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Florian Wöller • Ueli Zahnd (eds.)

Dominican Culture, Dominican Theology

The Order of Preachers and Its Spheres of Action (1215 – ca. 1600)

Aschendorff Verlag

Archa Verbi
Subsidia, Vol. 24

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Yearbook for the Study of
Medieval Theology

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Annuarium Societatis Internationalis
pro Studiis Theologiae Medii Aevi promovendis

Annuaire de la Société Internationale pour l'Étude de la Théologie Médiévale
Annuario della Società Internazionale per lo Studio della Teologia Medievale
Anuario de la Sociedad Internacional para los Estudios de la Teología Medieval
Jahrbuch der Internationalen Gesellschaft für Theologische Mediävistik
Yearbook of the International Society for the Study of Medieval Theology

Subsidia

iussu Societatis edendum curaverunt
Jan C. Klok
Volker Leppin
Ulli Roth

curator
Jan C. Klok

Annemarie Pilarski
Ulrike Treusch
directorium Societatis

Krijn Pansters
praeses Societatis

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1. Auflage 2025

© 2025 The editors and authors. A publication by Aschendorff Verlag GmbH & Co. KG, Münster
This book is part of the Aschendorff Verlag Open Access program.

Aschendorff Verlag GmbH & Co. KG
Soester Straße 13
D-48155 Münster
buchverlag@aschendorff-buchverlag.de
www.aschendorff-buchverlag.de

ISSN 1865–2964
ISBN 978-3-402-10333-3 (Print)
ISBN 978-3-402-10334-0 (ePDF)
https://doi.org/10.17438/978-3-402-22688-9

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The Book of Job Through the Lens of the *Nicomachean Ethics*
Aristotelian Fortitude and Virtuousness of Job's Lamentation in Albert the Great's Commentary on Job 6:11–12

Marco Vorcelli

1. Introduction

The second section of the Book of Job, which stages the dialogues between the protagonist and his so-called friends, begins with Job desperately wishing that his existence be obliterated: "Perish the day in which I was born and the night in which it was said: 'A human being has been conceived!'" (Job 3:3).[1] Having lost everything—wealth, children, and health—at the hands of Satan, whose action, in turn, had been permitted by God (Job 1–2), Job initially displays his proverbial forbearance, affirming that the Lord's will must be accepted also in times of tribulation (Job 1:21; 2:10). Shortly afterwards, however, in Job 3:3, Job presents his situation as unbearable, stating that there can be no solution to it other than the complete annihilation of life. Eager to know why he has to endure such a tragic fate, Job engages in a lengthy conversation with his friends about the causes of his misfortunes, recurrently professing his innocence and lamenting the fact that God has punished him undeservedly. The words addressed to the Lord are sometimes so bold that Elihu, one of the participants in the disputation, accuses him of foolishness, lack of discipline, and even blasphemy (Job 34:35–37).

The abrupt transition from the traditional motifs of devout acceptance of misfortune to complaint has always been one of the most difficult hermeneutical challenges for any reader of *Job*.[2] At the outset of the story, Job is said to be "a simple and upright man, fearing God and withdrawing from evil" (Job 1:1), who offers sacrifices to God for each of his children every single day (Job 1:5). If the ensuing protest is to all intents and purposes an angry, if not blasphemous, reaction, this entails the sudden collapse of Job's piety and moral virtue. In other words, when Job gives free rein to lamentation, are we witnessing an unexpected shift from patience to impatience, from virtue to vice? If so, his conduct in the dialogues is clearly at odds with his conduct in the prologue and, as a result, the overall consistency of the biblical narrative is seriously at risk.

[1] The English translation of the Bible, patterned on the Latin Vulgate, is mine.

[2] Balentine, Samuel E.: *Have You Considered My Servant Job? Understanding the Biblical Archetype of Patience*, Columbia 2015, p. 10: "It is relatively easy to read and interpret these two genres, the prose and the poetry, separately, as if they were two discrete accounts of the Joban story. [...] It is a far greater challenge to hold both genres together, to begin with the prose, read through the poetry, then end by returning to the prose, which invites a final assessment of the whole story."

