accidunt ipsis sive bona, sive mala, sequuntur debitum, sicut scriptura dicit, universae viae Domini iudicia. » Cf *Guide* III, 17, p 471.

Others taught that incorruptible things only were subject to providence and corruptible things not in their individual selves, but only according to their species; for in this respect they are incorruptible.⁷⁶⁹

It is very clear that these “*quidam*-others” who deny individual providence to corruptible things, are Aristotle and Maimonides. They restricted providence only to the species of the corruptible things. Maimonides however, is in agreement with Aquinas as for individual human beings who because of their rational power enjoy special providence from God. Contrary to Aristotle and Maimonides, Aquinas holds providence to be the reserve of all things both in general and in their individual selves. The importance of *esse* cannot be overstated. A little further, we shall see that Aquinas still distinguishes between the particular providence man has and the particular providence other things enjoy.

Rabbi Moses, however, excluded men from the generality of things corruptible, on account of the excellence of the intellect which they possess, but in reference to all else that suffers corruption he adhered to the opinion of the others. We must say, however, that all things are subject to divine providence, not only in general, but even in their own individual selves.⁷⁷⁰

It is very important to signal the importance of the human intellect, what Aquinas calls the “*splendor intellectus*” and the similarity it has with Maimonides’s “*splendor intellectus*.”⁷⁷¹ Even though the procedure of providence is not solely based on the intellect as in Maimonides, we see the particular care God reserves to man as a result of his distinguishing characteristic of the intellect. And that however does not make God restrict providence only to the human species. That is the point of Aquinas’s attack on Maimonides. Wohlman shares the same point when she notes:

⁷⁶⁹ ST 1a, q.22, a.2: “Quidam vero posuerunt incorruptibilia tantum providentiae subiacere; corruptibilia vero, non secundum individua, sed secundum species; sic enim incorruptibilia sunt.”

⁷⁷⁰ ST 1a, q.22, a.2: “A corruptibilium autem generalitate excepit Rabbi Moyses homines, propter splendorem intellectus, quem participant, in aliis autem individuis corruptibilibus, aliorum opinionem est secutus. Sed necesse est dicere omnia divinae providentiae subiacere, non in universali tantum, sed etiam in singulari.”

⁷⁷¹ *Dux Neutrorum*, lib.II, cap.XXXVIII, fol.64: “De splendore intellectus qui effunditur super intellectum hominum: et de differentia effusionis.” Cf *Guide* II, 37, p 373.

Maïmonide a donc tort de limiter à l'individu humain le privilège de jouir de la Providence, car être sous la Providence ne veut pas dire être d'une façon particulière, soit corps incorruptible, soit être corporel doué d'intelligence, mais être et agir tout court.⁷⁷²

Another implication of the human's "*splendor intellectus*" is the responsibility man has for his actions. By his intellect, he has the singular capacity to make decisions and to choose or not to choose between different alternatives. And by making a choice, he accepts full responsibility for the consequences of his actions: "Now man is master of his actions through his reason and will."⁷⁷³ It is in this ability that the particularity of man's providence, as against that of other creatures, comes to the fore. According to Aquinas:

Since a rational creature has, through its free will, control over its actions, ... it is subject to divine providence in an especial manner, so that something is imputed to it as a fault, or as a merit; and there is given it accordingly something by way of punishment or reward.⁷⁷⁴

It now becomes clear that for Aquinas, the rational creature benefits from the divine providence in a very special manner: not only that he participates in *esse* like every other created being, but by the special gift of the intelligence, he enjoys a greater privilege and has a bigger responsibility for his actions and choices. This still confirms that divine providence preserves and governs rather than destroys nature, as it does not infringe on man's ability to choose. God's governance of man passes through man's intelligence. Thus, for Aquinas, each man has equal responsibility for his choices. This cannot be said of Maimonides whose theory of providence is elitist in the sense that the more intelligent an individual is, the more providence he enjoys.⁷⁷⁵ On the moral

⁷⁷² Wohlman, Avital, *Thomas d'Aquin et Maïmonide: un dialogue exemplaire*, p 245 «Maimonides thus is wrong to have limited the enjoyment of providence only to the human individual. For being under providence does not mean to be in a particular manner, either an incorruptible body, or a corporeal being having an intelligence, but simply being and acting.»

⁷⁷³ ST 1a-11ae, q.1, a.1: "Est autem homo dominus suorum actuum per rationem et voluntatem, unde et liberum arbitrium esse dicitur *facultas voluntatis et rationis*."

⁷⁷⁴ ST 1a, q.22, a.2, ad 5: "Quia creatura rationalis habet per liberum arbitrium dominium sui actus...speciali quodam modo subditur divinae providentiae; ut scilicet ei imputetur aliquid ad culpam vel ad meritum, et reddatur ei aliquid ut poena vel praemium."

⁷⁷⁵ *Dux Neutorum*, lib.III, cap.XIX, fol.82: "Tunc ergo cura specialis in omnibus singularibus speciei hominum non erit aequalis, sed erit in eis praeeminencia curae, sicut est ibi praeeminencia intellectus humani." Cf *Guide* III, 18, p 475: "Accordingly divine providence does not watch in an equal manner over all the individuals of the human species, but providence is graded as their human perfection is graded." In the same text, Maimonides maintains: "Scilicet in cura quae fixa est in singularibus hominum secundum suam perfectionem et gradum." "I refer to the

sphere, this Maimonidean theory could be interpreted and rightly so, to mean that the less intelligent an individual is, the less morally responsible he becomes.

Aquinas further stretches the advantages accruing to man because of the singular possession of the “*splendor intellectus*.” In a genuine way of interpreting Maimonides, Aquinas brings other non-intellectual creatures under the servitude of man such that they (non-intellectual creatures) are ruled by providence for the sake of intellectual substances. This justifies, in the natural course of things, the killing of animals for man’s use.

Therefore, intellectual creatures are governed by divine providence for their own sakes, while all others are for the intellectual ones.⁷⁷⁶

Aquinas’s metaphysics of *esse* makes providence a direct effect of God and thus is a criticism of Maimonides for whom providence is a function of the separate intellects. This further solidifies the link between Aquinas’s doctrine of creation and his metaphysics of providence. Another implication of Aquinas’s stand on providence is that it prevents God from being called imperfect. If His providence does not reach to non rational creatures, it could be either because God is not all powerful or because He is not all good such that certain of His creatures are excluded from benefitting from His goodness. Such exclusion, contrary to what Maimonides might have argued in his treatment of this above, casts some doubts on God’s knowledge of particulars. If these were to be true, there is nothing left in the essence of God to merit His being called perfect. Aquinas however, calls this Maimonidean reasoning according to which divine providence does not reach to individuals of non-rational creatures, a big error:

This error, however, attributes a very great imperfection to God...the error we have mentioned belittles either God’s knowledge by denying that He knows individual things or His goodness by denying that He directs individual things as individuals.⁷⁷⁷

notion of providence watching over human individuals according to the measure of their perfection and excellence.” Cf *Guide* III, 18, p 476.

⁷⁷⁶ SCG III, 112, 4: « Naturae ergo intellectuales sunt propter se a divina providentia procuratae, alia vero omnia propter ipsas. »

⁷⁷⁷ *De ver.*, q.5, a.6: “Sed hic error maximam imperfectionem Deo attribuit...Unde praedictus error vel derogat divinae scientiae, subtrahens ei particularium cognitionem, vel divinae bonitati subtrahens ei ordinationem particularium in quantum sunt particularia. »

The *splendor intellectus* will again play a major part in Aquinas's exposition of the concept of happiness which he argues consists in an activity of a rational nature in the contemplation of the divine essence. He would again cross parts with Maimonides who in a similar manner describes true human perfection as consisting in the acquisition of rational virtues. Aquinas would come very close to Averroes's ideal of happiness which consists in the knowledge of separate substances. Our objective would be to examine the intricacies involved and to distinguish Aquinas's correct stand on the issue of human happiness.

9.5.1 On Evil and the Book of Job

Aquinas did write a whole commentary—*Expositio super Job ad litteram*—on the *Book of Job* to bring to light his understanding of the nature and operations of God's providence and its relation to human suffering. The whole intention of this book according to Aquinas is to show “*per probabiles rationes*—through plausible arguments that human affairs are ruled by divine providence.”⁷⁷⁸ Aquinas's theoretical discussions coupled with his Christian eschatological convictions, find their application in this special book of a special man who unjustly suffered even though he was innocent and righteous. Why would God permit a righteous man such suffering? Does providence extend to human affairs? Would Aquinas's answer be tailored to justify providence as a *ratio ordinis rerum in finem*?⁷⁷⁹ Not finding any justifiable explanation for the sufferings of Job in Maimonides's exposition, would Aquinas already suppose eternal life as the reason “since if that position is not posited, no reason can be given for the trial of just men, who it is certain, are sometimes troubled in this world”?⁷⁸⁰ While making effort to bring answers to our questions, there are two major attitudes that guide Aquinas's interpretation of the *Book of Job*: his attitude toward suffering and his attitude toward happiness.⁷⁸¹ It is in the examination of

⁷⁷⁸ *Super Job*, prologus, lin.55-57, p 3: “cuius tota intentio circa hoc versatur ut per probabiles rationes ostendatur res humanas divina providentia regi.” Cf “Prologue” in *The Literary Exposition on Job*, p 68.

⁷⁷⁹ *Super Job*, cap. 9, lin.119-121, p 59: « Comparatur igitur tota naturae operatio ad intellectum dirigentem res naturales in finem, quem Deum dicimus ; » Cf *The Literary Exposition on Job*, p 167.

⁷⁸⁰ *Super Job*, cap. 10, lin.504-506, p 74: « ex quo ea non posita non potest reddi causa tribulationis iustorum, quos certum est aliquando in hoc mundo tribulari. » Cf *The Literary Exposition on Job*, p 194.

⁷⁸¹ Stump has been the first to expose these two attitudes in Aquinas. Confer: Eleonore Stump, *Aquinas*, (New York: Routledge, 2003), p 463.

the former that we shall clearly see the influence of Gregory the Great's *Moralia* on Aquinas who, like his predecessor, interprets suffering in a positive light as part of divine providence.

9.5.1.1 Aquinas on Human Suffering:

There is much evidence to suggest that Aquinas had Maimonides's *Dux Neutrorum* before him while commenting on the book of Job. It does seem as if he wanted to set the assumptions of Maimonides correct before proceeding to the heart of the biblical book. The very motivation which plunged philosophers to doubt the very existence of God's knowledge of and providence over the affairs of men is the same for both authors. Maimonides described this motivation to be:

a lack of order in the circumstances of the human individuals and the fact that among the Adamites some excellent individuals are in a sorry and grievous plight whereas some wicked individuals are in good and pleasurable circumstances. This impelled them to formulate the division that you will now hear. They said ... God either knows nothing about these individual circumstances and does not comprehend them, or He knows and apprehends them.⁷⁸²

In Thomas Aquinas, we find almost the same motivation repeated verbatim but in a modified version. He puts it thus:

Indeed, the fact that no certain order appears in human events especially fostered this doubt. For good things do not always happen to good men or bad things to bad men. On the other hand, neither do bad things always happen to good men or good things to bad men. Rather, both good and bad things happen to good and bad men indifferently. This fact, then, is what has especially moved the hearts of men to the opinion that human affairs are not ruled by divine providence.⁷⁸³

⁷⁸²*Dux Neutrorum*, lib.III, cap.XVII, fol.79: "Quod autem fecit eos evagari et induxit eos in hoc, primo est illud quod apparet in principio cogitationis de malitia ordinis diversitatum hominum: et quod quidam hominum sancti scilicet sunt in afflictione: quidam vero malorum ducunt vitam in delectatione. Hoc igitur induxit eos ad distinguendum, sicut modo audies. Dicunt enim ... vel quod creator ignoret diversitates hominum: nec apprehendat eas: vel quia scit et apprehendit eas." Cf *Guide* III, 16, p 461.

⁷⁸³ *Super Job*, prologus, lin.29-37, p 3: "Cui quidem dubitationi maxime fomentum ministravit quod in eventibus humanis nullus certus ordo apparet: non enim semper bonis bona eveniunt aut malis mala, neque rursus semper

Even though the theme of the book is the tribulations of Job, the similarity in the phrasing of this theme cannot be a mere coincidence. Aquinas addresses as a kind of theme “the many grave afflictions of a certain man, perfect in every virtue, named Job.”⁷⁸⁴ It is a phrase that we find again in the *Dux Neutrorum*: “I refer to the assertion that a righteous and perfect man, who was just in his actions and is most careful to avoid sin, was stricken without his having committed a sin entailing this.”⁷⁸⁵ More than stating the fact of the suffering of a righteous man, Aquinas enlarges the statement into an enquiry on the importance of suffering. As we shall see, suffering could be a tool in the hands of God for a certain purpose.

Then he proceeds to underline the importance of accepting this story as a historical event, perhaps, meant to nourish the faith of the people that, in the midst of suffering, all hope is not lost and all suffering is not in vain. It was Maimonides who, convinced that *Iob non fuit ens*, called this story of Job “a parable intended to set forth the opinions of people concerning providence.”⁷⁸⁶ In reference to this assumption, Aquinas says:

Now there have been some men to whom it has seemed that the Job in question was not something in the nature of things but that he was a kind of parable made up to serve as a theme for a debate over providence, the way men often invent hypothetical cases to debate over them.⁷⁸⁷

Then against it, he appeals to the authority of the Sacred Scripture (Ezekiel 14:14) where Job is mentioned in some of the books, in the company of other ancient personalities like Noah and Daniel, whose parts in the history of the Jewish nation are well documented. If these other men

bonis mala aut malis bona, sed indifferenter bonis et malis et bona et mala. Hoc igitur est quod maxime corda hominum commovit ad opinandum res humanas providentia divina non regi ; » Cf *The Literary Exposition on Job*, p 68.

⁷⁸⁴ *Super Job*, prologus, lin.68-71, p 3: «Proponitur igitur ad quaestionem intentam, quasi quoddam thema, multiplex et gravis afflictio cuiusdam viri in omni virtute perfecti qui dicitur Iob. » Cf *The Literary Exposition on Job*, p 68.

⁷⁸⁵ *Dux Neutrorum*, lib.III, cap.XXIII, fol.84: “scilicet quod sit homo iustus, perfectus, intelligens, in omnibus operibus suis timens Creatorem suum: et contingunt ei multae tribulationes et adversitates in his quae possidet, et in filiis suis, et in corpore suo, non pro peccato quod fecerit.” Cf *Guide III*, 22, p 486.

⁷⁸⁶ *Ibid.* lib III, cap.XXIII, fol.84: “scilicet quod est parabola, ad ostendendum opiniones hominum in cura.” Cf *Guide III*, 22, p 486.

⁷⁸⁷ *Super Job*, prologus, lin.72-77, p 4 : «Fuerunt autem aliqui quibus visum est quod iste Iob non fuerit aliquid in rerum natura, sed quod fuerit quaedam parabola conficta ut esset quoddam thema ad providentiae disputationem, sicut frequenter homines confingunt aliqua facta ad disputandum de eis. » Cf *The Literary Exposition on Job*, p 68.

lived, Aquinas argues, then, “one must believe that Job was a man in the nature of things.”⁷⁸⁸ With this, he brings to a close the lingering doubts as to the authenticity of the work and the importance of interpreting it in the light of faith.

In fact, this early confrontation determines the direction that Aquinas takes his interpretation of Job seen by Maimonides. Aquinas moves totally away from the philosophical motivations behind the readings of Maimonides. It is not by accident that Maimonides considers the story of Job as “*exemplum, as parabola*,” he intends to underline that the scripture has been written in allegories and that beyond those allegories are found the truths of Aristotelian philosophy. The whole heavenly scene relating the presence of the sons of God, the later arrival of Satan, and the latter’s roaming about all over the earth, would refer to form and matter. Not accepting to make “light” of the biblical figures that played their parts in the history of man’s salvation, Aquinas would bring out the philosophical meanings of the stories as well as safeguard the authenticity of the biblical figures and what they stand. It is this intention that justifies his placing emphasis on the veracity of the story and the figure of Job made light by Maimonides.

Aquinas in his interpretation brings to bear in the various characters in the Job story, the metaphysical teachings he holds on the statue and the cause of evil. He will present evil in this interpretation as the absence of good due to a thing, and present good as the accidental cause of evil. What this would lead to is to present evil and suffering as part of the universal plan permitted by divine providence. Our earlier discussion has already examined this. The scene in the divine court where Satan, though not invited, is said to be “present among” the sons of men, is rich in signification.⁷⁸⁹ Satan is devil and belongs to the class of evil spirits which move men to evil actions. The dispensation of divine providence is such that the lower beings are moved through the higher ones.⁷⁹⁰ This presence of Satan is seen as accidental because not invited by God; he is nevertheless permitted in that presence and is submissive to God. Thus, Aquinas here highlights good as the accidental cause of evil since “evils are not from the principal intention of

⁷⁸⁸ *Super Job*, prologus, lin.89-90, p 4: “Sic igitur credendum est Iob hominem in rerum natura fuisse.” Cf *The Literary Exposition on Job*, p 69.

⁷⁸⁹ Job 1:6: The bible citations will all be taken from the *Literary Exposition on Job*.

⁷⁹⁰ *Super Job*, cap. 1, lin.235-237, p 7: “Sciendum est autem quod divina providentia tali ordine res gubernat quod inferiora per superiora dispensat; » Cf *The Literary Exposition on Job*, p 76.

God but come upon good men as if by accident.”⁷⁹¹ It is a conviction that Aquinas shares with Maimonides for whom God does not produce evil in an essential act.⁷⁹² This takes away from God, contrary to the assumptions of Job and His friends,⁷⁹³ the direct responsibility for evil. And equally avoids ontological dualism where there is a different rival principle responsible for evil just as God is responsible for good.

Though Job was innocent of wrong doing, Aquinas lets us know that it is within the plan of divine providence, that his virtue should be manifested to all by the way of suffering. This suffering would come through Satan to whom God has given the permission to assault Job while preserving his soul.

It is clear from what has been said before, that this was the cause of blessed Job’s adversity—that his virtue should be made manifest to all. ...On the contrary, He ordained it in His eternal disposition to manifest Job’s virtue against all the calumnies of impious men; therefore, the calumny is premised and the divine permission follows.⁷⁹⁴

Innocent Job has become “a pawn in the chess board of the gods.” To settle their differences, Job was sacrificed and God permitted that he be inflicted with sufferings of all sorts so that through them, Job’s virtue might be manifested to the shame of Satan and to detractors. The adversities inflicted on Job ranged as follows: the loss of his wealth (asses and camels); the loss of his children; and the loss of his health.⁷⁹⁵ These sufferings would lead to others since they have completely turned Job’s life upside down. It is at this point that Job’s three friends make their

⁷⁹¹ *Super Job*, cap. 1, lin.312-315, p 8: “Dicitur autem *inter eos* tum propter naturae parilitatem, tum ad insinuandum quod mala non sunt ex principali intentione sed superveniunt bonis quasi per accidens.» Cf *The Literary Exposition on Job*, p 78.

⁷⁹² *Dux Neutrorum*, lib.III, cap.XI, fol.75: “scito quod de Creatore non dicitur precise quod ipse faciat malum. » Cf *Guide III*, 10, p 439-40.

⁷⁹³ *Ibid.* lib.III, cap.XXIII, fol.84: “Et opinati sunt Iob et socii eius quod Creator operatus est ista cum substantia sua, et non mediante Sathan. » Cf *Guide III*, 22, p 487.

⁷⁹⁴ *Super Job*, cap. 1, lin.575-585, p 11f: “Patet igitur ex praedictis hanc fuisse causam adversitatis beati Iob ut eius virtus omnibus fieret manifesta ... aeterna dispositione hoc ordinavit ad manifestandam virtutem Iob contra omnes calumnias impiorum: et ideo praemittitur calumnia et subsequitur divina permissio.” Cf *The Literary Exposition on Job*, p 83.

⁷⁹⁵ *Super Job*, cap.2, lin.82-84 & 125-129, p 17 : «Considerandum est autem quod Iob dupliciter afflictus fuerat, scilicet in amissione possessionum et in amissione natorum...Unde dicitur *egressus igitur Satan a facie domini percussit Iob*, percussione quidem turpi et abominabili, unde dicitur *ulcere*, incurabili et doloroso, unde dicitur *pessimo*, et universali, unde dicitur *a planta pedis usque ad verticem eius*. » Cf *The Literary Exposition on Job*, pp 93 & 94.

entrance to comfort their friend in his great tribulations and offer words of consolation and inquire why Job, an innocent man, suffers.

The setting in his *Expositio* is a kind of scholastic *disputatio* between Job and his friends aimed at arriving at the correct understanding of the operations of providence. It is as if Job and his friends are at opposite poles of the debate. Though they all agree with Job that natural things and human beings are all subject to divine providence, they nevertheless differ on the *modus operandi* of providence. The friends think that providence works in this life by reward-for-good-done and punishment-for-evil-done principle “as if temporal goods are the rewards of virtue and temporal evils are the proper punishments for sin”—*propriae poenae peccatorum*.⁷⁹⁶ This is because they thought Job’s suffering and loss are consequences of his wrong doings and thus punishment for his faults. According to Aquinas, this way of seeing the workings of providence is wrong since it could mean that the ultimate end of man is in the possession of material goods. In this Aquinas agrees with Maimonides for whom providence is not reward for good done or punishment for evil done. But in the interpretation of Aquinas, Job does believe in a “future spiritual reward after this life.”⁷⁹⁷ Thus, even though he suffers now in his flesh, he believes that he will be consoled in the next life. This teleological interpretation is nowhere found in Maimonides for whom suffering does not represent a guarantee for a future glorious life. On the contrary, Maimonides ridicules the idea of a future reward for the present sufferings expressed by the Mutazila,⁷⁹⁸ by saying that incongruities and contradictions follow necessarily from this opinion.⁷⁹⁹ It could perhaps be seen as Aquinas’s way of explaining the utility of Job’s suffering and the fact that, contrary to the ridicule by Maimonides, God could permit an innocent suffering to direct man to the riches of an immaterial life. With reference to Eliphaz, one of the friends’ speech, Aquinas notes:

⁷⁹⁶*Super Job*, cap.2, lin.206-211, p 18: “sed differebant ab eo quod putabant hominem pro bonis quae agit remunerari a Deo prosperitate terrena, et pro malis quae agit puniri a Deo adversitate temporali, quasi temporalia bona sint praemia virtutum et temporalia mala sint propriae poenae peccatorum.” Cf *The Literary Exposition on Job*, p 96.