doi.org/10.17438/978-3-402-22705-3

In this article, I will show how the Dominican theologian Albert the Great (ca. 1200–1280), in his commentary on the Book of Job, the *Super Iob* (ca. 1274),[3] resorts to the notion of Aristotelian fortitude to account for Job's moral virtue during the complaint.[4] Traditionally enlisted amongst the four cardinal virtues, *fortitudo* was known in the 13th century also as an Aristotelian virtue, i.e., the 'courage' (ἀνδρεία) discussed in book III of the *Nicomachean Ethics*. From the early stages of his career, Albert the Great was well acquainted with both these traditions. Prior to the commentary on *Job*, he had already assimilated and reworked them in his ethical writings, especially in the *De bono* (ca. 1242) and in the two commentaries on the *Nicomachean Ethics*, the *Super Ethica* (1250–1252) and the *Ethica* (ca. 1262).[5]

At first glance, the notion of fortitude hardly seems to have a bearing on the Job of the dialogues, the 'impatient' Job. Employing this category as an interpretative means is *prima facie* more fitting for the prologue, where the protagonist is indeed strong and patient. Interestingly, a crucial source for medieval moral theorizing, Cicero's *De inventione* (1st century BCE), lists *patientia*—the virtue traditionally associated with Job's first reaction to misfortune—amongst the "parts" of *fortitudo*.[6] However, I believe Albert arrives at the most interesting conclusions

[3] Albertus Magnus: *Commentarii in Iob*, ed. Melchior Weiss, Freiburg 1904. In conformity with recent scholarship, I will refer to the work with the title *Super Iob*. The dates of Albert's works are taken from Anzulewicz, Henryk: "Zeittafel (Chronologie nach derzeitigem Forschungsstand)", in *Albertus Magnus und sein System der Wissenschaften*, Münster 2011, pp. 28–31.

[4] Albert's *Super Iob* has recently caught the attention of various scholars. For the general features of the work see Meyer, Ruth: "A Passionate Dispute Over Divine Providence: Albert the Great's Commentary on the Book of Job", in eds. Franklin T. Harkins/Aaron Canty: *A Companion to Job in the Middle Ages*, Leiden/Boston 2016, pp. 201–224; *ead.*: "'Hanc autem disputationem solus Deus determinare potest.' Das Buch Hiob als *disputatio* bei Albertus Magnus und Thomas von Aquin", in eds. Ludger Honnefelder/Hannes Möhle/Susana Bullido del Barrio: *Via Alberti. Texte – Quellen – Interpretationen*, Münster 2009, pp. 325–383; Harkins, Franklin T.: "Introduction", in St. Albert the Great: *On Job* (The Fathers of the Church), vol. 1, trad. Franklin T. Harkins, Washington D.C. 2019, pp. 3–46. Recent contributions have explored the connection between Albert's commentary on *Job* and his natural philosophy, showing how the Dominican employs zoological and botanical notions of his scientific *corpus* in the *Super Iob* (Perfetti, Stefano: "Biblical Exegesis and Aristotelian Naturalism: Albert the Great, Thomas Aquinas and the animals of the Book of Job", in *Aisthesis* 11/1 (2018), pp. 81–96; Cerrito, Amalia: "Botany as Science and Exegetical Tool in Albert the Great", in *Aisthesis* 11/1 (2018), pp. 97–107).

[5] The *Super Ethica* is the first complete commentary on the *Nicomachean Ethics* written in the Latin West. It was composed a few years after Robert Grosseteste provided the full Latin translation of Aristotle's work from the original Greek (ca. 1246–1248). At the time of the composition of the *De bono*, Albert could only read the fragmentary translations known as *Ethica vetus* and *Ethica nova*, which comprised books I–III of the *Nicomachean Ethics* (the account of courage was thus included). For an overview of Albert's ethical writings see Müller, Jörn: *Natürliche Moral und philosophische Ethik bei Albertus Magnus*, Münster 2001, pp. 62–73; Cunningham, Stanley B.: *Reclaiming Moral Agency. The Moral Philosophy of Albert the Great*, Washington D.C. 2008, pp. 24–45; Tracey, Martin J.: "The Moral Thought of Albert The Great", in ed. Irven M. Resnick: *A Companion to Albert the Great. Theology, Philosophy, and the Sciences*, Leiden/Boston 2013, pp. 347–379.

[6] Cicero: *De inventione* II, 54, 163: "Eius [fortitudinis] partes magnificentia, fidentia, patientia, perseverantia."

when he reads Job's lamentation through the lens of Aristotle's 'courage'. In doing so, he also subtly rethinks the virtues of fortitude and patience in a highly original way.

As we will see, Albert is well aware that not every trait of Aristotelian fortitude is suitable to the character of Job. Nevertheless, there are features of the *Nicomachean Ethics*' courageous person that, albeit implicitly, he positively attributes to the protagonist of the story. In order to appreciate the presence of these aspects in the *Super Iob*, I will first point out the main characteristics of Aristotle's courage and analyze how Albert interprets them in his moral works. I will then go on to show how the Dominican originally employs them in commenting upon Job 6:11–12.

What will emerge from my reconstruction is a virtuous portrayal of Job also in the dialogues, although here his virtue is somewhat different from the renowned forbearance of the prologue: when complaining about his painful condition, Job is truly strong and patient, but only if we bear in mind some features of Aristotelian fortitude. This conclusion has very important implications for a comprehensive reading of the biblical narrative. In fact, if Job is still the righteous man depicted in the prologue, however different his words and actions may be, the charge of undue transition from patience to impatience no longer holds. Thus, by detecting an element of continuity in Job's demeanor, Albert safeguards not only the protagonist's moral virtue, but also the coherency of the book.

2. Aristotle's Courage and Albert's *fortitudo*

If we recall Aristotle's definition of courage, it is immediately evident that Job's case, which, as Albert notices, has mostly to do with physical pain (*dolor*) and internal suffering (*tristitia*),[7] can hardly fall within its ambit. According to book III of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, courage is a mean disposition with regard to both fear and confidence,[8] although it is chiefly concerned with the former.[9] In particular, amongst the many fearful things, courage pertains to the most terrible, i.e, death, especially to the one chosen on the battlefield for the sake of the city-state.[10] Dealing with the cardinal virtue of fortitude in treatise II of the *De bono*, Albert explicitly endorses Aristotle's approach of defining a specific subject matter (*materia principalis*) for this virtue. Indeed, he states that *fortitudo* primarily consists in facing violent death coming from the outside (*mors illata*),[11] in particular death confronted in warfare.[12]

7 Albertus Magnus *Super Iob* 30:16–17, ed. Weiss, col. 346, ll. 7–31.

8 Aristoteles: *Ethica Nicomachea* III, 6, 1115a6–7. For the Aristotelian writings quoted, I follow the division into chapters of Aristoteles: *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, ed. Jonathan Barnes, 2 vols., Princeton NJ 1984.

9 *Ibid.*, III, 9, 1117a29–30.

10 *Ibid.*, III, 6, 1115a24–35.

11 Albertus Magnus: *De bono* II, q. 1, art. 2, eds. Heinrich Kühle/Carl Feckes/Bernhard Geyer/Wilhelm Kübel (Opera Omnia. Editio Coloniensis 28), Münster 1951, p. 86, l. 83–p. 87, l. 6.

12 *Ibid.*, II, q. 1, art. 1, p. 85, ll. 26–27. On Albert's conception of fortitude (and of cardinal virtues in general) see Müller, Jörn: "In War and Peace: The Virtue of Courage in the

In view of this account of courage, it follows that the exercise of this virtue is physically and psychologically painful.[13] Notwithstanding this, the aim for which the courageous man endures, i.e., victory, is beautiful (καλόν) and pleasant. Both Albert's *De bono* and *Super Ethica* recast this idea by drawing the sharp distinction between *tristitia* (or *dolor*) *in sensu* and *gaudium* (or *delectatio*) *in ratione*: the former is the pain invariably perceived in an act of courage, whereas the latter is the joy accompanying the consideration of the noble end one could obtain.[14] To quote Albert's words, "though no one rejoices in death *qua* death, nevertheless, we rejoice in it inasmuch as it is comprised in a virtuous action."[15] The condition of the courageous is similar to that of the boxer, for whom training and fighting are undoubtedly painful, but the reward in the case of victory pleasant. Only because of the possibility of attaining the end is the boxer willing to go through the distress of training and fighting.[16] The idea that being strong (*fortis*) consists in resisting for the sake of an objective prominently features in the *De bono*'s treatment of the 'passive parts' of fortitude, i.e., those responsible for a moral agent's capacity for endurance. These are patience and perseverance, Joban virtues *par excellence*.[17]

One more aspect of Aristotelian courage need be considered in order to appreciate Albert's exegesis of *Job*. According to the *Nicomachean Ethics*, there are dangers, for instance, floods and earthquakes, that go beyond human strength and should be frightening for any sensible man.[18] Not feeling fear in such extreme cases, a characteristic of irrational barbarous people, is a sign of sheer madness.[19] However, Aristotle suggests that it is equally foolish not to be scared in more ordinary circumstances. The right amount of fear in the face of danger is a fitting moral response and does not tarnish an act of courage in the slightest, since the complete lack of fear is inappropriate and contrary to virtue.[20]