⁷⁹⁷*Super Job*, cap.2, lin.216-218, p 18: “sed credebat bona opera hominum ordinari ad remunerationem spiritualem futuram post hanc vitam,” Cf *The Literary Exposition on Job*, p 96.

⁷⁹⁸*Dux Neutrorum*, lib.III, cap.XVIII, fol.81: “De morte vero iusti praedicta responsio eorum est, ut multiplicetur eius praemium in seculo venturo.” Cf *Guide III*, 17, p 468.

⁷⁹⁹*Ibid.* lib.III, cap.XVIII, fol.81: “Et idcirco sequuntur ex hac opinione inconvenientia quae seinvicem destruunt. » Cf *Guide III*, 17, p 468.

If man is rewarded in this life by God for good deeds and punished for bad, as Eliphaz was trying to affirm, it seems to follow that the ultimate end of man is in this life. But Job intends to disprove this opinion, and he wants to show that man's present life does not have in it the ultimate end but is compared to it as motion is compared to rest and the road to the destination.⁸⁰⁰

He compares man's life to the state of soldiers who strive toward victory in military campaigning. The analogy conjures up the wounds and the sufferings soldiers endure for the sake of victory that awaits them at the end of their campaign. The end is victory; the means is fighting through pains and sufferings expecting "to be relieved to the state of the other life which is without labor and anguish."⁸⁰¹ In other words, the ultimate end of life is not to be found in this present life,⁸⁰² and if God allows evil and sufferings in this world, it is always for a greater good in the afterlife. But in the immediate present, Job is permitted to suffer so that his virtues might be made manifest to all. This goes to rejoin Aquinas's overall sentiment borrowed from Augustine that God does not permit evil to fall upon his loved ones unless something good comes from it.

For it would not be pleasing to God that anyone suffers adversity except for the sake of some good coming from it. Hence, although adversity is bitter in itself and generates sadness, it still ought to be agreeable in consideration of its usefulness on account of which it pleases God ... For even over the taking of bitter medicine a person rejoices with reason because of the hope of health, although he is repelled in the sense of taste.⁸⁰³

⁸⁰⁰*Super Job*, cap. 7, lin.16-23, p 46: "unde si in hac vita homo remuneratur a Deo pro bene actis et punitur pro malis, ut Eliphaz astruere nitebatur, consequens videtur quod in hac vita sit ultimus hominis finis. Hanc autem sententiam intendit Iob reprobare et vult ostendere quod praesens vita hominis non habet in se ultimum finem, sed comparatur ad ipsum sicut motus ad quietem et via ad terminum; » Cf *The Literary Exposition on Job*, p 145.

⁸⁰¹*Super Job*, cap. 14, lin.190-193, p 93: "in hac tota vita milito, mutabilitati, laboribus et angustiis subiectus, sed expecto immutari in statum alterius vitae quae sit sine labore et angustia; » Cf *The Literary Exposition on Job*, p 228.

⁸⁰² Chardonens, Denis, *L'homme sous le regard de la providence*, p 148 : « cela signifie que cette vie n'a pas en elle-même sa fin ultime, mais qu'elle est en rapport avec sa fin comme le mouvement avec le repos et la route avec son terme. Ainsi la Providence ordonne l'homme, aux prises avec les peines du temps présent, à une rétribution dans une autre vie. »

⁸⁰³*Super Job*, cap. 1, lin.847-855, p 15: «Non enim esset placitum Deo quod aliquis adversitatem pateretur nisi propter aliquod inde proveniens bonum: unde adversitas, licet ipsa ex se amara sit et tristitiam generet, tamen ex consideratione utilitatis propter quam Deo placet debet esse iocunda, ... nam et de sumptione medicinae amarae aliquis ratione gaudet propter spem sanitatis licet sensu turbetur. » Cf *The Literary Exposition on Job*, p 89.

In the final analysis, Aquinas is very clear that suffering could be a salvific tool in the hands of divine providence and medicine for evil. Just like the doctor does not remove the bitter treatment he gives to his patients with the end of restoring them to good health, so does God “not take away the trials from a man set down in the midst of trials, although he prays for mercy, since He knows that they contribute to final salvation.”⁸⁰⁴ Job’s demands for answers to why he suffers might appear not to have been answered, but divine providence has so arranged that he becomes eternally fulfilled in his knowledge of God in the resurrection.

9.5.1.2 Aquinas on Human Happiness:

In the argument of Job’s friends, they correctly consider happiness to be a greater good. The only problem is what they think this happiness to consist in. And for them, happiness consists in bodily health, in wealth, in possessions, in honors, in family life, things that come as a reward for a just life and the absence of which confirms God’s punishment for unrighteous living.⁸⁰⁵ Western philosophy teaches that human beings naturally desire their own happiness. What constitutes a point of discord and disagreement is the nature of that happiness or good. For Aristotle, the good is something proper to man that cannot easily be taken from him.⁸⁰⁶ Thus, what is considered good in the reckonings of Job’s friends are things exterior to man and that can be taken away from him since they also come from the outside of man. Aristotle divides goods into three classes: some are described as external, others as relating to soul and others to body; we call those that relate to soul most properly and truly goods.’⁸⁰⁷ Maimonides quoting ancient

⁸⁰⁴*Super Job*, cap. 9, lin.418-421, p 63: “ita Deus homini in tribulationibus constituto tribulationes non subtrahit, quamvis deprecanti, quia scit eas expedire ad finalem salutem;” Cf *The Literary Exposition on Job*, p 174.

⁸⁰⁵*Super Job*, cap. 4, lin.117-121, p 28: “Ubi considerandum est hanc fuisse opinionem Eliphaz, et aliorum duorum, sicut supra dictum est, quod adversitates huius mundi non adveniunt alicui nisi in poenam peccati et e contrario prosperitates pro merito iustitiae; » Cf *The Literary Exposition on Job*,p.115 «And here one should consider that, as has been said above, it was the opinion of Eliphaz and of the other two friends that the adversities of this world do not come to anyone except as punishment for sin, and conversely, prosperity does not come except as a reward for justice. »

⁸⁰⁶Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, I, 5, 1095b25. From henceforth we shall be quoting it as NE

⁸⁰⁷NE I, 8, 1098b10-15.

and modern philosophers says that happiness to be found in man consists of four species.⁸⁰⁸ He names possessions, bodily constitution, moral virtues, and rational perfection. Apart from the rational perfection, every other type is external to man and a “preparation for something else and not an end in itself.”⁸⁰⁹ Like Maimonides, Aquinas also very much influenced by Aristotle maintains happiness to consist in an activity of a rational nature.

Since happiness is the proper good of an intellectual nature, happiness must pertain to an intellectual nature by reason of what is proper to that nature.⁸¹⁰

Aquinas’s claim is based on his conviction that, among the faculties of the soul, the intellect is superior to the will.⁸¹¹ This is a question he addresses in the *Summa Theologiae* where he asks “whether the will is a higher power than the intellect.”⁸¹² Aquinas begins by drawing a distinction between that which is absolutely higher (*simpliciter*) and that which is relatively higher (*secundum quid*).

The superiority of one thing over another can be considered in two ways: “absolutely” and “relatively.” Now a thing is considered to be such absolutely which is considered such in itself: but relatively as it is such with regard to something else.⁸¹³

In comparison to their objects, Aquinas argues that the intellect is simpler than the will. This is because the intellect considers objects in their abstract nature, that is, in their form. The will on other hand considers objects in their matter-form composite. The more detached a thing is from matter, the more abstract and higher it can reach. Thus, it is quite logical to assume that the

⁸⁰⁸ *Dux Neutorum*, lib.III, cap.LV, fol.113: “Philosophi tam primi quam ultimi ostenderunt quod quatuor sunt genera perfectionum quae reperiuntur in homine.” Cf *Guide* III, 54, p 634.

⁸⁰⁹ Ibid: “Haec autem species refertur et quasi derivatur ad alios nec est finis substantiae proprie.” Cf *Guide* III, 54, p 635.

⁸¹⁰ SCG III, 26, 8; ST 1, q.12, a.1: “...the ultimate beatitude of man consists in the use of his highest function which is the operation of his intellect;--enim ultima hominis beatitudo in altissima eius operatione consistat, quae est operatio intellectus.”

⁸¹¹ Contributing to the debate as to whether happiness is to be achieved through the intellect or through the Will, P. S. Eardley has argued that some late medieval thinkers especially Giles of Rome and Henry of Ghent disagreed with Aquinas’s intellectualist bent. Confer his “Conceptions of Happiness and Human Destiny in the Late Thirteenth Century,” in *Vivarium* 44, 2-3, (2006), pp 276-304. This article will be very helpful in our discussion of Aquinas’s notion of happiness. Duns Scotus also debated the issue. Cf Mary Beth Ingham, “Did Scotus Modify his Position on the Relationship of Intellect and Will?” *Recherches de Théologie et Philosophie Médiévales*, 69 (2002), pp 88-116.

⁸¹² ST 1, q.82, a.3: “Utrum voluntas sit altior potentia quam intellectus.”

⁸¹³ ST 1, q.82, a.3: “Respondeo dicendum quod eminentia alicuius ad alterum potest attendi dupliciter, uno modo, *simpliciter*; alio modo, *secundum quid*. Consideratur autem aliquid tale simpliciter, prout est secundum seipsum tale, secundum quid autem, prout dicitur tale secundum respectum ad alterum.”

intellect is more of an incorporeal nature than the will, and thus, in itself, the intellect is higher and nobler than the will.⁸¹⁴ Moreover, just as the good understood precedes the movement of the will, so, the intellect is the determining factor of the will.⁸¹⁵ This logic of Aquinas is geared towards showing that happiness is an act of the intellect in the contemplation of the divine essence. In theological language, Aquinas calls it the “beatific vision.”⁸¹⁶ He describes happiness as the “perfect good that totally quietens desire.”⁸¹⁷ Because he associates what is perfectly good to be the final end of man, he *ipso facto* would eliminate whatever is limited and perishable from this category. For Aquinas, to talk of “end” is to mean two things: the object itself which we desire to attain; and the attainment or possession or the use of the object desired. In the first sense, man’s final end is God, the infinite object that perfectly fulfills all human desires. This object is an uncreated good. In the second sense, because the end involves the subjective possession or attainment of the object desired which is God, Aquinas insists that this possession must involve an operation that is in man and an activity of the human soul. Happiness in this sense is created.⁸¹⁸ The essence then of man’s happiness, as a created good, is that he be united to the Uncreated Good, which is God.⁸¹⁹ Why has Aquinas taken this pain? Has it got anything to do with Aristotle’s definition of happiness? We shall soon come to examine Aquinas’s distinction of happiness into imperfect and perfect happiness.

⁸¹⁴ ST 1, q.82, a.3: “Si ergo intellectus et voluntas considerentur secundum se, sic intellectus eminentior invenitur. Et hoc apparet ex comparatione obiectorum ad invicem. Obiectum enim intellectus est simplicius et magis absolutum quam obiectum voluntatis, nam obiectum intellectus est ipsa ratio boni appetibilis ; bonum autem appetibile, cuius ratio est in intellectu, est obiectum voluntatis. Quanto autem aliquid est simplicius et abstractius, tanto secundum se est nobilius et altius. Et ideo obiectum intellectus est altius quam obiectum voluntatis. Cum ergo propria ratio potentiae sit secundum ordinem ad obiectum, sequitur quod secundum se et simpliciter intellectus sit altior et nobilior voluntate. »

⁸¹⁵ ST 1, q.82, a.3, ad.2 : “Et hoc modo intellectus est prior voluntate, sicut motivum mobili, et activum passivo, bonum enim intellectum movet voluntatem. »

⁸¹⁶ Torrell has correctly noted that the term “vision béatifique” is not found in Thomas Aquinas’s works. Rather the term that properly expresses what is called “vision béatifique” is “visio Dei per essentiam.” Cf Jean-Pierre Torrell, *Recherches Thomasiennes* (Paris : Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 2000) p 177.

⁸¹⁷ ST I-II, q.2, a.8 : “Beatitudo enim est bonum perfectum, quod totaliter quietat appetitum.”

⁸¹⁸ ST I-II, q.3, a.1 : “... finis dicitur dupliciter. Uno modo, ipsa res quamcupimus adipisci, sicut avaro est finis pecunia. Alio modo, ipsa adeptio vel possessio, seu usus aut fructio eius rei quae desideratur ; sicut si dicatur quod possessio pecuniae est finis avari, et fruire voluptuosa est finis intemperati. Primo ergo modo, ultimus hominis finis est bonum increatum, scilicet Deus, qui solus sua infinita bonitate potest voluntatem hominis perfecte implere. Secundo autem modo, ultimus finis hominis est creatum aliquid in ipso existens, quod nihil est aliud quam adeptio vel fructio finis ultimi. Ultimus autem finis vocatur beatitudo. Si ergo beatitudo hominis consideretur quantum ad causam vel obiectum, sic est aliquid increatum; si autem consideratur quantum ad ipsam essentiam beatitudinis, sic est aliquid creatum.”

⁸¹⁹ ST I-II, q.3, a.3: “Nam beatitudo hominis consistit essentialiter in conjunctione ipsius ad bonum increatum, quod est ultimus finis.”

We recall that Aristotle's thought on man's "good" is tied to what he considers the very function of man. This function Aristotle calls "an activity of soul which follows or implies a rational principle."⁸²⁰ We note that emphasis is placed on the type of activity that is involved—an activity of a rational type. Having arrived at this point, Aristotle then adds that:

Human good turns out to be activity of soul in accordance with virtue, and if there are more than one virtue, in accordance with the best and most complete.⁸²¹

Judging from the definition given above, Aristotle does not consider the human happiness to be some sort of external object, God as in the case of Aquinas. For Aristotle, human happiness is associated with an internal activity of the soul, an activity of contemplation. How does Aquinas then remain faithful to Aristotle while maintaining his Christian theological conviction and does he actually need to?⁸²² Eardley thinks that it is the desire to not deviate from the thinking of Aristotle that led Aquinas into distinguishing between happiness as "created" and happiness as "uncreated."⁸²³

In identifying the source of happiness with God as an uncreated object, Aquinas remains true to the Christian theological tradition; in associating created happiness with an activity of the soul, on the other hand, Aquinas is faithful to Aristotle.⁸²⁴

However right the thinking of Eardley may be, we think that the underlying desire behind Aquinas's motive is that of reconciling Aristotle with the Christian theological conviction. This Aquinas does by finally subjecting created happiness to uncreated happiness and reconciling the natural desire in man to its ultimate satisfaction which is God. In other words, Aquinas is saying that it is through the intellectual activity of the soul, that man arrives at his ultimate happiness, the "possession" of God. Man's true happiness, then, does not and cannot consist in the goods of

⁸²⁰ NE I, 7, 1098a5-10.

⁸²¹ NE I, 7, 1098a15-18.

⁸²² Gilson thinks that there is no need talking about Aquinas's desire to remain faithful to Aristotle since the latter does in no way arrive at the beatific vision of God. Cf. Etienne Gilson, "Sur la Problématique Thomiste de la Vision Béatifique," » *Archives d'Histoire Doctrinale et Littéraire du Moyen Age*, 31 (1964) p 74 : «Saint thomas se réclame sans cesse d'Aristote, mais il sait bien qu'Aristote ne parle nulle part d'une béatitude éternelle obtenue de Dieu par la grâce de la vision béatitude ; les aristotéliens ont donc beau jeu à dire qu'il trahit Aristote, ou même à l'y ramener. »

⁸²³ Eardley, P.S., "Conceptions of Happiness and Human Destiny in the Late Thirteenth Century," p 288. He even notes that Aquinas inherited this distinction from William of Auxerre.

⁸²⁴ Ibid. p 289.

the body which are attained by the operation of the senses. Like Aristotle, Aquinas also recognizes three categories of good:

Since man's good is threefold, namely, of the soul, of the body, and of external things, they are ordered toward one another in such a way that the body is for the sake of the soul whereas external things are for the sake of the body and the soul.⁸²⁵

Health, possessions, and children (family life), do not consist in themselves the end of man. Aquinas argues that "end" is desired for its own sake and not for something else. That which must be desired for its own sake must be something of such value that every other desire no longer exists. Possessions or riches "are only desired for the sake of something else; they provide no good of themselves but only when we use them, either for the maintenance of the body or some such use."⁸²⁶ These apply to all of Job's possessions-sheep, oxen and asses, and camels. They do not constitute real good which, according to Aristotle "is what is proper to man and which cannot be taken away from him." Does Maimonides not talk of the acquisition of the rational virtues as "what gives the individual true perfection, a perfection belonging to him alone?"⁸²⁷ Health also comes within the bracket. Even animals possess health, some better than men. Were it to be the highest good, Aquinas reasons that "man would not be the most excellent of animals, which is obviously false."⁸²⁸ Aristotle would call these goods, external goods serving as "conditions of happiness"⁸²⁹ and instruments "the lack of which takes the luster from happiness, as good birth, goodly children, beauty."⁸³⁰ This is knowledge that is not lacking to Maimonides for whom man's ultimate perfection can be achieved only after the conditions of the body have been achieved.⁸³¹ Getting inspired by his predecessors, Aquinas does also not neglect the importance of getting external goods working in tandem for man to achieve his ultimate end.

⁸²⁵*Super Job*, cap. 2, lin.1-5, p 16: "Cum triplex sit hominis bonum, scilicet animae, corporis et exteriorum rerum, hoc modo ad invicem ordinantur ut corpus sit propter animam, res vero exteriores et propter corpus et propter animam. » Cf. *The Literary Exposition on Job*, p 91.

⁸²⁶SCG III, 30, 2: "Non enim appetuntur divitiae nisi propter aliud: per se enim nihil boni inferunt, sed solum cum utimur eis, vel ad corporis sustentationem, vel ad aliquid huiusmodi." Cf ST I-II, q.2, a.1.

⁸²⁷*Dux Neutrorum*, lib.III, cap.LV, fol.113: "Quarta species est hominis perfectio vera, et consistit in acquisitione moralium,...Hic autem est ultimus finis qui perficit hominem perfectione vera et sunt sui solummodo : » Cf *Guide* III, 54, p 635.

⁸²⁸SCG III, 32, 4: "Non esset homo optimum animalum: quod patet esse falsum. » Cf ST I-II, q.2, a.5.

⁸²⁹NE I, 9, 1099b25-30.

⁸³⁰NE I, 8, 1099b1-5.

⁸³¹*Dux Neutrorum*, lib.III, cap.XXVIII, fol.89 : « homo nanque non potest apprehendere intelligibile etiam si doceatur, nedum per se inveniatur, nisi illud dum esurit vel sitit, vel frigus, vel calorem patitur. Sed post acquisitionem primae perfectionis oportet ut acquiratur ultima quae dignior est sine dubio : » Cf *Guide* III, 27, p 511.

He accepts that without the proper conditions of body and soul, man may find it very difficult to achieve felicity.

Now, in this life, there is no stability, for to any man, no matter how happy he is reputed to be, illness and misfortunes may possibly come, and by them he may be hindered in that operation, whatever it may be, with which felicity is identified.⁸³²

In the case of Job, Aquinas recognizes the sadness of Job at the loss of his children, his health and his possessions, and the fact that such loss may have diminished his serenity. But he remarks that Job's "reason is not engrossed through sadness so that it deviated from straightforwardness."⁸³³ Job's sadness did not disturb the activities of his soul, his rational principle. The emphasis here is on the type of goods that are lost. They are external or instrumental goods. They are not connatural with man but come to him accidentally.

This is clear from the fact that man comes into this world without them and goes out of it without them. Hence if the substantial good should remain when accidental goods have been taken away, a man ought not to be overcome by sadness even if sadness should touch him.⁸³⁴

Job's attitude is that of resignation to divine providence because he acknowledges that worldly prosperity comes to man from divine dispensation: "The Lord has given; the Lord has taken away,"⁸³⁵ Job says in the presence of his loss. In other words, temporal goods are what they are, external, instrumental and accidental gifts that may be taken away from man any time. The Lord gives them to man and takes them away from him without demanding his opinion. It is the temporality and the non-essential nature of such external goods that convinces both Maimonides

⁸³²SCG III, 48, 3: «In vita autem ista non est aliqua certa stabilitas: cuilibet enim, quantumcumque felix dicatur, possibile est infirmitates et infortunia accidere, quibus impeditur ab operatione, quaecumque sit illa, in qua ponitur felicitas. »

⁸³³*Super Job*, cap. 1, lin.745, p 14: «ita scilicet quod per tristitiam ratio non absorberetur ut a rectitudine declinaret. » Cf *The Literary Exposition on Job*, p 87.

⁸³⁴*Super Job*, cap. 1, lin.811-815, p 14: «quod ex hoc patet quia homo sine eis in hunc mundum venit et sine eis recedit: unde accidentalibus bonis sublati, si substantiale remaneat, non debet homo tristitia superari etsi eum tristitia tangat. » Cf *The Literary Exposition on Job*, p 89.