Writings of Albert the Great and Thomas Aquinas", in ed. István P. Bejczy: *Virtue Ethics in the Middle Ages. Commentaries on Aristotle's* Nicomachean Ethics*, 1200–1500*, Leiden/Boston 2008, pp. 77–99; Bejczy, István P.: *The Cardinal Virtues in the Middle Ages. A Study in Moral Thought from the Fourth to the Fourteenth Century*, Leiden/Boston 2011, pp. 172–174; *id.*: "The Cardinal Virtues in Medieval Commentaries on the *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1250–1350", in ed. Bejczy 2008, pp. 199–222: 204–205 and 217.

13 Aristoteles *Ethica Nicomachea* III, 9, 1117a32–35.

14 Albertus Magnus *De bono* II, q. 1, art. 2, eds. Kühle/Feckes/Geyer/Kübel, p. 88, ll. 14–19; *id.*: *Super Ethica* III, lec. xi, ed. Wilhelm Kübel (Opera Omnia. Editio coloniensis 14), Münster 1968–1987, p. 195, ll. 76–82; p. 196, ll. 1–3 and 56–61; p. 197, ll. 1–5.

15 *Id. Super Ethica* II, lec. ii, ed. Kübel, p. 98, ll. 8–10: "quamvis nullus gaudeat de morte, inquantum mors est, gaudet tamen de ea, inquantum substat operationi virtutis." All translations of Latin sources, save Albert's *Super Iob*, are mine.

16 Aristoteles *Ethica Nicomachea* III, 9, 1117a35–b6.

17 See for instance Albertus Magnus *De bono* II, q. 2, art. 8, eds. Kühle/Feckes/Geyer/Kübel, p. 111, ll. 47–53; *ibid.*, II, q. 2, art. 9, p. 111, ll. 82–84: "Its proper act [of perseverance] is the firm intention of bearing a difficulty until victory and of refusing to give in because of the abiding presence of the difficulty."

18 Aristoteles *Ethica Nicomachea* III, 7, 1115b6–10.

19 *Ibid.*, III, 7, 1115b23–27.

20 Nussbaum, Martha C.: "Aristotle on Emotions and Rational Persuasion", in ed. Amélie Rorty: *Essays on Aristotle's Rhetoric*, Berkeley/Los Angeles/London 1996, pp. 303–323: 314–315: "A person who is completely without fear does not strike Aristotle as virtuous

It is likely that in Aristotle's mind fearlessness is a form of brutishness (θηριότης), the subhuman state of character depicted in book VII of the *Nicomachean Ethics*. Indeed, brutishness is attributed to far-off barbarous people, thoughtless and reliant on sense perception alone.[21] Given this description, they do not seem to differ from the insensible individuals undisturbed by floods and earthquakes. Moreover, if being afraid of everything, even of the most harmless things, is for Aristotle brutish,[22] we are led to believe that the opposite behavior, i.e., fearing nothing, is no less brutish. Interestingly, Albert's *Ethica* portrays fearfulness and fearlessness in strikingly similar terms: despite being opposing traits of character, they both make us numb, thus having a detrimental effect on our capacity to think rationally, choose wisely, and be firm in our decisions. Accordingly, both the person who experiences excessive fear (*formidolosus*) and the one who does not feel it at all (*insanus*, *insensibilis*) are far from being virtuous.[23]

3. "My Fortitude Is not the Fortitude of Stones": Job's Aristotelian Patience

The immediate reason why the *Super Iob* introduces the category of fortitude is the occurrence of the word *fortitudo* in the Book of Job itself. In a heated discussion with the protagonist, Eliphaz, one of the alleged friends, accuses Job of having lost all his highly prized virtues as soon as misfortunes befell him: "Where is your fear [of God], your fortitude (*fortitudo*)? Your patience and the perfection of your ways?" (Job 4:6). Job's reply to these charges is the following: "What is my fortitude (*fortitudo*) that I might hold up? And what is my end that I should be patient? My fortitude is not the fortitude of stones, nor is my flesh of bronze" (Job 6:11–12).[24] Albert comments upon the first part of Job's answer in this way:

> *What is my fortitude*, which is human, *that I might hold up*, that is, that I might be able to withstand so many and such great tribulations, as if he were saying, 'None'. [...] *[A]nd what is my end*, which I could reach after such great tribulations, *that*, by hoping for that end, *I should be patient?* Indeed, Aristotle proves in Book III of the *Ethics* that a strong man (*fortis*) does not

[...] but, rather, as unbalanced." See also Leighton, Stephen R.: "Aristotle's Courageous Passions", in *Phronesis* 33/1 (1988), pp. 76–99: 88–94.