⁸³⁵Job 1:21 «Naked I came from the womb of my mother; naked will I return there. The Lord has given; the Lord has taken away; as it has pleased the Lord, so has it been done. Blessed be the name of the Lord!"

and Aquinas that happiness does consist neither in pleasures of the flesh, neither in wealth, neither in honors, nor in health.⁸³⁶

9.5.1.2.1 The Two Kinds of Happiness: Imperfect and Perfect Happiness

Let us try to further develop what we have hinted above as created and uncreated happiness. Aquinas's ethics in line with its Aristotelian model is teleological and *eudaimonistic*.⁸³⁷ To a certain extent, Maimonides's could also be qualified as teleological. This means that it is directed towards an end, the ultimate perfection of an intellectual nature that is called happiness or beatitude. The difference lies in how each man conceives this end and the means of achieving it. We could argue and for a good reason that Maimonides's ultimate perfection is not reachable for everybody. Those who for one reason or another are incapable of acquiring intellectual perfection are *ipso facto* excluded. Maimonides relegates them to the "rank of the individuals of all other species of animals."⁸³⁸ Thus for them, there could be no guarantee of the *natural desire* to achieve human happiness which consists in the activity of the intellect. The other impediment in Maimonides is what this activity of intellectual perfection consists in. In our earlier treatment, we discussed why Maimonides's ultimate perfection may be an impersonal conjunction with the Active Intellect. If that is so, then, there may be no personal possession of the ultimate happiness.⁸³⁹ However, where it to be a personal possession of the ultimate happiness, this could consist in the knowledge of the separate intelligences but never the knowledge or the possession of the divine essence, that is union with God. To know God entails knowing Him as He really is and Maimonides has no provision of how this could be achieved. Thus in the final analysis, Maimonides's Job may have achieved happiness but never the possession of the beatific vision.

⁸³⁶ SCG III, 27-34.

⁸³⁷ Bradley, Denis J.M., *Aquinas on the Twofold Human Good*, (Washington, D.C: The Catholic University of America Press, 1997) p 395.

⁸³⁸ *Dux Neutrorum*, lib.III, cap.XIX, fol.82: "Stulti vero et insipientes mali secundum quod sunt diminuti ab illo splendore minoratur eorum gradus, et cantant in ordine cum singularibus aliorum animalium." Cf *Guide* III, 18, p 475.

⁸³⁹ Hayoun, Maurice-Ruben, *Maïmonide et La Pensée Juive*, p 241 : « Si nous l'avons bien compris, le *Guide* paraît défendre l'immortalité collective...Une chose est incontestable, il n'est nulle part question de résurrection dans le *Guide*. Certains se seraient appuyés sur l'enseignement de Maïmonide pour nier la résurrection et c'est ce qui le conduisit, lui ou d'autres en son nom, à rédiger une épître sur la résurrection.» Cf L. N. Goldfield, *Maimonides' Treatise on Resurrection. An inquiry into its Authenticity*, 1986. This reference was given by Hayoun in the same work cited.

These are the loopholes that Aquinas's interpretation would attempt to fill up. The basic philosophical argument for this is going to be constructed on the natural desire—*naturale desiderium*—which Aquinas unlike Maimonides, believes is residing in every man to know its cause and to see God.⁸⁴⁰ Aquinas is in part reacting to Maimonides and to some other authors who implicitly or explicitly have held that the divine essence can never be seen by any created intellect—angels or the blessed souls.⁸⁴¹ This however is untenable.⁸⁴²

Every intellect naturally desires the vision of the divine substance, but natural desire cannot be incapable of fulfillment. Therefore, any created intellect whatever can attain to the vision of the divine substance, and the inferiority of its nature is no impediment.⁸⁴³

Where this desire is not fulfilled or impossible to realize, Aquinas argues that we are creatures made in vain (*vanum*) or futile.⁸⁴⁴ But nature is not unintelligible and does nothing in vain and thus; man has the possibility of seeing God by natural capacity even if that vision is imperfect. To be a perfect vision, man must need the assistance of God since the divine essence surpasses the ordinary realm of nature. It is on this fact that Aquinas bases his twofold division of happiness. Gilles Langevin has grouped into three families, Aquinas's arguments showing that man's ultimate beatitude is in seeing God.⁸⁴⁵ They include: (1) the coincidence of efficient and final causality; (2) the nature of exemplar causality; and (3) the ultimate fulfillment of the human desire to know. These arguments flow from the theory of creation. We shall look at the first two briefly and then discuss the third type in our treatment of the twofold division of happiness.

⁸⁴⁰ ST 1, q.12, a.1: "inest enim homini naturale desiderium cognoscendi causam, cum intuetur effectum; et ex hoc admiratio in hominibus consurgit."

⁸⁴¹ ST 1, q.12, a.1: « Hoc igitur attendentes, quidam posuerunt quod nullus intellectus creatus essentiam Dei videre potest. Sed hoc inconvenienter dicitur. »

⁸⁴² For a detailed discussion of the arguments for and against this natural desire in man to see the divine essence, confer Pierre-Yves Maillard, *La Vision de Dieu chez Thomas d'Aquin*, (Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 2001) pp 179-188; Lawrence Feingold, *The Natural Desire to See God According to St. Thomas Aquinas and His Interpreters*, (Naples, Florida: Sapientia Press of Ave Maria University, 2010).

⁸⁴³ SCG III, 57, 4: « omnis intellectus naturaliter desiderat divinae substantiae visionem. Naturale autem desiderium non potest esse inane. Quilibet igitur intellectus creatus potest pervenire ad divinae substantiae visionem, non impediēte inferioritate naturae. »

⁸⁴⁴ SCG III, 48, 11 : « Impossibile est naturale desiderium esse inane : natura enim nihil facit frustra. Esset autem inane desiderium naturae si nunquam posset impleri. Est igitur implebile desiderium naturale hominis... »

⁸⁴⁵ Langevin, Gilles, « Capax Dei: La créature intellectuelle et l'intimité de Dieu, » dans *Studia : recherches de philosophie et de théologie*, 20 (1966) pp 33-59ff. Cf also Denis J.M. Bradley, *Aquinas on the Twofold Human Good*, pp 431-439.

In the first above, the argument appealing to the coincidence of efficient and final causality is based on the Aristotelian principle that “men do not think they know a thing till they have grasped the ‘why’ of it (which is to grasp its primary cause).”⁸⁴⁶ A knowing intellect thus must not only desire to know the “substances of the effects” but also the “substance of the cause.”⁸⁴⁷ As God is the efficient cause of the human intellect, this later can only attain its proper perfection by reaching to the knowledge of its cause.⁸⁴⁸

Hence, it is necessary that the ultimate completion of human perfection is in understanding the most perfect intelligible, which is the divine essence.⁸⁴⁹

The second argument is based on the theory of exemplar causality according to which there is a resemblance between an effect and its cause. In the same *De Veritate* also quoted by Bradley, Aquinas again notes:

The human mind is immediately created by God, and immediately formed by Him as from an exemplar. From this it is immediately beatified in Him as its end.⁸⁵⁰

In his *Expositio* of Job 7:2-4, Aquinas argues for both this *natural desire* in every man and for the fact that the ultimate happiness is not to be found in this life. He argues that man’s desires are not completely satisfied since man keeps on desiring the future just as an army desires victory and a worker his salary:

For it is manifest that anything whatsoever rests once its ultimate end has been achieved; hence, it is necessary that, when the human will has achieved its ultimate end, it rest in it and not be moved further to desire other things. But we experience the opposite of this situation in the present life, for man always desires the future as if he is not content with the present; hence it is manifest that the ultimate end is not in this life but that this life is

⁸⁴⁶ Aristotle, *Physics* II, 3, 194b15-20.

⁸⁴⁷ SCG III, 50, 3: “Non quiescit igitur sciendi desiderium, naturaliter omnibus substantiis intellectualibus inditum, nisi, cognitis substantiis effectuum, etiam substantiam causae cognoscant.”

⁸⁴⁸ Langevin, Gilles, « Capax Dei : la créature intellectuelle et l’intimité de dieu, » p 37.

⁸⁴⁹ *De ver.*, q.18, a.1 “Unde oportet quod ultimus terminus humanae perfectionis sit in intelligendo aliquod perfectissimum intelligibile, quod est essentia divina. »

⁸⁵⁰ *De ver.*, q.18, a.1, ad.7 “Ipsa enim humana mens immediate a Deo creatur, et immediate ab ipso sicut exemplari formatur; et per hoc immediate in ipso sicut in fine beatificatur.”

ordered toward another end, as the campaign is ordered toward victory and the hireling's day is ordered toward the wage.⁸⁵¹

In the *Prima pars*, Aquinas describes beatific vision as union with God.⁸⁵² There are two things required for this vision: power of sight and the union of the thing seen with the sight; this is possible only when the object seen is in a certain way in the seer.⁸⁵³ How can the divine essence be in a created subject that sees it? Is it not just the *similitudo* transliterated as “likeness” of the divine essence that is seen by the created subject? Where it is the *similitudo* that is seen, how then maintain that it is a vision of God? Can this *similitudo* enter into a union? In other words, the debate here is whether the *divinam essentiam* is seen *per similitudinem* or *per essentiam suam*. The answers to our questions will become known in the course of our discussion of this very delicate issue.

9.5.1.2.1 Imperfect Happiness:

Beatitudo imperfecta is the happiness we can enjoy only in *praesenti vita* whereas *perfecta beatitudo* is the happiness expected in heaven.⁸⁵⁴ The former consists in the Aristotelian philosophical contemplation of the First Unmoved Mover that man can comfortably attain in this world through his intellectual virtues. This happiness is attainable through the use of discursive reason⁸⁵⁵ and therefore remains imperfect because bound by the finite realm of nature. As an intellectual activity, human contemplation is subject to the imperfections of bodily existence.⁸⁵⁶ Within the environment of the 13th century scholarship, Thomas Aquinas examined and rejected some philosophical positions pretending that perfect human felicity can be achieved in this life

⁸⁵¹ *Super Job*, cap.7, lin.56-66, p 46-47: “Manifestum est enim quod quaelibet res adepto ultimo fine quiescit, unde necesse est quod quando voluntas humana ultimum finem consecuta fuerit, in illo quiescat et ulterius ad alia desideranda non moveatur: huius autem contrarium in praesenti vita experimur, nam semper homo quasi non contentus praesentibus futurat desiderat: unde manifestum est in hac vita ultimum finem non esse, sed hanc vitam ordinari ad alium finem sicut ordinatur militia ad victoriam et dies mercennarii ad mercedem.”

⁸⁵² ST 1, q.12, a.4: “Non igitur potest intellectus creatus Deum per essentiam videre, nisi inquantum Deus per suam gratiam se intellectui creato coniungit, ut intelligibile ab ipso.”

⁸⁵³ ST 1, q.12, a.2 : “quod ad visionem, tam sensibilem quam intellectualem, duo requiruntur, scilicet virtus visiva, et unio rei visae cum visu, non enim fit visio in actu, nisi per hoc quod res visa quodammodo est in vidente.”

⁸⁵⁴ ST I-II, q.3, a.3, Cf *Super Boetium De Trinitate* q.6, a.4, ad.3: “duplex est felicitas hominis. Una imperfecta quae est in via, de qua loquitur Philosophus, et haec consistit in contemplatione subsantiarum separatarum per habitum sapientiae, imperfecta tamen et tali, qualis in via est possibilis, non ut sciatur ipsarum quiditas. Alia est perfecta in patria, in qua ipse Deus per essentiam videbitur et aliae substantiae separatae. Sed haec felicitas non erit per aliquam scientiam speculativam, sed per lumen gloriae.»

⁸⁵⁵ Te Velde, Rudi, *Aquinas on God*, 2006, p 156.

⁸⁵⁶ Bradley, Denis J.M., *Aquinas on the Twofold Human Good*, p 399.

by the intellectual understanding of the separate substances.⁸⁵⁷ These philosophical positions are unfortunately held by eminent interpreters of Aristotle. It is evident that Thomas Aquinas is not afraid to disagree with authorities he holds in high esteem. It will also become evident that Aquinas is not afraid to search and borrow the truth from wherever it may be found. The justification will be found in the fact that Aquinas finally borrows philosophical principles and structures showing the intellectual understanding of the separate substances, and makes them the solid foundation of his theological theory of *perfecta beatitudo in patria*. Let us note the observation of P.M De Contenson:

L'exemple de saint Thomas, qui trouve chez Averroès les précisions techniques lui permettant de promouvoir une théologie de la vision bienheureuse, montre clairement quels instruments rationnels nouveaux pouvaient être fournis au théologien médiéval par l'exploitation d'une noétique plus scientifique.⁸⁵⁸

9.5.1.2.1.1 Avempace

The first in this tradition is Avempace.⁸⁵⁹ He claims that by knowing the phantasms through the possible intellect and by the abstraction of the quiddity of what is understood, we can reach the understanding of the separate substances. Against this manner of reasoning that is “discovered to be frivolous,”⁸⁶⁰ Aquinas argues that even if it is the quiddity of something universal like that of a genus or a species, such quiddity pertaining to the sensible things, must still include within it matter and form, and thus unlike the quiddity of a separate substance which is simple and immaterial. Hence Aquinas concludes:

⁸⁵⁷ SCG III, 41, 2: “Quia ergo quidam posuerunt ultimam felicitatem hominis esse in hac vita per hoc quod cognoscunt substantias separatas, considerandum est utrum homo in hac vita possit substantias separatas cognoscere. »

⁸⁵⁸ De Contenson, P. M., « Avicennisme Latin et Vision de Dieu au Début du XIII^e Siècle, » in *Archives d'Histoire Doctrinale et Littéraire du Moyen Âge* 34, (1959), p 35 ; Cf Edouard H Wéber, “Les apports positifs de la noétique d'Ibn Rushd à celle de Thomas d'Aquin, » *Multiple Averroès*, édition préparée par Jean Jolivet (Paris : Les Belles Lettres, 1978), p. 212 He notes that Thomas « recourt à la noétique d'Averroès et très exactement à sa thèse de la jonction avec l'Intellect unique. »

⁸⁵⁹ SCG III, 41, 3 : “Avempace namque posuit quod per studium speculativarum scientiarum possumus, ex his intellectis quae per phantasmata cognoscimus, pervenire ad intelligendas substantias separatas.” Cf ST 1, q.88, a.2: “Sicut Averroes narrat in III de anima, quidam Avempace nomine, posuit quod per intellectum substantiarum materialium pervenire possumus, secundum vera philosophiae principia, ad intelligendum substantias immateriales.”

⁸⁶⁰ SCG III, 41, 5 : « Si autem diligenter consideretur, viae istae frivolae invenientur. »

It is not possible for the quiddity of a separate substance to be understood simply because the quiddity of a sensible thing is understood through phantasms.⁸⁶¹

9.5.1.2.1.2 Alexander of Aphrodisias

Alexander of Aphrodisias is another in this tradition who as we have earlier seen, is widely known for claiming that the possible intellect is generable and corruptible since it results from a mixture of the elements.⁸⁶² Alexander thinks that the possible intellect can come to the knowledge of the separate substances only when the separate agent intellect becomes “the form of the habitual understanding and a form for us ourselves. Thus we will understand through it, as we now understand through the possible intellect.”⁸⁶³ Where the agent intellect is the form by which we understand, we understand also the separate substances just as the agent intellect does. Thomas Aquinas finds the idea very good because it will help him in constructing his own idea of intellectual vision of the divine essence. What is wrong with Alexander’s however, is the means of getting there. How can an eternal, separate immaterial substance be the form of a material, corruptible substance like the habitual intellect?⁸⁶⁴ Again, if the agent intellect is one for all men as Alexander holds, and if it is by its form that one man understands, by the same token, it could also become the form by which another man similarly understands. Aquinas finds his theory “entirely frivolous.”⁸⁶⁵ “Therefore” Aquinas notes, “there will be the same act of understanding for two intelligent beings; and this is impossible.”⁸⁶⁶

⁸⁶¹ SCG III, 41, 5: “Non est igitur possibile quod per hoc quod intelligitur quidditas rei sensibilis per phantasmata, intelligatur quidditas substantiae separatae.”

⁸⁶² Moraux, Paul, *Alexandre d'Aphrodise: Exégète de la Noétique d'Aristote*, (Paris: Librairie E. Droz, 1942), p 32: “Pour Alexandre, l'âme naît du mélange des éléments, ou plus exactement du mélange des formes de ces éléments qui constituent le corps.”

⁸⁶³ SCG III, 42, 3: “Cum autem intellectus possibilis non possit intelligere substantias separatas, secundum eius opinionem, ut iam dictum est; intendit quod intelligemus per intellectum in habitu substantias separatas, in quantum intellectus agens, qui ab ipso ponitur substantia separata, fiet forma intellectus in habitus et nobis ipsis; ita quod per eum intelligemus sicut nunc intelligemus per intellectum possibilem.”

⁸⁶⁴ SCG III, 42, 7: “Cum igitur intellectus agens, secundum Alexandrum, ponatur esse quaedam substantia separata aeterna, impossibile erit quod intellectus agens fiat forma intellectus in habitu.” Since the agent intellect according to Alexander, is supposed to be an eternal separate substance, it will be impossible for the agent intellect to become the form of the habitual intellect.

⁸⁶⁵ SCG III, 42, 12: “Ratio etiam sua frivola omnino est.”

⁸⁶⁶ SCG III, 42, 11: “Erit ergo idem intelligere duorum intelligentium. Quod est impossibile.”

9.5.1.2.1.1.3 Avicenna

Before coming to the most popular of the philosophers in that Aristotelian tradition, we have the great Avicenna. His emanation scheme among other purposes shows the insurmountable distance between the finite and the infinite realm. As a result, knowledge is possible only when a higher intellect in the hierarchy communicates to the lower intellect, some intelligible forms by way of “impressions” that do not even remain an intrinsic part of the receiving intellect.⁸⁶⁷ Because in Avicenna the act of knowledge is not really immanent, he seems to go contrary to the Aristotelian principle according to which in the act of intellection, knowledge, the knower and the known are one and the same.⁸⁶⁸ The agent intellect as we have seen is the *dator formarum* that constitutes the forms of the lower world and the intelligible forms of human thought.⁸⁶⁹ Where what the rational intellect receives is only the “impressions” from the agent intellect, the vision of the separate substances is rendered difficult and at most, indirect. Aquinas answers that “the divine essence is not seen through a similitude”⁸⁷⁰ and secondly to say that God is seen *per similitudinem* is to say that the divine essence is not seen at all *quod est erroneum*.⁸⁷¹ This difficulty is due to the fact that the agent intellect in Avicennian conception remains separate from the rational soul and does not in any way permit any form of intrinsic union with the

⁸⁶⁷ Avicenna, *Avicenna's Psychology*, an English translation of Kitab Al-Najat, Book II, chapter VI, by F. Rahman, (Westport (Conn. : Hyperion Press Inc., 1981) p 35 : « the potential intelligence becomes actual only through an intelligence which is always actual, and that, when the potential intelligence makes some sort of contact with it, certain forms are actually imprinted on the former from the latter. Such forms are therefore acquired from without.” As Avicenna says in the *Métaphysique du Shifa*, III, 8, 144, 1-5, p 194: „Bien plus ce qui nécessairement existe d’elles pour nous ce sont les impressions qui les imitent et c’est cela notre science.” Cf also De Contenson, P. M., “Avicennisme Latin et Vision de Dieu au Début du XIIIe Siècle, » p. 56 : « C’est précisément par l’action de l’intellect agent que les « formes », dématérialisées par lui et émanant de lui, sont « imprimées » dans l’âme rationnelle. »

⁸⁶⁸ Aristotle, *De Anima* III, 4, 430a1-5: « For in the case of objects which involve no matter, what thinks and what is thought are identical; for speculative knowledge and its object are identical.” Cf P. M. De Contenson, « Avicennisme Latin et Vision de Dieu au Début du XIIIe Siècle, » p. 58 : « Ainsi l’âme ne reçoit imprimée en elle qu’une similitude de la forme immatérielle. Avicenne peut donc conclure : Ergo intellectus et intelligens et intellectum non sunt unum in nostris animabus. »

⁸⁶⁹ Steenberghen, Fernand Van, *La Philosophie au XIIIe Siècle*, p 367: pour Avicenne, “la doctrine du *dator formarum* est d’inspiration néoplatonicienne, elle fait partie intégrante de la théorie de l’émanation des Intelligences et des Sphères. » Cf Vivian Bolando, *Ideas in God According to Saint Thomas Aquinas*, p 181.

⁸⁷⁰ ST 1, q.12, a.2: « Ergo divina essentia non videtur per similitudines.” Cf Gilles Longevin, « Capax Dei: La Créature Intellectuelle et l’Intimité de Dieu, » p 30 « La vision immédiate de l’essence divine est à jamais irréconciliable avec toute réception d’une similitude de cette essence dans une intelligence créée. »

⁸⁷¹ ST 1, q.12, a.2 : « Unde dicere Deum per similitudinem videri, est dicere divinam essentiam non videri, quod est erroneum.”

rational soul.⁸⁷² Thus, Avicenna's *noétique* does not permit the direct vision of the separate substances. The most that such a vision of the separate substances could permit is imperfect.

Appliquée à la vision de Dieu par l'homme, même béatifié, cette *noétique*, dans l'interprétation la plus favorable, ne permet de connaître de Dieu qu'une *impressio* émanée de la déité et reçue dans l'esprit, cette *impressio* est donc, à double titre, distincte de la forme divine elle-même et inadéquate en tant que représentation.⁸⁷³

9.5.1.2.1.1.4 Averroes

Next in line is the *Commentator*, Averroes. To fill the gaps in the lapses of Alexander, he elevates the possible intellect to the same status as the agent intellect—that it “is incorruptible and separate in being from us, as also the agent intellect.”⁸⁷⁴ Aquinas takes issue with having the two powers as separate intellectual substances. Making the possible intellect a separate intellectual substance goes contrary to Aristotle who calls this intellect possible “in that it is able to become all things;”⁸⁷⁵ and says of the agent intellect that it should be a power in the human soul making things actually understood.⁸⁷⁶ In fact, having the two intellects as separate and as universal for all men constitute a real menace to the direct vision of the divine essence that should be the ultimate felicity of each individual man. One of the major consequences among others is that even the principle of beatific vision considered as the intellectual operation of the human soul in the afterlife, is threatened.⁸⁷⁷ As written by Trottmann:

Lui dénier un intellect individuel, c'est lui refuser son épanouissement ultime, lui ôter la possibilité d'atteindre sa fin dernière.⁸⁷⁸

⁸⁷² Steenberghen correctly reports that Avicenna professes “l'unicité de l'intellect actif ou du dator formarum. » Cf. Fernand Van Steenberghen, *La Philosophie au XIIIe Siècle*, p. 366.

⁸⁷³ De Contenson, P. M., « Avicennisme Latin et Vision de Dieu au Début du XIIIe Siècle, » p. 63.