21 Aristoteles *Ethica Nicomachea* VII, 5, 1149a8–10.

22 *Ibid.*, VII, 5, 1149a5–8.

23 Albertus Magnus: *Ethica* III, 2, 5, ed. Auguste Borgnet (Opera Omnia 7), Paris 1894, cols. 240b–241a: "no sooner does the fearful person (*formidolosus*) come across a danger than his heart is almost frozen by fear. He thus becomes benumbed (*stupidus*) and incapable of knowing, choosing, and being firm (*nec sciens, nec eligens, nec firmus*) [...]. Insane people (*insani*) [...] have no awareness of danger. Insensitive people (*insensibiles*) [...] throw themselves at painful things as if they had no perception of pain (*sensus doloris*) in dangers, which neither do they recognize, nor choose for the sake of something, and do not have a firm and unshakable will (*nec sciunt, nec eligunt propter aliquid, nec firmam et immobilem habent voluntatem*). The whole goodness of virtue consists precisely in these three things."

24 Iob 6:11–12 (Vulg.): "Quae est enim fortitudo mea, ut sustineam? Aut quis finis meus, ut patienter agam? Nec fortitudo lapidum fortitudo mea, nec caro mea aenea est."

withstand great evils valiantly and patiently unless by hoping for a great good, which he hopes to gain through great evils. But he who has been delivered into the power of Satan does not hope for a great good.[25]

In this passage, the Dominican explicitly refers to the previously expounded idea of the *Nicomachean Ethics* according to which the courageous person is willing to subject himself to the pain necessarily involved in an act of fortitude only if he has an end (*finis*) to achieve. The effort expected of him goes hand in hand with the hope of obtaining the aim. Therefore, according to Albert, when Job asks "what is my end that I should be patient?" (Job 6:11), he is claiming that, in the absence of any good end, he has no possibility of being strong (*fortis*) because of the very nature of Aristotelian courage.

It is noteworthy that Job's fortitude is qualified as human. It is as if Albert wanted to remind us what we can reasonably expect of Job *qua* human being. Regardless of his virtue, a man cannot but act in the way we specified, i.e., sustain (*sustinere*) evil insofar as there is hope for a positive end. Asking for more, however, namely, that one be capable of enduring sufferings under any circumstances, would be exacting not human, but heroic virtue.

In Robert Grosseteste's translation of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, heroic virtue (*virtus heroica*) is the superhuman, godlike disposition mentioned at the beginning of book VII. Within the classification of habits, it is opposed to brutishness (*bestialitas*) in the same way in which virtue is opposed to vice and continence to incontinence.[26] Aristotle devotes only a fleeting remark to it, probably introducing it for consistency's sake, so that each negative state has a positive counterpart.[27] Thus, without any detailed treatment, it remains just an empty label. On the contrary, Albert's *Super Ethica* and *Ethica* provide a more definite outline of this notion: by *virtus heroica* they mean the state of character virtually equivalent to a type of self-restraint which secures the complete liberation from the passions of the soul. Furthermore, the Dominican identifies it with the virtues of the purged mind (*virtutes purgati animi*) of Macrobius' *Commentarium in Somnium Scipionis* (5th century CE), i.e., the virtues which cleanse the soul from all the "filthiness" of the world.[28] Thus redefined, heroic virtue comes to occupy a precise position in the taxonomy of the states of character, standing at a higher level than "ordinary" moral virtue.

[25] Albertus Magnus *Super Iob* 6:11, ed. Weiss, col. 101, l. 45–col. 102, l. 13: "*Quae est enim fortitudo mea*, humana sc., *ut sustineam*, hoc est sustinere possim tot et tanta, quasi dicat: nulla. [...] *aut quis finis meus*, quem sc. ex tantis tribulationibus consequi possim, *ut*, supple spe illius finis, *patienter agam*? Probat enim Aristoteles in III. Ethicorum, quia fortis fortiter et patienter non sustinet magna mala, nisi spe magni boni, quod per magna mala sperat adipisci. Spem autem magni boni non habet, qui in potestatem Satanae traditus est." In the quotations from the *Super Iob*, the biblical lines are in italics. The English translation is from Harkins 2019, p. 154, with some modifications by me.