⁸⁷⁴ SCG III, 43, 1: “ex hoc quod ponit intellectum possibilem incorruptibilem, et a nobis secundum esse separatum, sicut et intellectum agentem.”

⁸⁷⁵ Aristotle, *De anima* III, 5, 430a14; SCG III, 43, 4: “Unde non oportebit quod sit subiectum substantiarum separatarum: praecipue cum Aristoteles dicat quod intellectus possibilis est in quo est omnia fieri.”

⁸⁷⁶ Aristotle, *De anima* III, 5, 430a15; SCG III, 43, 5: “cui Aristoteles attribuit hanc operationem, scilicet facere intellecta in actu, quae est in nostra potestate.”

⁸⁷⁷ Maillard, Pierre-Yves, *La Vision de Dieu chez Thomas d'Aquin*, p. 218.

⁸⁷⁸ Trottmann, Christian, *La Vision Béatifique: des disputes Scolastiques à sa définition par Benoît XII*, (Rome: Ecole Française de Rome, 1995) p. 247.

However, Averroes thinks that the act of understanding takes place when the possible intellect, itself a separate intellect, conjoins with the agent intellect and other separate substances. Epistemologically, Aquinas thinks that Averroes's assumption is not tenable. This is because of our natural way of acquiring knowledge, in which we make use of images from material reality. These sense data are not powerful enough as to lead to a direct knowledge of the separate substances. Thus, in this life, we cannot understand separate substances and can never attain perfect happiness.

9.5.1.2.1.2 Perfect Happiness

Perfect happiness—*perfecta beatitudo*—according to Aquinas is beyond the resources of metaphysical knowledge and the natural order. It is the vision of the divine essence and involves a “full participation in divinity.”⁸⁷⁹ It is happiness that is promised in faith after this earthly life and which “consists in an elevation of man beyond the power of his nature to the vision of God himself.”⁸⁸⁰ How does this happen? The debate here is whether the *divinam essentiam* is seen *per similitudinem* or *per essentiam suam*. It is here that Aquinas talks of the innate desire of the human intellect that must be satisfied. Because no created intellect is capable of seeing God *per essentiam suam* by its own natural power, Aquinas reasons that God, a pure intelligible act becomes Himself in some manner, the form of the intellect in the beatific vision.⁸⁸¹ In the *Summa contra Gentiles*, Aquinas explains the vision such that “the divine essence must be both what is seen and that whereby it is seen.”⁸⁸² For a proper grasp of *perfecta beatitudo in patria*, there are three things that are needed: first that the divine essence be the *forma intellectus*—intelligible form of the created intellect;⁸⁸³ second is that the created intellect be elevated, that is, that it be given the capacity “by a more sublime disposition” to receive the divine species as its intelligible

⁸⁷⁹ ST III, q.1, a.2: “... ad plenam participationem divinitatis, quae vere est hominis beatitudo, et finis humanae vitae.”

⁸⁸⁰ Te Velde, Rudi, *Aquinas on God*, p 156.

⁸⁸¹ ST I, q.12, a.2, ad.3: “Ita divina essentia unitur intellectui creato ut intellectum in actu, per seipsam faciens intellectum in actu.”

⁸⁸² SCG III, 51, 2: “ut sit in tali visione divina essentia et quod videtur, et quo videtur. »

⁸⁸³ SCG III, 52, 3: “Videre autem substantiam Dei impossibile est nisi ipsa divina essentia sit forma intellectus qua intelligit.”

form.⁸⁸⁴ Third, this *dispositione sublimiori* that empowers the created intellect to receive the divine species as its intelligible form and thus unites it to the intellectual vision of the divine substance is called the light of glory—*lux gloriae*.⁸⁸⁵ How could the divine essence be the form of another being without being one nature with it? Is it even possible for the divine essence to be the form of a created intellect? Did Aquinas himself not recognize this difficulty and the impossibility of making the divine essence the form of another?⁸⁸⁶ Aquinas thinks that the divine essence becomes “the form” of the created intellect in the sense that as the active principle, it not only perfects the created intellect for the act of understanding,⁸⁸⁷ but also enables it to participate in the divine likeness.⁸⁸⁸ Thomas Aquinas will have to resort to the Aristotelian principle of hylemorphism as interpreted by Averroes. But before this, he explains that a self-subsistent being that is pure form can also be the form of another provided that it is a self-subsistence that can be participated by that other being.⁸⁸⁹ Among intelligible substances, it is only the divine essence that is pure form while others are “possessors of a form in some subject.”⁸⁹⁰ It is not to be lost to us that whatever is not its own being, has its being received from another and thus composed. By the purity of its form, the divine essence alone has the capacity to become the intelligible form through which the rational intellect understands, in such a manner that they become one in the act of understanding.⁸⁹¹ Another reason is that the created intellect by its intellectual nature is even more disposed to receive the divine intellectual form, though this disposition does in no

⁸⁸⁴ SCG III, 53, 3: “Ad hoc igitur quod essentia divina fiat intelligibilis species alicuius intellectus creati, quod requiritur ad hoc quod divina substantia videatur, necesse est quod intellectus creatus aliqua dispositione sublimiori ad hoc elevetur.” « So, in order that the divine essence may become the intelligible species for a created intellect ... it is necessary for the created intellect to be elevated for this purpose by a more sublime disposition.”

⁸⁸⁵ SCG III, 53, 6: “Illa igitur dispositio qua intellectus creatus ad intellectualem divinae substantiae visionem extollitur, congrue *lux gloriae* dicitur: non propter hoc quod faciat intelligibile in actu, sicut lux intellectus agentis; sed per hoc quod facit intellectum potentem actu intelligere.” Cf ST 1, q.12, a.2: “Dicendum ergo quod ad videndum Dei essentiam requiritur aliqua similitudo ex parte visivae potentiae, scilicet lumen gloriae, confortans intellectum ad videndum Deum.” There are three characteristics of this *lumen gloriae*. Thomas mentions that it is a “created light,” that it acts like a ‘*habitus*,’ and that it renders the rational creature possessing it “*deiforme*.” Cf ST 1, q.12, a.2, ad.1 & 3. For a further elaboration on these characteristics, see Jean-Pierre Torrell, *Recherches Thomasiennes*, pp. 186-188; Christian Trottmann, *La Vision Béatifique: des disputes Scolastiques à sa définition par Benoît XII*, pp 315-317.

⁸⁸⁶ SCG III, 51, 3: «sit quod Deus nullius potest esse forma. »

⁸⁸⁷ SCG III, 51, 4: « Species autem intelligibilis, unita intellectui, non constituit aliquam naturam, sed perficit ipsum ad intelligendum: quod perfectioni divinae essentiae non repugnant. »

⁸⁸⁸ SCG III, 53, 2: “Impossibile est igitur quod ipsa essentia fiat intelligibilis forma alicuius intellectus creati, nisi per hoc quod aliquam divinam similitudinem intellectus creatus participat.”

⁸⁸⁹ SCG III, 51, 4: « Illud autem quod sic est subsistens ut tamen solum sit forma, potest alterius esse forma, dummodo esse suum sit tale quod ab aliquo alio participari possit... »

⁸⁹⁰ SCG III, 51, 4: “Alia igitur intelligibilia subsistentia sunt non ut pura forma in genere intelligibilium, sed ut formam in subiecto aliquo habentes...”

⁸⁹¹ *De ver.* q.8, a.1: “ex essentia divina et intellectu creato fit unum in intelligendo. »

way make the created intellect commensurate to God.⁸⁹² Though both created and divine intellects are immaterial and of intellectual nature, they do not have the same mode of being. Thus the importance of “elevating it” that is, the created intellect beyond its natural powers and making it fit to receive the divine intellectual form. We assume that there are two principles underlying this whole theory of beatific vision. One is the Thomistic metaphysical principle of participation and the other is the Aristotelian metaphysical principle of hylemorphism. We have seen Aquinas mentioning “participation” here and there in his struggle to explain how the divine essence could be the form of a created intellect. We want to pay a little attention to this principle before examining that of hylemorphism.

In his *Commentary on the De Hebdomads of Boethius*, Aquinas describes participation to mean “*partem capere*—taking a part,” that is, “when something receives in a particular way what pertains to another, it is generally said to participate in it.”⁸⁹³ In Thomistic language, “*partem capere*” means to have in a limited way what exists in a perfect way. An effect is said to participate in its cause when it is not equal to the perfection of its cause.⁸⁹⁴ This means that the cause of a thing is always found in its effect not as its part, but evidently as its ontological cause.⁸⁹⁵ We note a relation of *give* and *receive* in every participational structure as conceived by Thomas Aquinas. Whatever possesses some perfection in fullness gives as it were “a part” of what belongs to it to the *receiver* who receives it partially and according to the disposition of its mode.⁸⁹⁶ The perfection which is participated is not a mere abstract quality or a likeness but a real perfection which the participant possesses in some finite but intimate way and is thus said to be “like” the cause. The Latin has two different words that permit Aquinas in his distinctions: *simile* and *similitudo*. They both come from the same root but, they do not mean exactly the same things and are in some cases used differently by Aquinas. To signify a real quality or form taken from the parent object, Aquinas uses ‘*simile*.’ This signifies their agreement in form.⁸⁹⁷

⁸⁹² Cf Christian Trottman, *La Vision Béatifique : des disputes Scolastiques à sa définition par Benoît XII*, p 314.

⁸⁹³ *Expositio libri Boetii De ebdomadibus*, Lect. 2, lin.70-73: « Est autem participare quasi partem capere. Et ideo quando aliquid particulariter recipit id quod ad alterum pertinet universaliter, dicitur participare illud; »

⁸⁹⁴ *Exposition libri Boetii De ebdomadibus*, Lect.2, lin.80-83: « Et similiter etiam effectus dicitur participare suam causam, et precipue quando non adaequat virtutem suae causae ; »

⁸⁹⁵ SCG I, 26, 13: «Quartum etiam quod eos ad hoc inducere potuit, est modum loquendi quo dicimus Deum *in omnibus rebus esse*: non intelligentes quod non sic est in rebus quasi aliquid rei, sed sicut rei causa quae nullo modo suo effectui deest.”

⁸⁹⁶ SCG I, 32, 6: “nam omne quod participatur determinatur ad modum participate, et sic partialiter habetur et non secundum omnem perfectionis modum.”

⁸⁹⁷ ST 1, q.4, a.3, obj.3: “similia dicuntur quae convenient in forma.”

Understood in this sense, *simile* is what is found in that real causal ontological union between a cause and its effect. Let's not forget that since everything acts according to the manner of its form, the effect must in some way resemble the *formae agentis*. Aquinas gives three ways according to which a thing can be said to be "like" another. In the first way, things are said to be "alike" when there is a communication of form "according to the same meaning, and according to the same mode ... and this is the most perfect likeness."⁸⁹⁸ Two things equally white are said to be alike in whiteness. The second type is what interests us since here, things are said to be alike "which communicate in form according to the same meaning, though not according to the same mode, but according to more or less, as something less white is said to be like another thing more white; and this is imperfect likeness."⁸⁹⁹ Intellectual substances may have the same *ratio* but not according to the same mode. Created intellectual substances may be said to be "like" God but in an imperfect way. It is this communication of form though not according to the same mode, that would permit the created intellect to enter into a real union with the divine essence and allow the divine essence to be in the *seer* in an act of beatific vision.

However, in the act of vision involving corporeal substances, there cannot be any real union between the seeing subject and its object. The power of sight sees only a *similitudo* of its object. Aquinas gives the example of a stone which, being an object seen cannot be by its essence in the eye of the seer. It can be present in the seer only by its likeness.⁹⁰⁰ In other words, *similitudo* signifies more of a medium through which an action is carried out. The vision that takes place by similitudes is an indirect vision. For Aquinas, when a thing is said to be 'like' something else, it means that it possesses in a diminished way "a quality or form of that thing," on the basis of which it is said to be the *similitudo* of what is possessed.⁹⁰¹ The eminent philosopher of

⁸⁹⁸ ST 1, q.4, a.3: "Quaedam enim dicuntur similia, quae communicant in eadem forma secundum eandem rationem et secundum eundem modum ... et haec est perfectissima similitudo." Translation is ours.

⁸⁹⁹ ST 1, q.4, a.3: "Alio modo dicuntur similia, quae communicant in forma secundum eandem rationem, et non secundum eundem modum, sed secundum magis et minus; ut minus album dicitur simile magis albo. Et haec est similitudo imperfecta. » Translation is ours.

⁹⁰⁰ ST 1, q.12, a.2: "Et in rebus quidem corporalibus, apparet quod res visa non potest esse in vidente per suam essentiam, sed solum per suam similitudinem, sicut similitudo lapidis est in oculo, per quam fit visio in actu, non autem ipsa substantia lapidis."

⁹⁰¹ SCG I, 29, 5: «Simile enim alicui dicitur quod eius possidet qualitatem vel formam. Quia igitur id quod in Deo perfecte est, in rebus aliis per quandam deficientem participationem invenitur, illud secundum quod similitudo attenditur, Dei quidem simpliciter est, non autem creaturae. Et sic creatura habet quod Dei est: unde et Deo recte similis dicitur-- For that is called *like* something which possesses a quality or form of that thing. since then that which is found in God perfectly is found in other things according to a certain diminished participation, the basis on

participation, Cornelio Fabro describes the action of the participated perfection as a “descent,” or “a fall” to the level of the participant.

“Participer” n’est plus un pur synonyme de “suscipere,” mais comporte une « descente » de la formalité ou une « chute » dans le participant de la perfection participée, et donc une « différence ontologique » et une dépendance réelle du participant par rapport au participé dans la même sphère et selon le mode de la participation elle-même.⁹⁰²

Thus, in the beatific vision where the divine essence is required to be the *form* by which the created intellect understands, Aquinas means that the created intellect participates in the divine essence in such a way that the latter “falls” to a lower level and makes a “gift” to the created intellect. Having received this gift, the created intellect becomes activated or elevated beyond its natural power by the *lumen gloriae* to see the divine essence.⁹⁰³ It is by so doing that in the act of beatific vision, the created intellect and the divine essence exist in a participational union of potency to act where potency here is devoid of materiality. Without this participation in the divine likeness, the substance of God may not be seen.⁹⁰⁴

The second principle is the Aristotelian principle of hylemorphism according to which the most perfect in a composite relates to the less perfect as form to matter where form as the principle of being and agent, makes things to be in act.⁹⁰⁵ Aquinas is being faithful to the structure he found in the *Long Commentary on the De Anima* by Averroes.

which the likeness is observed belongs to God absolutely, but not to the creature. Thus, the creature has what belongs to God and, consequently is rightly said to be like God.”

⁹⁰² Fabro, C., *Participation et Causalité selon S. Thomas d'Aquin*, (Louvain : Publications Universitaires de Louvain, 1961) pp 271-272.

⁹⁰³ It is very clear what Aquinas takes the *lumen gloriae* to be: a disposition that makes the created intellect powerful enough to understand the divine essence, (SCG III, 53, 6); “it does not unite the created intellect with God in the act of being but only in the act of understanding” (SCG III, 54, 9); it is a “created light” which acts like a “habitus” and renders the created intellect “deiforme.” (ST 1, q.12, a.2, ad.1 & 3) This is clearly against the reading by Prof. Richard C. Taylor who says: “Aquinas understands God’s very own Divine essence as the *lumen gloriae* that functions as that by which we understand (corresponding to the Agent Intellect or, better, the Agent Intellect and Material Intellect working together) and as also that very thing which is understood (corresponding to the abstracted intelligibles that come to exist in the Material Intellect).” Cf “Aquinas and the ‘Arabs’: Arabic/Islamic Philosophy in Thomas Aquinas's Conception of the Beatific Vision in his Commentary on the Sentences IV, 49, 2, 1” (2011), pp 19-20 <http://www.aquinasandthearabs.org> If Taylor is correct, then the vision of God is never direct and this is not the intention nor the teaching of Aquinas.

⁹⁰⁴ SCG III, 53, 2: «Haec igitur divinae similitudinis participatio necessaria est ad hoc quod Dei substantia videatur.»

⁹⁰⁵ SCG I, 26, 4: “forma enim dicitur esse principium essendi ; et similiter agens, quod facit aliqua esse actu. »

Besides, if any two factors are to be mutually united, so that one of them is formal and the other material, their union must be completed through action coming from the side of the formal factor, and not through the action of the one that is material. In fact, form is the principle of action, while matter is the principle of passion. For the created intellect to see God's substance, then, the divine essence itself must be joined as an intelligible form to the intellect, as we have proved.⁹⁰⁶

The language of form and matter is used by Aquinas to explain how the divine essence should be understood as the intelligible form of the created intellect. As a formal principle, it enables the created intellect to see the divine essence itself. It is good to remark that the divine essence does not see in the place of the created intellect. What it does is only to perfect the created intellect for the act of understanding. The first place where Aquinas applies this model is in his treatment of created intellectual substances like angels. Instead of talking of a composition of form and matter, he properly talks of a composition of act and potency where the intellectual substance is in potency to the being rendering it in act.⁹⁰⁷ For the created intellect to see the divine essence, it must be brought into act by the divine intelligible form and unite with this form in act of intellectual vision. It is this union of the divine intelligible form with the created intellect that brings the *naturale desiderium* in each man to its complete satisfaction. By the avoidance of vision *per similitudinem*, Aquinas tries to underline the real union which the created intellect has with God in the beatific vision.⁹⁰⁸

⁹⁰⁶ SCG III, 52, 4: « Si aliqua duo debeant ad invicem copulari quorum unum sit formale et aliud materiale, oportet quod copulatio eorum compleatur per actionem quae est ex parte eius quod est formale, non autem per actionem eius quod est materiale: forma enim est principium agendi, materia vero principium patiendi. Ad hoc autem quod intellectus creatus videat Dei substantiam, oportet quod ipsa divina essentia copuletur intellectui ut forma intelligibilis, sicut probatum est. » Compare this passage with that of Averroes in his *Long Commentary of Averroes on the De Anima*, book III, comm. 36, 499, 1.571-577.

⁹⁰⁷ SCG II, 53, 2: « In substantia autem intellectuali create inveniuntur duo: scilicet substantia ipsa; et esse eius, quod non est ipsa substantia, ut ostensum est. Ipsum autem esse est complementum substantiae existentis: unumquodque enim actu est per hoc quod esse habet. Relinquitur igitur quod in qualibet praedictarum substantiarum sit compositio actus et potentiae. »

⁹⁰⁸ Cf Olivier Bonnewijn, *La béatitude et les béatitudes : une approche thomiste de l'éthique*, (Roma : Pontificia Università Lateranense, 2001) p 169 : « La question 12 de la Prima Pars écarte d'emblée toute conception « intellectualiste » de la béatitude en montrant tout le poids de réalité de la communion avec Dieu dans la vision bienheureuse. »

For perfect happiness it is required that the intellect attain the essence of the first cause. It will have this perfection through union with God as its object, in whom alone the happiness of man consists ...⁹⁰⁹

It wouldn't be an exaggeration to say that if Aquinas has succeeded in his explanation of the beatific vision in the afterlife, it is thanks to the philosophical principles he has taken from mostly Alexander and Averroes.⁹¹⁰ Earlier he has given the impression that the latter were wrong in their thinking about the possibility of seeing the separate substances but it is with their help that he has given a Christian article of faith, a rational explanation.

C'est-à-dire que Thomas place lui-même au cœur de sa conception de la vision béatifique la pièce centrale d'un dispositif noétique intégralement philosophique que, par ailleurs, il entend et prétend démonter et détruire.⁹¹¹

Care must be taken however to note that unlike the noetics of Averroes where the Agent Intellect becomes somehow the "form for us" enabling us to know all the separate substances, in the Thomistic noetics, the perfect beatific vision is exclusively of the divine essence itself. Aquinas reasons that the divine essence is the only pure form that has the capacity of becoming the *forma intellectus* of a created intellect in an act of intellectual union. As earlier seen in man's knowledge of God, the vision of the divine essence that man has is not exhaustive. How? Aquinas distinguishes between seeing and comprehending. "Something is truly comprehended when it is attained by the intellect according to the whole range (*totus ratio*) of its knowability."⁹¹² Whatever is known is known according to the mode of the knower. Where the created intellect is aided by supernatural power to know the essence of God, this knowledge according to Aquinas, cannot be exhaustive since the created intellect knows according to its

⁹⁰⁹ ST I-II, q.3, a.8: "Ad perfectam igitur beatitudinem requiritur quod intellectus pertingat ad ipsam essentiam primae causae. Et sic perfectionem suam habebit per unionem ad Deum sicut ad objectum, in quo solo beatitudo hominis consistit ..."

⁹¹⁰ Even the structural principle of hylemorphism is borrowed by Aquinas from Averroes. In the *Long Commentary on the De Anima*, Book 3, comm.36; paragraph 497, Averroes writes: "For with respect to every activity which has come to be from the gathering together of two different things, it is necessarily the case that one of those two be as it were matter and instrument and the other be as it were form or agent. The intellect in us, therefore, is composed of the intellect which is in a positive disposition and the agent intellect, either in such a way that the propositions are as it were matter and the agent intellect is as it were form, or in such a way that the propositions are as it were the instrument and the agent intellect is as it were the efficient cause. For the disposition is similar in this case."

⁹¹¹ Brenet, Jean-Baptiste, « Vision béatifique et séparation de l'intellect au début du XIVe siècle, » p 329.

⁹¹² Rocca, Gregory P., *Speaking the Incomprehensible God*, p 42.

limited mode, and moreover, the *lumen gloriae* that elevates the created intellect beyond its natural power, is itself a created *habitus* that is not infinite. It is only God that has an exhaustive knowledge of His essence since He knows Himself in every aspect that He is infinitely knowable.

The ultimate good and happiness of man consist in the contemplation of God⁹¹³ and the fullness of this contemplation can be achieved only in the afterlife.⁹¹⁴ This is what Aquinas calls perfect happiness, the beatific vision. It is this ultimate good that justifies according to Aquinas, man's suffering in this life. It is Aquinas's own version of the morally sufficient reason argument by the moderns.