[26] Aristoteles *Ethica Nicomachea* VII, 1, 1145a15–20.

[27] Urmson, James O.: "Aristotle's Doctrine of the Mean", in ed. Amélie Rorty: *Essays on Aristotle's Ethics*, Berkeley/Los Angeles/London 1980, pp. 157–170: 158.

[28] For Albert's understanding of *virtus heroica* see Costa, Jacopo: "Heroic Virtue in the Commentary Tradition on the *Nicomachean Ethics* in the Second Half of the Thirteenth Century", in ed. Bejczy 2008, pp. 153–172: 156–160.

Therefore, when he states that his fortitude is human and asks where the end for which it is worth being patient is, Job is reminding his friend Eliphaz who rebukes him that, without any objective, he cannot be strong according to human fortitude, since it requires as a necessary element the presence of an end. Like the boxer of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, one can bear fatigue and pain *if* honors await us in the end. On condition that a rewarding outcome is possible, we know how to persevere along the way, however burdensome it can be.[29] But if the effort is severed from the aim, if we see no prize at the end of the path, being strong and enduring evil—let alone 'purifying' oneself from the passion of pain—seem to call for a heroic effort. With a remarkable capacity for psychological penetration, Albert lays before our eyes the tragedy of gratuitous suffering: more often than not, evil strikes us and we cannot distinguish a reason, we just do not understand why.

Of course, God's perfect wisdom, unfathomable for human beings, does not distribute punishments and rewards by mere chance. The *Super Iob* suggests various explanations as to why God allowed Satan to make Job suffer: maybe He wanted to test his virtue or maybe He wanted to offer him an opportunity to exhibit steadfastness (*constantia*), so that he could set an example for all of us.[30] However, from Job's human standpoint, tribulation lacks a clear motive: it does not make any sense. And when this occurs, maintains Albert in the *De bono*, pain becomes even more excruciating:

> The consideration of the reward diminishes the intensity of suffering (*vis flagelli*), not suffering itself and the perception of it. On the other hand, the intensity of suffering [...] distracts from the consideration of the reward. Therefore, if the reward is little or there is none, suffering (*tristitia*) increases to the extent that even the strong (*fortis*) is either overwhelmed by it or yields to it, *because he does not know why he is suffering*.[31]

Although it does not change the entity of pain *per se*, the imagination of a prize makes our efforts reasonable and endurable: at least we know they are not vain. But when the prize is taken out of the picture, action seems pointless and pain all the more unbearable.

To conclude, if the exercise of Aristotelian fortitude needs the presence of an aim, Job is not and cannot be strong in the *Nicomachean Ethics*' terms. The biblical Job does not share the 'cognitive situation' of the one featured in the

[29] Lodovici, Giacomo S.: "Resistenza e lotta: la fortezza (morale)", in *Divus Thomas* 122/2 (2019), pp. 296–324: 297: "Viktor Frankl (psychologist and psychotherapist imprisoned in Nazi lagers) verified in extermination camps that, sometimes, the physically strong succumbed, whereas the physically weak managed to save their lives, they survived, if and when the life of the physically weak (unlike that of some of the physically strong) had a grand objective for which it was worth suffering and for which it was worth exerting fortitude, a grand objective they hoped to obtain" (transl. mine).

[30] Albertus Magnus *Super Iob* 1:5, ed. Weiss, col. 23, ll. 35–37; *ibid.*, 10, col. 143, ll. 41–44; *ibid.*, 16, col. 202, l. 46–col. 203, l. 1.

[31] Albertus Magnus *De bono* II, q. 1, art. 5, eds. Kühle/Feckes/Geyer/Kübel, p. 94, ll. 50–57: "consideratio praemii diminuit vim flagelli, non flagellum ipsum vel sensum ipsius. Vis enim flagelli facit cedere flagellatum a proposito vel bono, et quoad hoc diminuit consideratio praemii. Unde si parvum vel nullum esset praemium, adeo ingravesceret tristitia, quod fortis aut absorberetur tristitia vel cederet, cum nesciret, quare pateretur."

Testament of Job (2nd century BCE–2nd century CE).[32] In this apocryphal version of the story, which circulated in the Latin Middle Ages, Job knows from the outset that his patience will be rewarded in the end. Interestingly, he is oftentimes compared to a warrior or to an athlete that, similarly to the *Nicomachean Ethics*' boxer, fights for the crown.[33] The canonical Job, on the contrary, finds himself in the middle of misfortunes with no apparent prospect of success. How can we ask him to be strong and resist?