Happiness consists in an operation of the speculative rather than of the practical intellect. This is evident for three reasons. First because if man's happiness is an operation, it must needs be man's highest operation. Now man's highest operation is that of his highest power in respect of its highest object and his highest power is the intellect, whose highest object is the Divine Good, which is the object, not of the practical but of the speculative intellect. Consequently happiness consists principally in such an operation, viz: in the contemplation of Divine things.⁹¹⁵

For the mind to achieve perfect "beatific vision," Aquinas thinks and we have seen his explication, that the mind must be divinely aided by being infused with a sublime disposition to know God's essence. Maimonides's intellectualism could not reach to this level and that explains why his idea of ultimate felicity stops at man's intellect remaining in a state of "intense pleasure" of perhaps, the knowledge of the intelligibles.

We may reason that the benefits of the afterlife are not enough to justify human suffering in this world. But they do provide a kind of psychological boost that our sufferings would not be in vain. Just like the hope of health makes a cancer patient to accept the injection of poisonous

⁹¹³ SCG III, 37: "Quod ultima felicitas hominis consistit in contemplatione Dei."

⁹¹⁴ SCG III, 48: "Quod ultima hominis felicitas non sit in hac vita."

⁹¹⁵ ST 1-11, q.3, a.5: "Beatitudo magis consistit in operatione speculativi intellectus quam practici. Quod patet ex tribus. Primo quidem, ex hoc quod, si beatitudo hominis est operatio, oportet quod sit optima operatio hominis. Optima autem operatio hominis est quae est optimae potentiae respectu optimi obiecti. Optima autem potentia est intellectus, cuius optimum obiectum est bonum divinum, quod quidem non est obiectum practici intellectus, sed speculativi. »

chemicals into her body by way of chemotherapy,⁹¹⁶ the hope of beatific union with God in the afterlife explains the sufferings of this present life. In a vague allusion to his hope in the resurrection, and in firm belief that his *naturale desiderium* will not be in vain, Job says: “And I will be surrounded by my own hide again and in my flesh I will see God, Whom I myself am going to see and my eyes are going to behold, and no one else. This hope of mine is stored up in my breast.”⁹¹⁷ Interpreting the very last sentence, Aquinas remarks that it is as if Job were saying:

My hope is not in the earthly things which you vainly promise but in the future glory of resurrection. Now he expressly says *is stored up in my breast* to show that he had this hope concealed not only in words but in his heart, not doubtful but most firm, not as if it were cheap but as if it were most precious, for what is concealed in the breast is held in secret, is firmly preserved, and is deemed dear.⁹¹⁸

Job’s reference to “seeing God” is no doubt understood by Aquinas as a statement of Job’s hope of the beatific vision. Aquinas’s conviction is based on his values and metaphysical world view that the ultimate end of man does not depend on material things but on the ability of his intellectual essence to contemplate God, and to unite with Him eternally. Unlike Maimonides who bases ultimate felicity according to the strength of one’s intellectual capacity,⁹¹⁹ Aquinas teaches that every human mind irrespective of his intellectual ability can see God. There are two major reasons for which Aquinas is reinterpreting Maimonides in this all important issue: one is the natural desire of every intellect to see God.⁹²⁰ The other reason is that seeing God does not depend on one’s natural intellectual resources but on the action of God. Aquinas phrases his response as if he has Maimonides in mind:

⁹¹⁶ Stump, Eleonore, *Aquinas*, (New York: Routledge, 2003), p 470.

⁹¹⁷ Job 19:26-27.

⁹¹⁸ *Super Job*, cap. 19, lin.341-349, p 117: “non est spes mea in terrenis quae vane promittitis, sed in futura resurrectionis gloria. Signanter autem dicit *reposita est in sinu meo*, ad ostendendum quod hanc spem non solum habebat in verbis sed in corde absconditam, non dubiam sed firmissimam, non quasi vilem sed quasi pretiosissimam: quod enim in sinu absconditur in occulto habetur et firmiter conservatur et carum reputatur.» Cf *The Literal Exposition on Job*, p 271.

⁹¹⁹ *Dux Neutrorum*, lib.I, cap.LIII, fol.20: “Omnis autem qui scit illum invenit gratiam, et est prope ipsum : qui autem ignorat consequitur eum ira eius, et est longe ab eo.» Cf *Guide I*, 54, p 123-24.

⁹²⁰ SCG III, 50, 6: «Sicut naturale desiderium inest omnibus intellectualibus naturis ad sciendum... Just as the natural desire to know is present in all intellectual natures.”

Since the created intellect is exalted to the vision of the divine substance by a certain supernatural light ... there is no created intellect so low in its nature that it cannot be elevated to this vision... Therefore, the varying level of the intellectual nature does not hinder the lowest member of such a nature from being able to be brought to this vision by the aforementioned light.⁹²¹

This is the vision that Job, accused by Maimonides of lacking in intelligence, finally achieves in the interpretation of Aquinas. This underlines that one does not have to be especially intelligent to achieve perfect happiness. Every creature created in the *imago dei*, has this *naturale desiderium* that is brought to fulfillment by the assistance of divine essence itself.

10.0 Evaluation and Conclusion

Finally, we observe that the chief obstacle to Aquinas's interpretation is not his reconciliation of revelation and reason but, his attempt to force the truths of Christian revelation fit into the logics of Aristotelian reasoning. This obstacle is seen in St. Thomas's uneasiness with trying to reconcile the subsistent nature of the body-soul composite in the acquisition of knowledge, and on the other hand, his attempt at upholding the superior non-sensory based knowledge. Aquinas tries to diffuse this dilemma by agreeing to different modes of being of the soul: the material and the immaterial mode:

To solve this difficulty we must consider that as nothing acts except as it is actual, the mode of action in every agent follows from its mode of existence. Now the soul has one

⁹²¹ SCG III, 57, 1-2: "Cum autem ad visionem divinae substantiae intellectus creatus quodam supernaturali lumine sublimetur...non est aliquis intellectus creatus ita secundum suam naturam infimus, qui non ad hanc visionem possit elevari ... Diversus ergo gradus naturae intellectualis non impedit quin infimum in tali natura ad illam visionem perducere possit praedicto lumine. »

mode of being when in the body, and another when apart from it, its nature remaining always the same.⁹²²

In the material mode, that is, when united to the body, the soul turns to corporeal phantasms for its acquisition of knowledge; when it is separated from the body, the soul has a mode of understanding by turning to simply intelligible objects as is proper to other separate substances. Aquinas's major positive is the avoidance of two extremes:⁹²³ one is 'theological materialism' according to which God's providence consists in material reward for virtue and punishment for vice. Against this, Aquinas posits the beatific vision of God. The other extreme is pure Aristotelianism which denies creation, particular providence and resurrection. By his metaphysics of *esse*, supported by the metaphysical vision that is Christian, Aquinas proves the importance of creation and God's ontological presence in his creation through providence. By this interpretation, Aquinas neither condemns nor rejects Maimonides, but completes and appreciates him.

The place of the *lumen gloriae* in the noetics of beatific vision raises some unanswered questions. Because it is a created *habitus* that is not acquired, critiques reason that in *perfecta beatitudo in patria*, man's participation is only passive since the power that elevates him to such union is infused from above.⁹²⁴ Others argue that Aquinas saved the agent intellect from the radicalisms of Avicenna and Averroes only to divest it of its function, and render it, in an act of beatific vision, into a mere redundant component of the rational soul. This is because *lumen gloriae* seems to be doing what the active intellect is supposed to do. If as Aquinas says that the divine essence, in the act of beatific vision, becomes "what is seen and that whereby it is seen,"⁹²⁵ are we not to suspect the disappearance of the created intellect into God?

The Aristotelian principle of hylemorphism adopted to explain the beatific vision is not without its own problem. Where the subject and the object of knowledge become one entity in the act of

⁹²²ST I, q.89, a.1: "Et ideo ad hanc difficultatem tollendam, considerandum est quod, cum nihil operetur nisi inquantum est actu, modus operandi uniuscuiusque rei sequitur modum essendi ipsius. Habet autem anima alium modum essendi cum unitur corpori, et cum fuerit a corpore separata, manente tamen eadem animae natura."

⁹²³Yaffe, Martin D, «Interpretative Essay, » in *The Literal Exposition on Job*, p 6.

⁹²⁴Trottmann, Christian, *La Vision Béatifique*, p 318. There is similarity between this view of Aquinas and the infusion of divine providence that is the hallmark of Maimonides's thoughts.

⁹²⁵SCG III, 51, 2: « quod videtur et quo videtur. »

knowledge, it comes back to the same problem as above; the created intellect would no longer be distinct from the divine intellect.⁹²⁶

It is very evident that faith seems to be the driving force behind Aquinas's reasoning. In the case of the beatific vision, Aquinas makes it clear that no created being can see the divine essence without the supernatural help of God. Though he argues that man has a natural desire to see God and achieve happiness, Aquinas is at a difficulty to justify his appeal to the supernatural assistance for the actualization of what he calls a *desiderium naturale*. We are in agreement with the observation of Wohlman in comparison to the faith context of Maimonides:

Il est clair que Thomas discerne ici, dans l'hitoire de Job, une vérité en laquelle consiste la quintessence de la foi chrétienne...Mais il est sans doute nécessaire de considérer auparavant la totale étrangeté d'une telle position dans l'univers spirituel de Maïmonide.⁹²⁷

However hard it may be to rationally accept all that Aquinas seems to say, the basic undeniable metaphysical root holding the thomistic principles, is the transcendence of the divine essence that cannot be quidditatively known by any created substance. Thus, in order to accede to this vision of the divine essence, it is justifiable that it be by a supernatural power elevating the human intellect to union with itself. In his own way, Thomas Aquinas succeeds in shedding light to the darkness of Maimonides and the Arabic philosophers of the Peripatetic tradition especially Avicenna and Averroes, whose epistemological principles influenced by emanation could neither properly assure the individual acquisition of knowledge (Avicenna), individual immortality⁹²⁸ nor individual knowledge of the divine essence. By assuring the composite unity of the human soul in possession of the agent and possible intellect, Aquinas safeguards the status of the individual person in his acquisition of providence, knowledge, immortality and in his union with God in the beatific vision.

⁹²⁶ Trottmann, Christian, *La Vision Béatifique*, p 211.

⁹²⁷ Wohlman, Avital, *Maïmonide et Thomas d'Aquin : Un dialogue impossible*, p 89.

⁹²⁸ Avicenna holds individual immortality, but the separateness of the active intellect from the human rational soul, casts some doubt on the authenticity of this teaching. Aquinas and some in scholastic tradition hold this against Avicenna.

Aquinas's theory of creation cannot pass without getting some mention. This is because of the evident difficulties inherent in the concept of creation itself.⁹²⁹ Clavier examines four different types of definitions that do not sit well with the concept of creation. For example, we cannot say the following: “(a) l’agent créateur opère sur x, et x est créé. (b) le créateur donne l’existence à x. (c) Le créateur conduit x de la non-existence à l’existence. (d) le créateur produit l’existence de x.”⁹³⁰ Definition (a) above suggests the existence of a substrate upon which God exercises the act of creation. This is contrary to the idea of creation *ex nihilo*. In (b) above, to say that the Creator gives existence to x means that x already exists before the imposition of existence on it which is also absurd. Examining (c) above, we find a situation suggesting that x which is led from non-existence to existence, possesses non-existence as a property. As a result, Clavier asks how a non-existent thing could possess a property. Finally, (d) above also possesses a problem. If the Creator produces the existence of x, the question is to know from where comes the reality that is created. If it comes from the Creator, it means that it is only an emanation of what already existed in the Creator. If it is from nothing, we arrive at the eternal question: can anything come from nothing? Fortunately, we have treated some of these problems in our discussion of creation. The working definition which avoids all these problems is to define creation as Aquinas does: the “*productio totius esse*.”⁹³¹ *Esse* is the “nature” of God. To ask how this God could produce finite *ens* in possession of *esse*, is to inquire into the functioning of God’s essence. Not only that human language is incapable of expressing this knowledge, it is beyond what finite intelligence can know.

Whether defined as “production of *esse*,” or described as a “language of total dependence of creatures” on God, we note according to John Deck, some seemingly logical inconsistencies.⁹³² This difficulty arises from the description given by Aquinas himself while stating that every being, by whatever mode of its existence, is from God.⁹³³ God is the only *Ipsum Esse Subsistens*, and as such, every other being has its existence received from God. It is as if there is an essence—a “recipient” somewhere, waiting to receive *esse*; it is as if ‘essence’ is something

⁹²⁹ Clavier, Paul, “La création: une déclaration de dépendance, » dans Thierry-Dominique Humbrecht, éd., *Saint Thomas d’Aquin*, (Paris : Les Editions du Cerf, 2010) pp 476-491.

⁹³⁰ Clavier, Paul, “La création: une déclaration de dépendance, » p 478.

⁹³¹ ST 1a, q.45, a.4, ad.3: “the production of the whole being.”

⁹³² Deck, John N., « St. Thomas Aquinas and the Language of Total Dependence, » in Anthony Kenny, ed., *Aquinas: A Collection of Critical Essays*, (London-Melbourne: MacMillan, 1969), p 239.

⁹³³ ST 1, q.44, a.1 : « quod necesse est dicere omne quod quocumque modo est, a Deo esse. »

causeless in the creature.⁹³⁴ The dependence of the creature on God, it would seem, hinges on the fact of its reception of *esse* from God. That being the case, Deck asks whether the essence or substance of a creature is also dependent on God since Aquinas holds that “the substance of each and every thing, furthermore, belongs to it through itself and not through another.”⁹³⁵ In other words, does the substance of a thing also depend on God since it already exists without earlier receiving *esse*? Deck obviously accuses Aquinas of having an inconsistent account of the creature:

For the substance or essence of a created thing to be “to it through itself” is incompatible with the total dependence of the creature upon the Creator. The essence-existence composition must be taken, in the light of the three texts discussed, as a composition of the causeless with the caused. As such, it cannot be the composition of a creature, which is meant to be entirely, totally caused.⁹³⁶

In reply to Deck, we say that Aquinas does not begin his explanation of creation by positing two constituent principles of a finite nature. He defines creation as the “the production of the whole of being.” This means that whatever being is, it must have its explanation from an external cause. It does not mean the imposition of *esse* on an already existing “recipient” as Deck would want to present. The language of essence and *esse* acting as potency to act is a logical way of explaining a composite being. It is the *modus essendi* of finite things to be composed. Because *esse* is the principle of actuality in the composite, it is described as what comes in while the other principle, because it is like potency in relation to the *esse*, is described as a recipient of the act. We think rather that Thomas Aquinas, by such emphasis on *esse*, wishes to bring out “more forcefully the role of *esse* or the act of being within the ontological structure of any subsisting subject.”⁹³⁷ Thus explained, we do not think that Aquinas did commit a “fundamental metaphysical error”⁹³⁸ in his theory of creation conceived as a total dependence of creatures on God. We would rather think that Deck committed a fundamental metaphysical misunderstanding of the basic assumption of Aquinas’s theory of creation by understanding “essence” and the like, as independent of God’s

⁹³⁴ Deck, John N., « St. Thomas Aquinas and the Language of Total Dependence, » p 243.

⁹³⁵ SCG II, 52, 6 : « Substantia uniuscuiusque est ei per se et non per aliud. »

⁹³⁶ Deck, John N., « St. Thomas Aquinas and the Language of Total Dependence, » p 246.

⁹³⁷ Wippel, John F, *The Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas*, (Washington, D.C: Catholic University of America Press, 2000) p 251.

⁹³⁸ Deck, John N., « St. Thomas Aquinas and the Language of Total Dependence, » p 247.

creative activity. Deck would actually be likened to Avicenna who also conceived essence as something staying *à part entière* and upon which existence comes to be added. According to Aimé Forest:

Ainsi concevoir l'essence comme une réalité qui attendrait pour ainsi dire du dehors que l'existence vienne s'ajouter à elle, c'est un réalisme beaucoup trop simple à manier. Plaçons-nous maintenant dans le cas de l'essence réelle, il faut dire évidemment qu'une telle essence est créée au même titre que le sujet lui-même.⁹³⁹

Another thing that we must not lose sight of is the fact that Aquinas wanted to give a metaphysical explanation to the creatureliness of angelic substances that, being intelligences, are not made of matter.⁹⁴⁰ It is here that Aquinas conceives the essence as a potential principle doing the role that matter does in corporeal substances. Thus, though devoid of matter, angels are really distinct from God by the composition that is in them, of essence and *esse*. God is the only Creator and nothing pre-exists His action of creation.

11.0 RECENT INTERPRETATIONS OF THE BOOK OF JOB:

The first impression that comes to mind on seeing our interest in the *Book of Job* is to ask the importance of a book which presents, not a historical reality, but a fictional account of innocent suffering very much outside of the current problems of social justice and natural disasters. The *Book of Job* could be interpreted at very different levels: esthetic, psychological, philosophical and social or theological, where the last encompasses the others.⁹⁴¹ We shall try to examine some authors that have given not only a philosophical interpretation of the book of Job; but also

⁹³⁹ Forest, A, *La structure métaphysique du concret selon saint Thomas d'Aquin*, (Paris : Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 1956) p 154.

⁹⁴⁰ Cf Sentis, Laurent, *Saint Thomas d'Aquin et le Mal*, (Paris : Editions Beauchesne, 1992) p 72 : « Faudrait-il alors aller jusqu'à dire que l'ange est acte pur dépourvu de toute potentialité ? Thomas répond en utilisant la notion d'essence de façon nouvelle et originale. Il y a dans l'ange une composition entre l'être et l'essence qui permet de trouver en lui puissance et acte. Dans cette perspective, l'être est l'acte ultime de l'étant. »

⁹⁴¹ Chéreau, Georgette, *Job et le mystère de Dieu : un chemin d'espérance*, (Paris : Lethielleux, 2006) p 234.

theological, psychological and spiritual (religious) interpretations as they provide a sound proof that the *Book of Job* cuts across centuries and across all fields of life and remains very much essential in the life of the contemporary man. Our examination of the recent books on the story of Job does not pretend to be exhaustive. Our attempt will be to show how the contemporary scholars, different from our medieval authors, try to interpret this *religious classic* and the message such holds for the realities of the contemporary man.

11.1 Françoise Mies : « Le Livre de Job: de l'excès du mal à l'altérité du mal? »

Mies makes a very interesting reading of the *Book of Job*.⁹⁴² She details the principal questions that the *Book of Job* asks and for which answers are required: what is the sense of the suffering of the innocent? Is there any possibility of a disinterested faith in God? How do we talk of God from the suffering of the innocent?⁹⁴³ None of these questions was answered by Mies in this interpretation and she did not even set out to answer them. In her study on the contrary, she talks about the author's intention to exteriorize evil in the form of Satan in order to take away from God, the direct responsibility for evil and also to avoid:

L'hypothèse ruineuse du dualisme ontologique opposant deux puissances rivales de même niveau: le satan fait effectivement partie de la cour de Yhwh et lui est donc soumis.⁹⁴⁴

This exteriorizing of evil is also seen in the genesis account of the fall where Satan is presented with the responsibility of bringing about the fall of man. Unlike in the genesis account, Job is ignorant of the presence of this exteriorized evil and his sufferings do not even point to this exteriority.⁹⁴⁵ However, the evil suffered by Job, a just and righteous man, is seen as excessive in all its ramifications. From the exteriority and excess of this evil, Mies leads us gradually to the point she wants to make: the otherness of evil (*altérité du mal*), a point which would constitute

⁹⁴² Mies, Françoise, « Le Livre de Job : de l'excès du mal à l'altérité du mal ? » *Nouvelle Revue Théologique* 121, (1999) pp 177-196 : cf also « Job et l'altérité du mal » dans Myriam Watthee-Delmonte et Paul-Augustin Deproost, éds., *Imaginaire du Mal*, (Paris : Editions du Cerf, 2000) pp 141-150 ;

⁹⁴³ Ibid. p 179.

⁹⁴⁴ Ibid. p 183.

⁹⁴⁵ Ibid. p 187 : « Le mal souffert par Job, le mal comme souffrance n'est donc pas ici l'altérité ... il n'autorise même aucune extériorité. »

the foundation of her interpretation of this book. She asks whether the figure of Satan also approximates, for Job, to otherness. In the sense where it is employed here, Satan designates not the figure of devil but a function, that of the accuser. This interpretation makes evil a non-substance and negates the figure of Satan as otherness. Inasmuch as the book does not present evil as otherness, the reason for Job's suffering must be sought elsewhere.

Mies proposes that Job finds the reason for his suffering neither in the otherness of evil nor in the exteriority of evil. The reason for Job's suffering is to be found in Job's relation with God. This God is not an agent of action but simply an existence made of presence and of absence:

C'est donc bien sa relation avec Dieu qui le fait souffrir, une relation qui est devenue un combat, mais qui n'est pas nécessairement un combat contre le mal, qui n'est pas nécessairement une lutte contre le Dieu méchant, contre l'agent de ses malheurs.⁹⁴⁶

Hence it is God that is responsible for the suffering of Job not as the causative agent of this suffering but as the object of Job's love and attachment.⁹⁴⁷ In the final analysis, Job must accept the otherness of God as the expression of the divine liberty. By so doing, Mies refuses the reading of the prologue which exonerates God of all direct responsibility for Job's suffering.⁹⁴⁸

11.2 Françoise Mies: *L'Espérance de Job*

This is a very important work in modern scholarship on Job. Mies conceives the *Book of Job* as a dramatic work of poetry⁹⁴⁹ whose major protagonist never actually existed. The fictional character of Job however, does not negate the existential albeit philosophical and ontological reference of the book today. Hope is the major message that Mies reads from the character of Job. If Job in the midst of his inexplicable suffering, still managed to hope in a better future, then

⁹⁴⁶ Ibid. p 193.

⁹⁴⁷ It is quite necessary to note that for Mies, « C'est la vulnérabilité de l'attachement qui engendre la souffrance, mais aussi la transcendance, la résistance et l'appel de l'autre, de Dieu. » Cf « Le Livre de Job : de l'excès du mal à l'altérité du mal ? » p 194.

⁹⁴⁸ Mies observes as follows : « Certes, Yhwh semble permettre au satan de porter atteinte à Job et cette idée de permission du mal, et donc de responsabilité indirecte de Dieu, nous est intolérable. » Cf « Le Livre de Job : de l'excès du mal à l'altérité du mal ? » p 183.

⁹⁴⁹ Mies, Françoise, *L'Espérance de Job*, (Leuven: University Press, 2006) p 210 : « Je tiens le livre de Job pour un drame. » Cf also p 237.

nothing is lost for the world and nothing is lost for anyone.⁹⁵⁰ Because she attacks this book from the point of view of anthropological and theological hermeneutics, Mies takes the pains to define her terms and to establish their field. The whole issue of the semantics, symbols and dramatics of hope in the book of Job, to which the author dedicated almost half of her 653paged work, would not come into our enquiry. We go into examining her interpretation of the book of Job and how hope in its double axis of time and relation leads man into the acceptance of God as mystery even beyond what we would consider as the problem of evil.

Hope is constituted of two axis: temporal and relational axis. Briefly speaking, it is temporal when it engages with the future, that is, with time. Mies describes it as a movement of the soul or being towards a future good that mobilizes the desire in a judgment of probability.⁹⁵¹ What is hoped for may or may not be obtained. Hope is relational when it is based on the other as an object of confidence and trust, as an object of dialogue. “*L’espérance est un “espérer en”: en toi, en Dieu, en l’homme.*”⁹⁵² For this hope to be truly relational and have the dimension of a dialogue, it must be expressed by acts of language. What constitutes this act of language is not just the fact of speaking, but the fact of “speaking to” somebody or “being spoken to” by someone else.⁹⁵³ In this exchange is found confidence on which is based the relational dimension of hope.

But in relation to his friends who had come to console him, Job quickly found out that his hope on them is misplaced and that his dialogue with them is without any fruit.⁹⁵⁴ Instead of listening to Job to understand his suffering, they accused Job of offending God, hence the pains of suffering. On the contrary, it is in God that Job’s hope is fulfilled:

D’abord et surtout, la réponse de YHWH atteste que l’espérance de Job n’était pas illusion: l’acte de s’adresser à Dieu postulait implicitement que Dieu existe, qu’il est

⁹⁵⁰ Mies, Françoise, *L’Espérance de Job*, pp 5- 6 : « J’ai donc commencé cette étude avec l’idée que si Job espère dans la pire situation qui se puisse imaginer, alors rien n’est perdu pour notre monde et rien n’est perdu pour personne. »

⁹⁵¹ Ibid. p 7 : « De manière plus précise, selon l’axe temporel, l’espérance peut être définie comme une tension de l’âme ou de l’être vers un bien futur, qui mobilise le désir et s’accompagne d’un jugement de probabilité. »

⁹⁵² Ibid. Cf ID., « Est-il Sage d’Espérer en Dieu ? L’énigme de Job » in Françoise Mies, éd., *Toute la sagesse du monde*, (Namur : Presses Universitaires de Namur, 1999) p 391.

⁹⁵³ Mies, Françoise, *L’Espérance de Job*, p 265 : « Parler n’est pas en soi un acte d’espérer. Mais « parler à » témoigne d’une espérance en acte ... Ce *dire à* exprime cette confiance minimale au fondement de l’espérance relationnelle. »

⁹⁵⁴ Ibid. p 298.

présent tout au long de l'épreuve, écoute, est capable et veut répondre; que le silence de Dieu continu et récurrent, ne signifiait pas pour autant son absence.⁹⁵⁵

When we come to hope in its temporal axis, temporal not in the sense of linear or homogenous, we have come to the central point of Mies's interpretation of Job. There are two special moments in this temporal axis: the manifestation *au présent*—in the act of waiting and of hoping; and the verification *a posteriori* of hope fulfilled or unrealized.⁹⁵⁶ Mies then applies this distinction to the book of Job.

The events in the life of Job have not been homogenous. In the beginning, he is described as a faithful and righteous man, abundantly blessed by God with children, riches and wealth. He enjoyed a long period of stability until suddenly his world came tumbling down due to the wager between Satan and God. This is what opened up the moment of pain and suffering, of waiting, of discouragement, and of hope in silence and in language. The experience of Job is divided into three stages of his life: the prologue (1, 1-12) entitled the first history of Job consists of his initial state of happiness and the sudden interruption by trials (1, 13-2, 10); the second history is that of fully fledged suffering (2, 11-37, 24); and finally third is the history of Job's restoration (42, 10-17).⁹⁵⁷ In each of these stages of Job's life, the author tries to find the instances of Job's hope and comes to the observation that Job's hope is neither in the future as a restoration of the past, nor in the future as bettering the conditions of his present life. Job's hope in the future is inexorably tied to a positive relation he must have with God and thus:

L'axe temporel de l'espérance serait ainsi dépendant de l'axe relationnel.⁹⁵⁸

This positive relation with God holds Job's hope of seeing God (Job 19, 26) and thus disproves the friend's theological theory of temporal retribution.⁹⁵⁹ Unlike the medieval authors like Aquinas, who would read into this Job's hope the idea of resurrection, Mies observes that this

⁹⁵⁵ Ibid. p 289.

⁹⁵⁶ Ibid. p 302 : « L'espérance, dans sa dimension temporelle, peut être appréhendée à deux moments distincts : au moment de l'acte d'espérer, au présent, et à un moment ultérieur, au moment de la vérification de l'espérance, quand elle s'avère illusoire ou exaucée. »

⁹⁵⁷ Ibid. p 304.

⁹⁵⁸ Ibid. p 320.

⁹⁵⁹ Cf Mies, Françoise, « Est-il Sage d'Espérer en Dieu ? » p 396 : « La théorie de la rétribution est un rapport de causalité et de proportionnalité entre mal et malheur, entre bien et bonheur ; le malheur est le châtement de la faute ; le bonheur est la récompense du mérite. Cette rationalisation du mal et du bien implique un tiers jugeant qui sanctionne les actions et leur proportionne châtements et récompenses : Dieu. »

hope of seeing God “*s’élève indépendamment de toute idée de résurrection, idée anachronique pour le livre.*”⁹⁶⁰ Job’s only true hope is that of meeting “face to face” with God.

The revelation of God to Job is a validation of Job’s hope which has lasted all through his years of suffering. By reminding Job of his creaturely condition, temporal limits of knowledge and power, Job is opened to the dimensions of the world.⁹⁶¹ In the revelation, Job’s hope is fulfilled: he hears and sees God. (*Je t’ai entendu d’audition d’oreille [oui-dire?], Et maintenant mon œil t’a vu* (42,5). Job now has a different knowledge of God and has become a different person. This profound change in Job is attributed to his personal experience of hearing and seeing God. What is the actual nature of this vision? Is it intellectual, imaginary, prophetic or beatific? One certainty is the novelty and the personal character of the vision, the type that Job had not had before, but the content and nature of this vision rests an enigma that interpreters have not been able to solve. Mies quickly rejects an Augustinian-influenced-thesis of an interior vision in the order of beatific contemplation because, according to her:

Rien dans le texte n’exprime le caractère intérieur de sa vision, mais la mention des yeux n’est pas une objection puisque “voir de ses yeux,” en hébreu, insiste non sur le caractère physique de la vision mais sur son caractère personnel.⁹⁶²

In the final analysis, Mies calls the problem of interpreting this vision *un phénomène littéraire*, where in a dramatic mode, the reader and the character of the drama swaps their position such that what the reader knows of the personal experiences of the character, is what the latter tells by words. Job does not give details of his encounter with God and the interpreter is forced thus to enter into the hope of the vision-the final reunion with God.⁹⁶³ Unlike the commentators who criticize the revelation for its seeming failure to provide solutions to Job’s suffering, God’s response consoles Job and fulfills his hope. In a stroke of genius, Mies observes that the above contradictory attitude is because response is relational while solution is not. The commentators have not entered into the unique relation that Job has with God. As spectators, it is only the external action that we see and never the interior dispositions of the actor. And hence concludes Mies:

⁹⁶⁰ Mies, Françoise, *L’Espérance de Job*, p 372.

⁹⁶¹ Ibid. p 400.

⁹⁶² Ibid. p 415.

⁹⁶³ Ibid. p 416.

Cette rencontre entre Job et son Dieu nous reste donc a fortiori mystérieuse, mais c'est bien elle qui fait de la théophanie une réponse.⁹⁶⁴

The interpretation of Mies does not presume to provide any sort of solution to the said modern problem of evil. What the analytic philosophers do, in extracting the situation of Job from its context of a personal relation with God, complicates rather than solves the problem. The response to the problem of evil can very much be experienced in a personal relation with a transcendent God.

11.3 Jean Radermakers : **Dieu, Job Et La Sagesse**

We intend to think that Radermakers approaches his interpretation of the book of Job from a linguistic point of view, by looking to fashion an adequate language that would better describe the experience of suffering:

Quel langage sur Dieu pouvons-nous engager quand des hommes, des femmes, des enfants souffrent aussi atrocement de la haine de leurs semblables?⁹⁶⁵

The major question that the book of Job asks is, according to our author, whether man's suffering has any sense at all: a meaning, an orientation or even an end in itself? The author is not totally free of religious influence since he sees a lot that happens to Job as being part of God's will, who holds in His hands, man's destiny. The implication is that God is not under necessity to reward man for his fidelity by saving him from suffering and evil. That being so, the theory of *rétribution temporelle* theologically founded on God's perfect justice, and propounded by Job's three friends, is nullified. God does not reward or punish as we think, since He does not take note of man's actions.⁹⁶⁶

Like the earlier interpreters of this book, Radermakers accepts that Job does not question the existence or the goodness of God. These are taken for granted. But however, he thinks that Job in his intimate discussions with himself, attacks two major points: the creation and the providence

⁹⁶⁴ Ibid. p 425.

⁹⁶⁵ Radermakers, Jean, *Dieu, Job et la Sagesse*, (Bruxelles : Editions Lessius, 1998) p 7.

⁹⁶⁶ Ibid. p 108.

of God.⁹⁶⁷ Job questions the purpose of creation and the validity of God's providence over man when his experience is that of total disorder, and of vulnerability in the face of nature. For this, Job holds God responsible for afflicting him with suffering. And from the depths of his distress, it is still only in the same God that Job places his confidence to get him out of his troubles, even though, his earlier experience should have alerted him of the futility of doing so. Radermakers interprets this blind confidence of Job as opening up for us a mysterious way:

Au Cœur de la désespérance, Dieu est présent, et il nous mène, à travers cette mort de tout notre être, jusqu'à la révélation de son visage.⁹⁶⁸

Another of Job's friends, Elihu, makes an unexpected entrance into the discussion. He singles out two ways: the way of visions and the intercession of an angel—by which Job could eventually listen to the mysterious language of God and get to the acquisition of His message. One of the clearest lessons according to Elihu is God's transcendence and man's limited intelligence to understand His ways. These messages become very clear to Job in the revelation when God speaks in the whirlwind. God's providence which is never in doubt manifests in two distinct roles: *révéler le desseins divins et éduquer l'homme*.⁹⁶⁹ It is in these that the place of suffering comes to the fore. Elihu is interpreted by Radermaker as having suffering to be an educational and medicinal tool in the hands of providence. This agrees with the interpretation earlier done by Gregory the Great and Thomas Aquinas. In the present interpretation however, it is seen as God's way of inviting Job to conversion. This conversion does not consist in repentance from sin but conversion from his anthropomorphic ways of seeing God and understanding reality. Job, after God's response in the whirlwind, says:

Par ouï-dire, j'avais entendu (parler de) toi, mais maintenant mon œil t'a vu. C'est pourquoi je me rétracte et me repens sur poussière et cendre."⁹⁷⁰

Job acquires a new vision of the mind—*un regard nouveau*—that leads him to the rejection of his past attitude in relation to God. In this new optic, Job discovers God as “a mystery of life and

⁹⁶⁷ Ibid. p 75.

⁹⁶⁸ Ibid. p 137.

⁹⁶⁹ Ibid. p 224.

⁹⁷⁰ Job 42: 5-6 (I had heard of thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eyes had seen Thee, wherefore I abhor myself and repent of dust and ashes).

tenderness, and not only as an object of theological discourse or a distant presence.”⁹⁷¹ Job still suffers in his body but with the knowledge that he is not abandoned by His God whose love encompasses him even in the midst of his suffering.

11.4 Paul Ricoeur : Philosophie de la Volonté II Finitude et Culpabilité

Our interest in Ricoeur will be limited to his interpretation of the story of Job. It is an interpretation he does within his treatment of myths as he attempts to make sense of the Christian story of the fall erected into the doctrine of original sin.⁹⁷² The story of Job belongs to what he calls the “tragic element in Biblical theology.”⁹⁷³ The foundation of this interpretation rests on the conception of God as ethical. Because of this, the relation that this God holds with man is also seen as ethically binding in the sense that man must respect a contract he has with this God. The consequences keep on spiraling.

Cette “éthisation” de l’homme et de Dieu tend vers une vision morale du monde, selon laquelle l’Histoire est un tribunal, les plaisirs et les douleurs une rétribution, Dieu lui-même un juge. Du même coup la totalité de l’expérience humaine prend un caractère pénal.⁹⁷⁴

It is Ricoeur’s contention that the Jewish reflection on the experience of innocent suffering, shown in the book of Job, shatters this moral vision of the world and renders untenable the conversion of “the evil of scandal to the evil of fault.”⁹⁷⁵ When the demands of justice built on an ethical vision of the world, can no longer explain the presence of unjust suffering, suffering becomes an enigma.⁹⁷⁶ Job’s complaint becomes quickly an accusation against the ethical God of

⁹⁷¹ Radermakers, Jean, *Dieu, Job et la Sagesse*, p 255.

⁹⁷² Ricoeur, Paul, *Philosophie de la Volonté II Finitude et Culpabilité*, (Paris: Aubier, 1960, 1988) p 171: “C’est de ce péché que le mythe de la chute raconte l’entrée dans le monde; c’est lui que la spéculation sur le péché originel tente d’ériger en doctrine. » The work also exists in English edition : *The Symbolism of Evil*, translated from the French by Emerson Buchanan, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1967).

⁹⁷³ Ibid. p 448: “ce moment tragique de la théologie biblique... » Cf Ibid. p 314

⁹⁷⁴ Ibid. p 448.

⁹⁷⁵ Ibid. p 448: “Le livre de Job est le document bouleversant qui consigne cet éclatement de la vision morale du monde: la figure de Job témoigne de l’irréductibilité du mal de scandale au mal de faute, du moins à l’échelle de l’expérience humaine.”

⁹⁷⁶ Ibid. pp 448-449: “la souffrance surgit comme énigme dès lors que l’exigence de justice ne peut plus l’englober; cette énigme est le produit de la théologie éthique elle-même. »

justice. In order to justify this God and hold on to the ethical vision of the world, the business of theodicy is born. The attempts of Job's friends to justify this God in the face of the suffering of Job, fail to convince. "It at this point of doubt" according to Ricoeur, "that the possibility of a tragic vision looms up":

Cette possibilité naît de l'impossibilité de sauver la vision éthique par le secours d'aucune "preuve"; les amis de Job pourront bien mobiliser les péchés oubliés, les péchés inconnus, les péchés ancestraux, les péchés du peuple, pour rétablir l'équation de la souffrance et de la punition, Job refuse de colmater la brèche: son innocence et sa souffrance s'inscrivent en marge de toute vision éthique.⁹⁷⁷

It is a tragedy when the justifiable God becomes unjustifiable in the face of Job's claims of innocence. Job turns the table against his friends' theories: "I know as much as you; I yield to you in nothing. But I must speak to Shaddai; I wish to remonstrate with God...He may slay me: I have no other hope than to justify my conduct before him." (Job 13:2-3, 15). Job puts to question the ethical God and the theory supporting Him. By so doing, Ricoeur observes that Job "penetrates beyond any ethical vision to a new dimension of faith, the dimension of *unverifiable* faith."⁹⁷⁸

God's speech from the midst of the lightning is imbued with a different form of meaning not easily accessible to rational man. The speech neither addresses Job's questions, nor provides answer to the problem of suffering ethically or otherwise epitomized in the case of Job. It is also not a reconstruction of the battered ethical vision of the world. According to Ricoeur:

Le Dieu qui s'adresse à Job du fond de la tempête lui montre le Béhémoth et le Léviathan, l'hippopotame et le crocodile, ces vestiges du chaos vaincu, devenues figures d'une brutalité dominée et mesurée par l'acte créateur; à travers ces symboles il lui laisse entendre que tout n'est qu'ordre, mesure et beauté; ordre inscrutable, mesure démesurée, beauté terrible; un chemin est tracé entre l'agnosticisme et la vision pénale de l'histoire et de la vie: la voie de la foi invérifiable.⁹⁷⁹

⁹⁷⁷ Ibid. p 449.

⁹⁷⁸ Ibid. p 453: "Job à son tour accède, par-delà toute vision éthique, à une nouvelle dimension de la foi, celle de la foi *invérifiable*. »

⁹⁷⁹ Ibid. p 454.

We tend to think that another language to express what Ricoeur calls “order, measure, and beauty” is divine providence keeping everything in its place. God’s speech does not talk about Job as a person but talks about creation as a whole, and by implication, the infinitesimal place man has in that grandiose order. It is this that challenges Job to a surrender of his claims. He had earlier called upon God to be interested in his own (Job’s) little island in the universe and to do him justice. Thus, like the friends, Job is found to be guilty of the same ethical vision of the world according to which innocence merits reward and guilt merits punishment. After that encounter, Job became a changed man as he testifies: “I did not know you except by hearsay, but now my eyes have seen you. Therefore I take back my words; I repent in dust and ashes.” (Job 42: 5-6). What is it then that necessitates the repentance of the innocent Job if not his earlier claim for compensation, which made his contention impure?

Comme dans la tragédie, la théophanie finale ne lui a rien expliqué, mais a changé son regard; il est prêt à identifier sa liberté à la nécessité ennemie ; il est prêt à convertir liberté et nécessité en destin. Cette conversion, c’est la véritable « répétition, » non plus la répétition matérielle qui est encore une espèce de récompense et donc une manière de rétribution, mais la répétition tout intérieure qui n’est plus du tout la restitution du bonheur antérieur, mais la répétition du malheur présent.⁹⁸⁰

The understanding of this interpretation is in the wager that Satan made with God in the prologue, to test Job and verify for Himself that Job does not serve God “*pour rien.*” (Job 1:9) By finally renouncing the law of retribution, and rejecting the ethical vision of God and the World, Job learns to accept everything as God given. “Such is the tragic wisdom of the “re-enactment” that triumphs over the ethical vision of the world.”⁹⁸¹ With this, we end our reading of Ricoeur.

11.5 Carl G. Jung: **Réponse à Job**

From Jung we get a psychological interpretation of the *Book of Job*. His is a resounding witness to the wide range of influence that the story of Job has. Written from a Judeo-Christian tradition,

⁹⁸⁰ Ibid. p 455.

⁹⁸¹ Ibid. p 455 : « Telle est la sagesse tragique de la « répétition » qui triomphe de la vision éthique du monde. ».

and giving a particular psychological bent to his reading of Job, one gets the impression that Jung is actually giving a personal reflection on his own internal emotional conflicts with the teaching of the Church in contradistinction to his personal convictions. His interpretation goes right through the Christian mysteries of the incarnation and the dogma of the Assumption all necessitated by the unmerited suffering of Job at the hands of a God said to be just and good. As Jung lets us know in his book of our study:

Ce que je vais donc tenter ci-après, c'est de me confronter avec certaines représentations religieuses traditionnelles. Comme il va s'agir de facteurs numineux, ce n'est pas à mon seul *intellect* qu'est jeté un défi ; mon *sentiment* devra aussi entrer en lice. C'est pourquoi je ne puis me contenter d'user d'objectivité : je dois également laisser parler ma subjectivité et mes émotions pour décrire ce que je ressens à la lecture de certains Livres des Ecritures, ou lorsque je me souviens des impressions que m'ont laissées l'enseignement de la foi et des dogmes...Ce que j'exprime est tout d'abord ma conception personnelle ; mais je sais par expérience que je parle en même temps au nom de beaucoup d'êtres qui ont eu des réactions et des destins semblables aux miens.⁹⁸²

His contestation of the monotheistic God, his discussion of the nature of man, his rejection of the metaphysical interpretation of evil as *privatio boni*, in the Judeo-Christian history of salvation, all point to the rich evidence of a man not only in conflict with his God, but also with his environment influenced by some form of personal experiences in life. Let us begin our study by examining Jung's image of God in his *Réponse à Job*.

Jung does the function of a historian when he notes that the book of Job serves as a point of reference in a long historical development of a divine drama. Casting a critical look on this historical development, Jung sees many testimonies of the contradictory image of Yahweh—the image of a god who lacks control over the excessive outpouring of his emotions; a god consumed by anger and jealousy; a god of ambiguity—having opposite qualities residing in him at the same time; a psychotic and sometimes schizophrenic god who often is not in touch with reality; a god capable of goodness and cruelty; a god in possession of creative force and destructive power, a god full of contradictions.

⁹⁸² Jung, Carl C., *Réponse à Job*, traduit de l'allemand et annoté par Roland Cahen, (Paris : Butchet/Chastel, 1964) p 21.

Un tel état mental n'est pensable à nos yeux qu'en l'absence de toute conscience réfléchie, ou bien, si cette conscience existe, cela signifie que la réflexion y est alors occasionnelle, passive, impuissante. Un état semblable, avec des caractéristiques de cette sorte, ne peut se qualifier autrement que d'amoral.⁹⁸³

The book of Job has at its center, a pious and just man Job, subjected without any cause or profit, to various forms of suffering—psychological, moral, and physical—in order to test his moral resistance.⁹⁸⁴ In the contemporary society, Jung would compare Job to a man of our day raised and educated in a Christian way, and how this man would react to the “*obscurités divines*” which is manifested in the *Book of Job*.⁹⁸⁵ The goal of Jung is to understand why and the purpose for which Job has been wounded, and the consequences of this experience for Yahweh and for men.⁹⁸⁶ One of the instances of this divine darkness is shown in the fact that Job is suffering even though he is innocent. He believes dearly that the God who is said to be just could at least show him justice and mercy. In his heart Job knows clearly that his suffering comes from Yahweh Himself. This double-face in God—the good side and the evil side—is already clear to Job. He has hoped to find in this God “*un allié et un intercesseur contre Dieu Lui-même.*”⁹⁸⁷ Jung comes up again with his description of this psychotic god:

On ne saurait dire que l'être de Yahvé est dissocié : il constitue une *antinomie*, somme de contradictions intérieures qui est le tremplin et la condition préalable de Sa dynamique monstrueuse, de Son omnipotence et de Son omniscience.⁹⁸⁸

This internal conflict in God would be made manifest in His comportment with regards to Job. It would suffice only an instigation of doubt in God, by one of His sons—Satan—for God to suspect the fidelity of His servant Job. Jung points to the same double-faced attitude of Yahweh in the *Garden of Eden* when He showed His children the tree of knowledge and at the same time forbade them to eat it. By so doing, without having the intention, He provoked the fall of the first

⁹⁸³ Ibid. p 23.