However, in commenting upon the rest of Job's answer to Eliphaz (Job 6:12: "My fortitude is not the fortitude of stones, nor is my flesh of bronze"), Albert hints at a fundamental feature of Aristotelian courage which Job fully possesses:

> Explaining this, Job said: *My fortitude is not the fortitude of stones*, as if I were insensitive (*insensibilis*). [...] *[N]or is my flesh of bronze*, so that if it is shattered, it could be recast in the same form and appearance and reforged like new. Job 14:14: 'Do you think that a dead man might live again?' that is, in this mortal life, as if he were saying, 'No'.[34]

Eliphaz wants Job's resistance to be like that of stone and bronze. Job retorts that it cannot and should not be so, otherwise he would be insensitive. In the *Moralia in Iob* (6th century), Gregory the Great had already interpreted Job 6:12 as a critique of insensitivity. In his exegesis, stone and bronze symbolize a wicked form of fortitude, i.e., the insensitivity of the obstinate sinner, who disregards God's correction by way of suffering. His typical trait is to persevere stubbornly in his evil course of action notwithstanding God's intervention.[35] In particular, stone, which is lifeless and makes no sound when struck, represents those who fail to humbly recognize their faults when God punishes them. Bronze, which makes a sound but is inert matter nonetheless, stands for those who utter pious words during God's trial, but neither keep their promises nor are sincere in what they say.[36] Hence, within Gregory's exegetical framework, when Job claims to be neither stone nor bronze, he wants to assert that he is immune to such vices. A similar reading of Job 6:12, in the form of a collection of excerpts from the *Moralia*, can still be found in the first half of the 13th century in the *Postillae in totam Bibliam* by the Dominican Hugh of St. Cher (1200 ca.–1263).[37]

[32] Larrimore, Mark: *The Book of Job. A Biography*, Princeton NJ/Oxford 2013, p. 42.

[33] On the *Testament of Job* see *ibid.*, pp. 40–49; Balentine 2015, pp. 20–29.

[34] Albertus Magnus *Super Iob* 6:12, ed. Weiss, col. 102, ll. 23–33: "Quod explanans dixit: *Nec fortitudo lapidum fortitudo mea*, ut sc. sim insensibilis. [...] *nec caro mea aenea*, ut sc. contrita iterum possit refundi in eandem formam et speciem. Iob XIV, 14: 'Putasne mortuus homo rursum vivat?' hac sc. mortali vita, quasi dicat: non"; trad. Harkins 2019, p. 155 (modified).

[35] Gregorius Magnus: *Moralia in Iob*, VII, 22, 26, ed. Marc Adriaen (CChr.SL 143), Turnhout 1979–1985, pp. 350–351, ll. 2–5: "What is denoted here by bronze and stones if not the hearts of insensitive people (*insensibiles homines*), who oftentimes receive strokes from above, and yet are not softened by the beating of any discipline?"

[36] *Ibid.*, VII, 22, 26, p. 351, ll. 9–24.

[37] Hugo de Sancto Caro: *Biblia cum postillis Hugonis de Sancto Caro. Prima pars* [...] *continens textum una cum postilla* [...] *librorum infra signatorum, videlicet Genesis, Exodi, Leuitici, Numeri, Deuteronomii, Josue, Judicum, Ruth, Regum IIII, Paralipomenon II, Esdre IIII, Tobie, Judith, Hester, Job*, Basel 1498. Gregory's *Moralia* were transmitted to the 13th century thanks to the *Glossa ordinaria* (middle of the 12th century), which, for the Book of Job, is nothing but a very

In my opinion, Albert interprets Job's insensitivity somewhat differently. Indeed, when he comments upon Job 6:12 by simply adding the word *insensibilis*, he does not seem to be thinking of insensitivity in the Gregorian sense. As in the previously analyzed passage, he is working, though this time implicitly, with Aristotle's conception of courage in mind: afflicted both in the flesh and in the spirit, Job cries—rightly—that he cannot be insensitive like stone, because if he were, he would make the same mistake as the deranged individuals of the *Nicomachean Ethics* who lack the due amount of fear. The rare folly of those who are never afraid is analogous to that of those who do not suffer when confronted with hardship. Being as hard as stone is not patience, but insanity; manifesting pain in tragic circumstances is not impatience, but is perfectly in keeping with Aristotle's account of courage.