⁹⁸⁴ Ibid. p 43.

⁹⁸⁵ Ibid. p 24.

⁹⁸⁶ Ibid. p 25. “Mais c’est pourquoi, dans ce qui suit, je laisserai, sans crainte ni vergogne, la parole à l’affect, répondant à des injustices par des partialités injustes, afin de pouvoir comprendre en définitive pourquoi et en vue de quoi Job a été blessé et quelles sont les conséquences qui découlent de cet événement, tant pour Yahvé que pour les hommes.”

⁹⁸⁷ Ibid. p 31. The emphasis belongs to the author.

⁹⁸⁸ Ibid. p 32.

parents and their subsequent expulsion from paradise.⁹⁸⁹ In the case of Job, Yahweh is convinced of the fidelity of Job and yet, inexplicably makes a wager with Satan to the damnation of Job. This test could have been avoided where Yahweh to draw from His omniscience. The facility with which Yahweh accepted to abandon his faithful servant to such terrible suffering orchestrated by Satan, but permitted by Yahweh, leaves to wonder whether Yahweh has an ulterior motive. Does man possess something of which God could be jealous?

A cause de sa petitesse, de sa faiblesse, de son manque de défense face au Tout-Puissant, l'homme possède, comme j'y ai déjà fait allusion, une conscience un peu plus aigüe basée sur son autoréflexion : s'il veut survivre, il doit toujours rester conscient de son impuissance en face du Dieu Omnipotent...Yahvé aurait-Il été saisi du soupçon que l'homme détient une lumière infiniment faible, certes, mais plus concentrée que la Sienne, à Lui, Dieu ? Une jalousie de cette sorte expliquerait peut-être la conduite de Yahvé.⁹⁹⁰

Jung has pointed to the quality of “auto reflection” in man as what could solicit God’s jealousy toward man. Jung interprets this envious attitude of God as an unconscious recognition by God, of Job’s moral and conscious superiority. Perhaps, because of this faculty, Job could have an idea in his head that God could not have been aware of but which the adversaries inflicted by Satan could confirm or deny. The succession of suffering inflicted on Job, and the accusations by his friends, could only but energize the suspicion of divine connivance against Job. The God of justice denies His servant even his fundamental human right, the right to justice. In his suffering, Job could, without knowing or willing it, have been given access to “*une supériorité de la connaissance divine que Dieu Lui-même ne possédait point.*”⁹⁹¹ This is how Jung puts it:

Job discerne l’antinomie intérieure de Dieu, et, de ce fait, la lumière de sa connaissance personnelle atteint elle-même à la numinosité divine...Job, en ne se laissant pas détourner de soumettre son cas à Dieu, même sans espoir d’être entendu, détermine une confrontation qui constitue cet obstacle à l’occasion duquel l’essence de Yahvé doit se

⁹⁸⁹ Ibid. p 43.

⁹⁹⁰ Ibid. p 44.

⁹⁹¹ Ibid. p 46.

révéler en toute lumière. C'est à ce dramatique point culminant que le jeu cruel s'interrompt.⁹⁹²

Instead of giving Job an explanation for his suffering, or even punishing Satan for bringing about the condition which leads to Job's revelation of God's limitation, Yahweh On the contrary questions Job:

“Quel est celui qui brouille mes conseils par des discours dénués de sens?” (Job, 38:2)

Jung casts a long look at the words of Yahweh to Job. “*Qui obscurcit quels Conseils,* » Jung asks?⁹⁹³ The darkness should rather be found in the conclusion of the wager that God made with Satan for which Job is ignorant. Thus it is Yahweh Himself who has darkened His proper counsel and gives witness to His lack of understanding. But instead of questioning Satan, it is Job that is put on divine examination. This attitude according to Jung further shows how God is illogical and incomprehensible. When finally He decides to speak to Job, He neglects the answers that Job is waiting for, and engages in self glorification of His power.

Dans Ses discours, Yahvé glisse tellement à côté de Job, de sa personnalité, de sa situation, de ses problèmes, qu'il est aisé de se rendre compte à quel point Il est intérieurement préoccupé de Lui-même. L'emphasis avec laquelle Il met en relief Son Omnipotence et Sa Grandeur n'a absolument aucun sens à l'adresse d'un homme tel que Job ; il est impossible que ce dernier en soit davantage convaincu qu'il l'est ; une attitude de ce genre n'a de sens et ne devient compréhensible qu'à l'adresse d'un témoin *qui en doute*.⁹⁹⁴

For Jung, the doubt that God places on Job is to be correctly found in God Himself. That is what necessitates His *mise-en valeur* of all the qualities of His Omnipotence: His force, His courage, His invincibility before a man as weak as Job. Overwhelmed by the display of power, Job responds by accepting and totally submitting to the divine force crushing him. He accepts to darkening God's counsel:

⁹⁹² Ibid. pp 46-47.

⁹⁹³ Ibid. p 47.

⁹⁹⁴ Ibid. p 50.

“J’étais celui qui brouille tes conseils, par des propos dénués de sens. Aussi ai-je parlé sans intelligence, de merveilles qui me dépassent et que j’ignore... *Je ne te connaissais que par ouï-dire, mais maintenant mes yeux t’ont vu.* Aussi je retire les paroles, je me repens sur la poussière et sur la cendre. » (Job, 42 : 3-6)

For Jung, Job has really learnt a lesson about God from the experience of His reality. Before this experience, Job was naïve; he had an image of “a good God,” a benevolent sovereign and just judge who would at least respect the terms of a binding covenant on moral grounds. All this was not to be. God is not human and in some cases, He is less than human; He is unconscious and thus, there is no legal basis for contracts with Him. He is not a moral being. Then Jung observes that to make God a conscious being is the foundation on which the nonsensical doctrine of *privatio boni*, that evil is the absence of good—is based.

L’inconscience et l’irréflexion divines, au contraire, rendent possible une conception qui libère l’action divine du jugement moral et qui ne fait pas jaillir de conflit entre la bonté et l’épouvante.⁹⁹⁵

Unconsciousness is a quality of animality. That is what Jung calls the animal side of God. “Yahweh is a phenomenon and not a man.”⁹⁹⁶ And more still, His unreasonable manner of acting like unforeseeable natural disasters confirms the unethical nature of this God.

Job, à son grand effroi, a dû se rendre compte que Yahvé, non seulement n’est pas un homme, mais, en un certain sens, est moins qu’un homme —selon ce qu’Il a dit Lui-même de Léviathan, le crocodile (Job, 41 : 26) : « Tout ce qui est élevé le craint ; il est roi au-dessus de tous les fiers animaux. »⁹⁹⁷

How, Jung asks, could a god with such quantity of irreconcilable contradictions be considered monotheistic? The experience of Job has revealed and exposed the duality implicit in God and

⁹⁹⁵Ibid. p 59, fn. 1. Jung’s psychological experience shows that good is always opposed by evil, even substantially. He argues the absence of evil would automatically mean that all that exists is good. But experience shows the contrary. He argues that before the arrival of Manichaeism, the idea of evil as privation did not exist. He quotes the example of Clement of Rome whose monotheistic idea of God accepted two contrary principles in God: the right hand signified Christ and the left hand signified Satan. Later attempts to subdue duality in God gave rise to the *privatio boni* doctrine. But the problem of Job has put everything into doubt as he had to appeal to God against God Himself. Cf p. 244.

⁹⁹⁶ Ibid. p 59.

⁹⁹⁷ Ibid. p 58.

would inevitably transform the traditional conception of God as monotheistic. A loving relationship with such a god is impossible and at most be based on fear and compulsion. Would the encounter with Job make God eventually conscious? What effect would the fact that Job held his own and did not falter even before God, have on the personality of God? Apart from showing the moral superiority of Job over God, Jung would argue also that it is precisely this situation that would necessitate the intervention of *Sophia* and render possible God's decision to become man.⁹⁹⁸

In order to establish the change that eventually takes place in the statue of God, Jung switches over to the history of the composition of the *Book of Job* between 600 and 300 B.C and relates it to the time of the composition of the *Book of Proverbs*. The idea of 'Wisdom' or *Sophia* would be seen to play a major part in establishing the link between the *Book of Job* and the transformation in the statue of God. *Sophia* is presented as a *pneuma* or a personified feminine spirit, co-eternal with God and preexisting before creation.⁹⁹⁹ It is related to the Johannian *Logos*, the Hebrew *Hokhma*, and the Indian *Shakti*. This feminine Wisdom is presented as the *Verbum Dei*—Word of God which, at the beginning—a *présidé à l'incubation des profondeurs*.¹⁰⁰⁰ Jung seems to suggest that before the wager with Satan and the consequent unjust abandonment of Job into suffering, Yahweh had not remembered the need for wisdom. He showed no confidence in Job His faithful servant and was quick to side with Satan in the infliction of evils on Job. Even when the innocence and fidelity of Job has been proved, Yahweh did nothing to redress the situation. That attitude shows that Yahweh still doubts Job because :

Il projette sur un bouc émissaire Sa propre tendance à l'infidélité. Il y a lieu en effet de soupçonner que Yahvé Se dispose à relâcher le lien matrimonial avec Israël, tout en Se dissimulant à Lui-même cette intention...Yahvé est devenu incertain de Sa propre fidélité.¹⁰⁰¹

⁹⁹⁸ Ibid. p 104: « La supériorité de Job...crée une situation qui exige réellement réflexion et méditation. C'est pour ce motif que la Sophia intervient. Elle protège l'éclosion d'un retour sur Soi-même, devenu indispensable, et par là, elle rend possible la décision de Yahvé de devenir homme Lui-même. »

⁹⁹⁹ Ibid. p 65.

¹⁰⁰⁰ Ibid. p 67.

¹⁰⁰¹ Ibid. pp 72-73.

But this attitude cannot continue. Something must change. Thus, Yahweh remembers of a feminine being who was a friend and companion from the beginning of time, a first-born among all the creatures of God:

Reflet sans souillure de Sa magnificence éternelle, artisan féminin de la Création plus proche et plus intime de Son Cœur que les descendances créées ultérieurement...C'est sans doute une *dira necessitas* — une funeste nécessité — qui imposait cette réminiscence de la Sophia; les choses ne pouvait plus continuer comme elles étaient ; le Dieu « juste » ne pouvait plus continuer à perpétrer Lui-même des injustices, et le Dieu « omniscient » ne pouvait plus Se comporter comme une créature illogique et étourdie. L'autoréflexion devient une nécessité impérative, et pour cela, il faut la sagesse : Yahvé doit Se rappeler Son savoir absolu. Car si Job discerne Dieu, Dieu doit bien Se discerner Lui-même. Il n'était pas possible que dans toute la création la double nature de Yahvé devienne sujet de discussion et qu'elle ne reste ignorée que de Yahvé Lui-même. Quiconque reconnaît Dieu agit sur Dieu. L'échec de la tentative faite pour précipiter Job dans la déchéance a modifié Yahvé.¹⁰⁰²

In order to draw the consequences of this transformation in the statue or personality of God, Jung makes a historical examination and correspondence of the archetypal stories involving the original man *ante lapsum*—before the fall: Adam and his feminine counterpart Eve produced from his side. For Jung then, if Adam is a correspondence of God, then Cain, Adam's son, is a miniature copy of Satan, God's son. Abel the other son could have been a copy of another celestial son of God. But the early report of the fall and the unexpected fratricide committed by Cain, were indications of imperfection in creation. From the beginning of time, this duality was unavoidable. The presence of this duality was already inevitable in the creation of Monday—the separation of the heavens and the earth (according to Jung, God did not call Monday good). Against all attempts through generations to maintain the general conception of monotheism, Jung argues that metaphysical duality was present from the beginning of time.¹⁰⁰³ Another imperfection, which like the earlier ones, was not even known by God and was probably the

¹⁰⁰² Ibid. p 73.

¹⁰⁰³ Ibid. p 76.

work of Satan, is the creation of snakes who are not only more intelligent and more conscious than man, but are even earlier than man in the hierarchy of creation. From this Jung concludes:

Comme pour ce qui advint ensuite, on peut soupçonner déjà ici que l'omniscience n'a pas été poussée jusqu'à ses conséquences, c'est-à-dire que Yahvé n'a pas pris conscience de Son savoir absolu et potentiel, et que, par suite, après coup, Il fut tout étonné des résultats.¹⁰⁰⁴

What is more surprising is that Yahweh places the responsibility for this imperfection on man and not on His Son Satan the deceiver. The consequence of this is that in man, the fear of God becomes the beginning of wisdom and the growth in consciousness. Another explanation for this lack of faith in man is because God has no *Eros*, that is, a relation based on the sentiment of values with man.¹⁰⁰⁵ God only uses man as a collaborator for the attainment of a certain objective. Jung tells us that Job is the culminating point of this development. Knowing the real face of God and the unconscious duality of His nature, Job needs Wisdom as an advocate and God also needs her.

Cette sagesse, personnifiée à un très haut degré, ce qui met en relief son autonomie, se révèle à eux comme une aide amicale et comme un avocat qui plaide en leur faveur auprès de Yahvé, et leur montre l'aspect lumineux, bon et juste de leur Dieu, devenant ainsi digne d'être aimé.¹⁰⁰⁶

It is this need of wisdom that brings about a radical change in God. The appearance of Wisdom in the divine space signals the arrival of a new act of creation. Unlike the old, this new creation would be like an eternal divine marriage—*hierosgamos*—from which the worlds are conceived and begotten.

¹⁰⁰⁴ Ibid. p 79.

¹⁰⁰⁵ Ibid. p 83: "Le manque d'Eros, c'est-à-dire de relations basées sur un sentiment des valeurs, apparaît en toute clarté dans le drame de Job : c'est l'admirable paradigme de la Création qui est un monstre — qu'on le remarque — et non pas l'homme ! Yahvé n'éprouve aucun Eros à l'adresse de l'homme, n'a pas de relation avec lui, mais ne l'utilise qu'en vue du seul but auquel l'homme doit collaborer. »

¹⁰⁰⁶ Ibid. p 84.

La réapparition de la Sophia annonce qu'un changement décisif est imminent : *Dieu entend Se renouveler dans le mystère du mariage céleste* (comme les principaux dieux égyptiens l'ont fait de tout temps) et *veut S'incarner dans l'homme*.¹⁰⁰⁷

Jung notes that by the use of the Egyptian model of god's incarnation in Pharaoh, God wants to realize the regeneration of Himself in man. And the major reason for God's becoming man is to be found "*dans Sa confrontation avec Job*."¹⁰⁰⁸ In this new creation, only a human being is to be created, God-man (the new Adam) to be born of a woman, the second Eve. To avoid the imperfections of the earlier creation, this second Eve—the Immaculate Virgin Mary, would be freed from the stains of original sin and would belong to the *status ante lapsum*—the state of Creation before the fall. That is why what she conceives is divine. But what does this incarnation mean in essence? According to Jung,

Cela ne signifie rien de moins qu'une métamorphose de Dieu qui va bouleverser le monde. Cela représente quelque chose de comparable à ce que fut, en son temps, la Création, à savoir une objectivation de Dieu : lors de la Création, Dieu Se manifesta dans la nature de façon générale ; maintenant, Il veut Se manifester de manière bien plus spécifique, en devenant homme précisément.¹⁰⁰⁹

From the first creation, we understand that God is reality itself in the sense that we could arrive at God from creation. At the risk of panentheism, Jung explains that "God is in everything." This being so, one could actually ask why then the need for the incarnation? If it is to deliver humanity from devil and prevent Satan expanding its corruptive influence, Yahweh could have simply stopped Satan and hence uprooted the root of evil if He had wished. But because Yahweh did not count on His omniscience, everything happened as they did and Satan did all he wanted to do. Worst still, Job's resistance in the face of unjustified suffering, showed his moral superiority over Yahweh, and exposed the unconscious state of Yahweh. The situation must change. Yahweh must do something to redress the imbalance.

Yahvé doit devenir un homme, semblable à l'homme à l'encontre duquel Il a été injuste. Lui, le gardien de la justice, sait que toute injustice doit être rachetée, et la Sagesse sait

¹⁰⁰⁷ Ibid. p 85.

¹⁰⁰⁸ Ibid. p 86.

¹⁰⁰⁹ Ibid. p 97.

que Lui aussi est soumis à la loi morale. *Sa créature L'ayant dépassé, Yahvé Se doit de Se renouveler.*¹⁰¹⁰

It is this renewal that leads to the mystery of the divine and human nature in one man—Jesus Christ. These two natures so interpenetrate each other that any attempt at a separation mutilates them both. Jung reasons that this is so that in the human nature God could suffer what He let man endure and thus make amends for all evil. Christ's love of mankind however is lacking one thing—self-reflection. But there is only one significant exception, and that is what really matters in this divine-human relation. It is at that point where God takes up the suffering of man and suffers in man, that His response to Job is given.

Il n'y a qu'une exception importante à cette règle, le cri désespéré sur la croix: "Mon Dieu, mon Dieu, pourquoi m'as-tu abandonné?" Ici, à savoir au moment où Dieu fait l'expérience vécue de l'homme mortel et subit ce qu'Il a laissé à Son fidèle serviteur Job, Son essence humaine atteint au divin. C'est ici que la réponse à Job est donnée, et, comme on le voit, cet instant suprême est tout aussi divin qu'humain, tout aussi « eschatologique » que « psychologique ».¹⁰¹¹

Jung reasons that it is in the life and the suffering of Christ that God's intention to become man is accomplished. As a part of the transformation in God, He is definitely separated from His son Satan who is banished from the heavenly courts and no longer able to insinuate doubts into God. Satan is finally exiled and has lost the paternal solicitude that he had enjoyed. This situation of Satan makes up for the punishment that regrettably was missing in the encounter with Job.¹⁰¹² By limiting the role of Satan, Yahweh has become "*un Dieu bon et un père aimant*" even when there is the possibility of His going back to His choleric nature as the prayer "Our Father" puts in guard when it says: "And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil."¹⁰¹³ Jung insists on the need for Christ to remind His Father to desist from His biased tendencies against mankind. It is highly immoral to entice people into dangerous situations with the goal of testing the force of

¹⁰¹⁰ Ibid. p 105.

¹⁰¹¹ Ibid. pp 110-111.

¹⁰¹² Ibid. p 116 : « Cet événement explique probablement pourquoi Satan, partout où il apparaît dans l'histoire et le déroulement de l'Incarnation, joue un rôle aussi insignifiant qui ne rappelle plus en rien les rapports de confiance qu'il avait précédemment avec Yahvé...En cela, il est tout de même atteint par la condamnation dont nous regrettons l'absence dans l'histoire de Job — sous une forme singulièrement atténuée toutefois. »

¹⁰¹³ Ibid. p 117 : « Et ne nous soumetts pas à la tentation, mais délivre-nous du mal. »

their moral resistance. That is what happened in the case of Job, and what Christ wishes to correct in the prayer. But Jung still doubts the possibility that Yahweh could totally abandon His destructive nature. Jung cites the instances of the Apocalypse where the prophecies of universal destruction are not works influenced by Satan but the “act of God.”¹⁰¹⁴ The Incarnation of God in Christ needs to be continued and completed by the Holy Spirit who by making men children of God, “*signifie de fait une perpétuelle incarnation qui va s’élargissant.*”¹⁰¹⁵ What this further signifies is the elevation of man to a position of divine sonship where he becomes man-god.¹⁰¹⁶

The final part of our study borders on Jung’s interpretation of the Apocalypse of St. John.; the realization of the vision of the Woman covered with the Sun in the dogma of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Heaven; the confirmation of Sophia which was with God before the creation of the world, in the reality of Mary—the Mother of God and the Queen of Heaven—who has been given Her rightful place by the side of the Holy Trinity.¹⁰¹⁷ Jung reasons that the primitive divine beings had both masculine and the feminine natures. What the dogma of the Assumption does is to place the woman nature on equality with the masculine nature.¹⁰¹⁸ This equality is anchored metaphysically in the figure of a “divine” woman, the bride of Christ. Thus, it is thanks to Job, the cataclysmic events which led to the exposition of the *complémentarité des contraires* in God, the transformation of the statue of God, the Incarnation of God in man, the acceptance of a feminine nature in God, also leads the ultimate salvation of man.

11.6 Philippe Nemo : Job et L’Excès du Mal

It is our observation that Nemo confronts the book of Job and especially the suffering of Job from the point of view of psychology and philosophy. As such, he describes the evil that besets

¹⁰¹⁴ Ibid. p 119 : « la destruction du monde ne sera pas l’œuvre de Satan mais constituera un « *act of God* » non influencé par Satan. »

¹⁰¹⁵ Ibid. p 124.

¹⁰¹⁶ Ibid. p 159 : « Cela entraîne une profonde modification du statut de l’homme, puisque celui-ci se trouve maintenant élevé, dans un certain sens, à la filiation divine et à une humanité semi-divine. »

¹⁰¹⁷ Ibid. p 224 : « On pouvait savoir depuis fort longtemps qu’un vœu profond agitait les masses, celui que la médiatrice que l’on prie et qui intercède trouvât enfin sa place auprès de la Sainte Trinité, et qu’elle fût accueillie comme « Reine du ciel et fiancée de la cour céleste. » »

¹⁰¹⁸ Ibid. p 229 : « Le protestantisme n’a manifestement pas porté assez d’attention aux signes du temps qui démontrent que la femme est en train d’acquérir son droit à l’égalité avec l’homme. »

and destroys Job as psychopathology.¹⁰¹⁹ In this case, it is no longer just physical or moral suffering as some modern interpreters like Kierkegaard would hold, but suffering that touches the very being of the sufferer. It is a language that permits Nemo to describe the “excess” or “extreme” evil that Job suffers, in the sense that the nature of this evil cannot be encompassed or appropriated.

The major type of evil that is the hallmark of Job’s suffering is described by Nemo as “l’angoisse,”¹⁰²⁰ that is what we shall translate as ‘anxiety’ or ‘fear’ or ‘anguish.’ One of the characteristics of this evil is the impossibility to forget the truth¹⁰²¹ of one’s suffering and distract oneself from this truth. (Job 16:6) The evil of anxiety does not leave one intact. It totally transforms the sufferer into an ‘other’ and makes him abnormal. Job is said to be “drunk” with suffering (Job 10:15c) or “insane.” (Job 7:4c)

Il est dans un “autre” état, inédit, sans rapport avec l’état normal. L’angoisse l’a sorti de lui-même, a fracturé son être, l’a fait *dérivé*.¹⁰²²

In this state of anxiety, Job’s relations with his family and friends break down because the person they once knew has become a totally different personality. Eliphaz, Bildad, Zophar all stay far from their friend Job and address words of consolation and accusations to him. For them, Job suffers because he has sinned and must purify himself of his sins to be pardoned and healed by God. Job’s wife encourages him to curse God and die. Worst of all, because of the evil of anxiety, Job no longer recognizes himself.

How do we then interpret this anxiety in the book of Job? The friends of Job interpret his suffering as following a religious conception of a moral world order where evil is punished and good rewarded. Accordingly, Nemo calls it:

Le système de la conception religieuse traditionnelle du monde, la “morale de la rétribution,” consistant en une « technologie morale » faite de prescriptions et de rites.¹⁰²³

¹⁰¹⁹ Nemo, Philippe, *Job et l’excès du mal*, (Paris : Editions Grasset & Fasquelle, 1978) p 54.

¹⁰²⁰ Ibid. p 33 : « Mais on y parle plus encore d’une forme très particulière de souffrance, réductible à nulle autre et mère de toute autre : l’angoisse. Il y a dans le *Livre de Job* une phénoménologie de l’angoisse, une méticuleuse description de l’angoisse telle qu’elle apparaît elle-même et transforme l’apparence de tout le reste. »

¹⁰²¹ Ibid. p 40.

¹⁰²² Ibid. p 55.

God is considered, according to His manifestations and the teachings of the friends, as the law of nature: the law which rules the world.¹⁰²⁴ Thus, God becomes equivalent to the Law and to the World; to go contrary to the Law is to go against God, and that is the source of evil. Nemo puts it thus:

Le mal vient d'un faux pas accompli par l'homme sur le chemin qui lui est tracé.¹⁰²⁵

This conception of a regular and fixed order of nature, does not actually explain the evil that Job suffers. If it were to be as a result of an ordinary transgression of a fixed law, Job would not have so much pain.¹⁰²⁶ But how then can man go against the Law instead of remaining eternally faithful to it? Job is accused by his friends of four different kinds of sin: of having the willingness to dominate, of being impious, of saying evil and of being proud.¹⁰²⁷ For all this, he is under punishment. Cf Job 18:7b “*il trébuche dans ses propres desseins*.” As for the victims, they are repaid by the *mechanism of retribution*. Job: 22, 29b-30; 20:10etc. This ‘*morale de la retribution*’ is of course built on the classical conception of God as omnipotent, omniscient, and all good.¹⁰²⁸ But is this religious interpretation correct? Nemo would wish to disagree. The attributes of God would have to be verified according to what they signify and intend to do. If “God” is all-powerful, it is in order to be the secular hand of unfailing justice. And if He is omniscient, it is so that nothing of the crimes or merits of men should escape Him.¹⁰²⁹ Where is this “God” that is unconcerned with the sufferings of Job? But Job, against all the accusations of culpability and merit of his suffering, consistently declares his innocence of the entire fault for which he is being accused and his ignorance of the reason for his unjust suffering. Has the omniscient not known the innocence of Job? Is He not powerful enough to prevent the sufferings of Job? What Nemo tries to show is that God is beyond categories and cannot be identified to the rigid law of nature.

¹⁰²³ Ibid. p 71.

¹⁰²⁴ Ibid. p 80 : « Dieu » n'est en ce sens rien d'autre que le mécanisme lui-même, la nécessité qui régit le monde. Le monde est encore un autre nom de la même nécessité. »

¹⁰²⁵ Ibid. p 82.

¹⁰²⁶ Nemo, Philippe, « Job et l'excès du mal » dans Claude Bruaire, éd., *La Confession de la Foi*, (Paris : Librairie Arthème Fayard, 1977) p 60.

¹⁰²⁷ Nemo, Philippe, *Job et l'excès du mal*, pp 83-84 : Le premier est la *volonté de domination*. Le second type est précisément *l'impiété*. Le péché consiste troisièmement, à *dire du mal*. Enfin, autre aspect du péché, l'orgueil, objet spécial : »

¹⁰²⁸ Ibid. p 77 : « Ses attributs sont les puissances humaines poussées à l'extrême. Il est grand, merveilleux, tout-puissant. »

¹⁰²⁹ Ibid. p 79.

The evil that Job suffers is excess in the sense that it is eternal.¹⁰³⁰ It is not just an ordinary suffering, but a suffering of a second degree.¹⁰³¹ No evil coming as a result of a fixed order could have been so persistently aggressive, direct and violent. If it were so however, this evil could even be avoided by a stroke of chance. But the evil that Job suffers, acts as if it were endowed with a pair of eyes, and searches Job out and inflicts heavy pains on him. Not only that it is a persistent evil, it is evil that insists and on this insistence is found the eternity of evil.¹⁰³² And yet Job knows the source of his evil: it is to be found in God who is different from the law of necessity that marks the God of his three friends. This God in whom Job trusts is found a compatibility of evil and goodness. God has an Intention to inflict Job with evil.

Source intentionnelle du mal, ce Dieu est le nouveau et seul Maître que Job reconnaisse : sa maîtrise ne se définit pas, comme celle, fausse, du monde, par la puissance, mais par la faculté de répondre à une question.¹⁰³³

That explains why Job pleads to God against God in his request for response. Nemo describes Him as *le seul accusé* and *le défenseur ultime* of the soul to whom He has inflicted the most evil.¹⁰³⁴ As Job says: “Je sais, moi, que mon Défenseur est vivant,...et de ma chair, je verrai Dieu. Celui que je verrai sera pour moi, celui que mes yeux regarderont ne sera plus un étranger. » (Jb 19 : 25-27) There are two essential points that come out from these words of Job. The first is that Job must have to go beyond this temporal world order in order to encounter the Intention who wishes him evil.¹⁰³⁵ The meaning is that there exists, beyond this world, an Intentional Cause for whom Job exists as he is,¹⁰³⁶ but a Cause that Job cannot see. The second point is that in these words Nemo identifies the “eschatological perspective” of Job’s hope, which would serve as the resolution of the human adventure and the end of evil; above all, it

¹⁰³⁰ Ibid. p 145: “Le mal dont Job souffre est en excès, en ceci encore qu’il est éternisé.”

¹⁰³¹ Nemo, Philippe, « Job et l’excès du mal » dans Claude Bruaire, éd., *La Confession de la Foi*, p 61 : « Or, Job connaît une souffrance de *second degré*. Un mal qui non seulement survient, mais demeure ; qui non seulement persiste, mais *insiste*. »

¹⁰³² Nemo, Philippe, *Job et l’excès du mal*, p 162 : « Non seulement il persiste, mais il fait plus que simplement durer ; il insiste. Il insiste, et telle est son éternité ; »

¹⁰³³ Ibid. p 169.

¹⁰³⁴ Ibid. p 177.

¹⁰³⁵ Nemo, Philippe, « Job et l’excès du mal » dans Claude Bruaire, éd., *La Confession de la Foi*, p 63 : « L’enjeu est donc hors du monde...Il s’agit de faire advenir le sens de toute l’aventure, c’est-à-dire d’opérer la jonction entre la personne de Job et ce mystérieux quelque chose qui lui veut manifestement quelque chose. »

¹⁰³⁶ Ibid. p 63.

signifies the beatific encounter with the Master who has taken the initiative.¹⁰³⁷ The excess of evil that has so much weighed down on Job, would in turn, require the excess of beatitude to defeat it.

Seul l'excès de béatitude répondra à l'excès du mal. Il ne s'agira pas seulement pour Dieu d'effacer le mal donné, mais de se montrer, par la béatitude donnée à l'excès, à la mesure de l'immensurable excès du mal.¹⁰³⁸

In the final analysis, Nemo tends to answer the argument of atheists who hang on the existence of suffering like that of Job, as the proof for the nonexistence of God.

Nous disons au contraire, d'après Job: sans tout ce mal, jamais Dieu n'existerait. C'est le mal qui nous met sur le chemin de quelque chose comme « Dieu », en nous ouvrant à une Autre scène. Le mal « prouve » Dieu.¹⁰³⁹

Where God would be understood as a being « *étant* », evil would infinitely overcome him and refute his existence. This way of understanding God would prove the arguments of atheists. Nemo thinks that Job, at the earlier stages of his suffering, thought in such a manner. Such God considered as “being” is compromised, and annihilated by the excess of evil in the world. Nemo identifies this “God” as “*le Dieu des religions*” inasmuch as religions situate and posit God, evil, and man as beings in a technical conception of the world.¹⁰⁴⁰ God is beyond being and beyond the world and that is why He is capable of excessive evil and excessive goodness. The excess of evil and the excess of beatitude reveal to man that he is but secondarily a part of the world:

Il est le destinataire et l'enjeu d'une volonté qui le dépasse parce qu'elle dépasse le monde.¹⁰⁴¹

The secret of the *Book of Job* is according to Nemo, the truth that the excess of evil and the excess of beatitude are not possible without God.¹⁰⁴²

¹⁰³⁷ Nemo, Philippe, *Job et l'excès du mal*, p 187: “Job envisage ici son salut intégral, la résolution de l'aventure humaine, la fin du mal, et plus précisément la rencontre béatifique avec le Maître qui a pris l'initiative. »

¹⁰³⁸ Ibid. p 231.

¹⁰³⁹ Ibid. p 205.

¹⁰⁴⁰ Ibid. p 206: “Ce Dieu annulé est bien le Dieu des religions en tant que celles-ci procèdent à un discours technique-métaphysique qui pose et situe Dieu, le mal et l'homme comme des étants, dans une conception technicienne du monde.”

¹⁰⁴¹ Nemo, Philippe, « Job et l'excès du mal » dans Claude Bruaire, éd., *La Confession de la Foi*, p 65.

11.7 Gustavo Gutiérrez : **Job: Parler de Dieu à partir de la Souffrance de l'innocent**

The book we are about to examine has a lot of practical application in the daily lives of the people as it tries to talk about God in a comprehensible language, from the experience of the suffering of an innocent. It is a book we shall interpret as coming forth from philosophical practical reflections on the life experience of the people of Latin America. How do we talk about God of love in a reality marked by excruciating poverty, pain and oppression? By what language do you tell those that are not considered as human beings, that they are also sons and daughters of God? These are the fundamental questions being asked by this theology called liberation theology which has specifically taken form in Latin America, and other places sharing the same experiences of suffering.¹⁰⁴³

As the title of the book shows, the evil that is one of the objects of this enquiry is not moral or culpable evil, but on the contrary, innocent evil or “*mal-malheur*” du “*mal-innocent*.”¹⁰⁴⁴ Without forgetting the responsibility of those who bring about this unnecessary suffering of the innocent, the pains and demands of the innocent constitute a true *mise en question capital pour la théologie*. It is these that explain the choice of the biblical *Book of Job* as a *locus classicus* of an innocent suffering.

The legendary personage of the book, Job is shown to be honest, just and fearful of God. But he is so much comfortable and rich that Satan finds this as the reason for Job's fidelity to God. Satan is convinced that faith in and worship of God endure as long as there is expectation of reward. Religion hangs on utilitarian motivations—rewards and gains. This brings on to the scene the ancient doctrine of retribution. Is religion an affair of utility? Satan is convinced of this.

Ce qu'il met en doute c'est le désintéressement, la gratuité de sa religion. Il ne critique pas ses actions, mais ses motivations : Job ne se comporte pas ainsi « pour rien ». ¹⁰⁴⁵

¹⁰⁴² Ibid. p 66.

¹⁰⁴³ Gutiérrez, Gustavo, *Job. Parler de Dieu à partir de la Souffrance de l'innocent*, traduit de l'espagnol péruvien par Christine et Luc Durban sur le texte revu par l'auteur, (Paris : Les Editions du Cerf, 1987) p 18.

¹⁰⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴⁵ Ibid. p 33.

Job's love for God, Satan claims, is not disinterested. The case scenario would be the condition of physical and moral pain, the extreme situation of which could lead to a radical rejection or interrogation of God.¹⁰⁴⁶ In order to prove to Satan that Job's faith and worship are not based on what he gains, God accepts Satan's bet to subject Job to various forms of temptation. The context thus becomes an examination of what remains of God's love in the experience of an innocent sufferer. Can a man suffering innocently still love God? Job remains faithful to God regardless of the loss of his children, his health and his riches. "Nu, je suis sorti du sein maternel, nu j'y retournerai. Yahvé avait donné, Yahvé a repris que le nom de Yahvé soit béni! » (Job 1, 21). By this fidelity, Job answers that faith in God can exist and endure without any interest. In his suffering, Job does not curse God. He manages to speak well still of God. Hence contrary to the pretensions of Satan, the author notes:

La religion de Job est désintéressée, gratuite, "pour rien." Il n'a pas besoin du bien-être matériel pour faire confiance à Dieu...L'auteur nous indique dès à présent que la gratuité est le trait central d'une authentique foi en Dieu.¹⁰⁴⁷

According to Gutiérrez, there are two important movements in Job's language; movements which helped him arrive at the denial of the doctrine of retribution, from the point of view of his personal experience. The first is the provocation by his friends which led him to a wider vision that the suffering at stake is not just about an individual; and the second is God's response.

Le premier se produit lorsque Job, provoqué par ses amis, élargit sa vision, sort de son isolement initial et comprend qu'il ne s'agit pas d'un cas de souffrance individuelle. Il perçoit qu'en fait c'est la douleur et l'injustice que subissent les pauvres qui est en cause. Par conséquent, le croyant se doit d'essayer de les soulager par l'aide et la solidarité. Les discours de Dieu sont l'occasion du second déplacement. Job comprend que le monde de la justice doit être placé sur un horizon vaste, exigeant et libre : la gratuité de l'amour de Dieu.¹⁰⁴⁸

¹⁰⁴⁶ Ibid. p 48.

¹⁰⁴⁷ Ibid. p 102.

¹⁰⁴⁸ Ibid. p 53.

It is as such that Gutiérrez suggests two types of language as the best approaches to speaking to and about God from the experience of unmerited suffering: prophetic language and the language of contemplation.¹⁰⁴⁹

Under the prophetic language, the author tries to explain the religious conviction of Job's friends, what we have all along called the doctrine of temporal retribution. They the friends, try without much success or conviction to make Job accept his culpability in suffering and thus to justify God as the punisher of Job. But Job's moral rectitude and unjust suffering contradict all that the doctrine of temporal retribution stands for. In all this discussion, the author struggles to demonstrate or apply what he has called the prophetic language about God. However, where he comes very close to letting this language felt is in the intervention of Elihu, the last comer in the discussion of Job with his friends. Elihu does not deny the doctrine of temporal retribution, but he enlarges its horizon more than the other friends. His idea of God as beyond human imagination and conception sets the tone of his intervention and correction of Job and his friends, and their various ideas about the importance and goal of Job's suffering:

“Dieu est plus grand que l'homme. » Pour Elihu, c'est une conviction profonde et, nous l'avons noté, l'un de ses thèmes favoris. Pour lui, l'audace de Job vient de ce qu'il ignore le rôle que peut tenir l'adversité dans les desseins de Dieu. Nous nous trouvons devant une réalité subtile et multiple. Ce qu'Elihu cherche à démêler ce n'est pas d'où vient la souffrance et quelle en est la cause, mais plutôt quel est son but, sa finalité dans le plan de la providence divine. Les voies de Dieu ne se comprennent pas facilement et moins encore à l'aide des catégories simplistes que manient Job et ses compagnons.¹⁰⁵⁰

Elihu's contributions are very important and somehow change the tone and structure of the discussion. God's transcendence means that He could manifest in ways not very familiar to man. Suffering could be one of those means of God's manifestation and not necessarily a punishment, but a pedagogical tool.¹⁰⁵¹ God's silence, for which Job complains, could in fact be God's means of communication. Thus the necessity for two forms of attitude: Job's change of attitude towards God; and then, God's attitude in relation to the poor. Contrary to the cries of Job, God gives

¹⁰⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵⁰ Ibid. p 91.

¹⁰⁵¹ Ibid. p 92. The author owes this insight to Jean Lévêque, *Job et son Dieu*, (Paris: Gabalda, 1970) II, p 574.

justice to the poor. It is in this relation between God and the poor that is found the substance of the prophetic message.

Cette relation entre Dieu et le pauvre constitue précisément la substance du message prophétique. Le Seigneur est toujours vigilant et disposé à écouter la voix des pauvres, bien que parfois cette attention puisse prendre des formes plus discrètes.¹⁰⁵²

Evidently, Job's quest for audible answers from God continues. He naturally desires and hopes to hear God explain in clearest language the meaning of His divine justice. This Job's desire to hear God would not be in vain and thus this sets the stage for Job's ultimate encounter, all alone with the God of his faith and hope. We do not forget that Job according to Gutiérrez represents the suffering humanity.

En Job, seul devant Dieu, sont présents tous les innocents de ce monde qui souffrent injustement et demandent au Dieu de leur foi le pourquoi de cette situation.¹⁰⁵³

God's speech to Job seems an affirmation of Job's innocence, and a rejection of the doctrine of temporal retribution being branded about by Job's friends. God does not make reference to Job's supposed sins and neither does He refer to the reasons for his suffering. The response is based on two major angles: God's design in creation and the justice of divine government. Where other interpreters do not see any connection between the demands of Job and the response of God, Gutiérrez sees a breakthrough. According to him, Job's major complaint against God had been on the issue of divine justice and *ipso facto* on the plan of God's creation.

En effet, dans ses discours Job avait mis en cause les plans de Dieu. Plus exactement, à partir de sa souffrance, et dans son refus de l'explication qu'en donnaient ses amis, il avait exprimé des doutes au sujet de la justice divine...C'est cela que maintenant Dieu appelle « obscurcir mes plans. »¹⁰⁵⁴

God reveals His plan for the entire creation and demands Job that he be endowed with intelligence, the faculty of discernment that would enable him to understand the truth of things as

¹⁰⁵² Ibid. p 94.

¹⁰⁵³ Ibid. p 120.

¹⁰⁵⁴ Ibid. p 122.

they are,¹⁰⁵⁵ that is, the gratuity of God's love. This means that creation is not tailored to the unique advantage of human beings. Having finally heard the response of God, Job adopts a different attitude and language towards God and towards creation, an attitude of adoration and a language of contemplation¹⁰⁵⁶ as is seen in Job's final response to God: "*Je ne te connaissais que par ouï-dire mais maintenant mes yeux t'ont vu. C'est pourquoi je répudie et j'abandonne la poussière et la cendre.*" (Job 42, 5-6)

11.8 Evaluation and Conclusion

Our consultation of some of the most recent interpretations of the book of Job, confirm among other things, that it is not a place to find the solution to the problem of evil but perhaps a response to the problem. In fact, it confirms the transcendence of God beyond the human questions of the problem of evil. The contemporary interpreters of the book of Job also establish that none of God's traditional attributes: omnipotence, omniscience and all good, is ever denied by the problem of evil even in its most evidential sense as that of Job. What they deny however is our anthropomorphic interpretation of such attributes. Jung and Nemo however find in God, a complementarity of natures allowing both the existence of good and evil. Nemo tells us that the excess of evil and the excess of beatitude as witnessed by and promised to Job, are not possible without God.

Our authors also confirm that the worldly principle of retribution (the ethical world of Ricoeur) according to which virtue is rewarded while vice is punished, does not really hold. God's love is not conditioned on what good man does or the evil that he avoids. Creation is an act given freely by God and it is the responsibility of man to establish the foundation of justice and the application of this temporal justice for the good of the world and its inhabitants. However, the book leads to an interior journey where man realizes his inability even to understand the things that come to him in life and the little but important place he occupies in the universe. In the face of suffering, man's real quest for God and for meaning actually begins. As a figure who has lived beyond the ages, Job's greatness lies in the fact that he did not choose the easier way of hiding

¹⁰⁵⁵ Ibid. p 123.

¹⁰⁵⁶ Ibid. p 154.

away from the difficulties of life. He is an illuminating example of how the problems of life should be confronted; he is an illuminating example to the contemporary man who for the most time, in the face of difficulties, tends to the way of suicide to hide away from his fear of living.¹⁰⁵⁷ Man's finitude means that he can never have a suffering-free life and unless he establishes a personal relation with a transcendent subject of hope, it will be very difficult for him to accept his ontological status as a finite being. Jung's radical interpretation sees the encounter between the suffering Job and God as the catalyst bringing about the transformation of God and resulting in the Incarnation. God's suffering in Christ on the Cross is the answer He gives to Job.

Contrary to the impression *in some quarters* that *Book of Job* is archaic, the importance contemporary thinkers from all works of life attach to it, shows the perennial relevance of the history of Job even to a world that is not faith-centered. "Job" is the situation we live everyday and it demands interpretations from us on a daily basis. What is the meaning of life and suffering? The truth that emerges from the *Book of Job* is that life is a mystery and the only thing that makes this life worth living is a leap of faith into the unknown where God is found.

¹⁰⁵⁷ Radermakers, Jean, *Dieu, Job et la Sagesse*, p 277.

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