Obviously, the parallel between the two situations is a formal one, so to speak. As I have pointed out, the Book of Job is only accidentally concerned with fear, having other emotions, namely, pain (*dolor*) and suffering (*tristitia*), as primary subject matter. Nevertheless, Albert shrewdly recognizes a similarity between insensitivity to danger and insensitivity to pain: both are forms of incapacity to perceive and, therefore, of appalling stupidity. The concept of *insensibilitas* effectively comprises either aspect, since it denotes the inability to be aware of evil that cannot but appear monstrous to any rational being.[38] If Job experienced no pain, he would be as brutish as the barbarous people portrayed by Aristotle, who do not flinch even at floods and earthquakes.

This last consideration leads to an interesting conclusion. I have argued that in Albert's commentary on Job 6:11, Job's human fortitude is distinguished from the heroic forbearance which transcends the limits of ordinary virtue. In the commentary on Job 6:12, instead, Job's conduct is starkly contrasted to brutishness, which, according to the *Nicomachean Ethics*' hierarchy of habits, is exactly the opposite of heroic virtue. Thus, when he asks what the purpose of resisting without an end is, Job reveals that he does not possess superhuman virtue, which as such is not expected of human beings. Subsequently, by acknowledging the presence of pain and complaining vehemently about it, he avoids slipping into a beastlike, subhuman state. Unable to attain what is too high and refraining from what is too low, Job locates himself in the middle, striking the moral goodness within the reach of human nature.

This picture is reinforced in the commentary on the second part of Job 6:12, which introduces the comparison with bronze: "*nor is my flesh of bronze*, so that if it is shattered, it could be recast in the same form and appearance and reforged like new."[39] As we have seen, Gregory the Great based his exegesis on bronze's (*aes*) capacity to make sounds. The *Super Iob* picks out a different quality, namely,

skillful abbreviation of Gregory's text (Smith, Lesley: "Job in the *Glossa Ordinaria* on the Bible", in eds. Harkins/Canty 2016, pp. 101–128).

[38] The profound connection between lack of perception and stupidity is evident in the word with which Harkins aptly renders Albert's *insensibilis*, i.e., "insensate" (Harkins 2019, p. 155): indeed, this English word indicates both the person incapable of feeling and the person devoid of judgment.

[39] Albertus Magnus *Super Iob* 6:12, ed. Weiss, col. 102, ll. 28–31: "nec caro mea aenea, ut sc. contrita iterum possit refundi in eandem formam et speciem"; trad. Harkins 2019, p. 155.

the fact that damaged bronze can reacquire its former shape if melted again. This is not possible for the human body, which cannot be healed if struck severely. In Albert's reading, when Job reminds his friends that his flesh is not made of bronze, he is drawing attention to his human vulnerability, both physical and mental. The underlying message is that if he were capable of adapting himself immediately even to the most painful reversals of fortune, just as melted bronze takes on any shape as soon as it is poured into the mold, he would be once again unduly insensitive. Being impervious to external events is by no means being strong or resistant: on the contrary, it is being guilty of an excessive and blameworthy form of resilience.[40]

The idea that suffering prompts perceptive, rational creatures to lament is prominent in another passage of Albert's commentary on Iob 6. Before the comparison with stone and bronze, Job evokes the behavior of two animals, the wild ass (*onager*) and the ox (*bos*). With a rhetorical question, he asks whether they complain when they are given food in abundance: "Can it be that the wild ass brays when it has grass? Or that the ox lows when it stands before a full trough?" (Job 6:5).[41] Albert's explanation of these lines is the following:

Can it be that the wild ass brays [...] *when it has grass*? [...] [A]nd he [Job] reveals his intention by stating the opposite, as if he were saying: 'It does not bray in the presence of something delightful, but in its absence.' [...] Then Job introduces a second metaphor, revealing his intention in the opposite, as in the earlier metaphor: *or that the ox lows*, that is, from the necessity of hunger, *when it stands before a full trough*?, as if he were saying, 'No.' [...] It is as if Job were saying: 'If irrational beasts, which do not know how to weigh (*ponderare*) their own punishments, bellow for something delightful that has been lost, what wonder is it (*quid mirum*) if I, a rational being who does weigh faults and punishments, cry out at the loss of such great goods?'[42]

[40] In contrast to Albert's minimalistic exegesis, consisting of two scanty—though extremely insightful—remarks, Thomas Aquinas comments upon Job 6:12 with a longer and more explicit reasoning: "*My fortitude is not the fortitude of stones*: indeed, the fortitude of stones is without perception (*sine sensu*), whereas the fortitude of man is accompanied with the perception of harmful things. This is why Job adds *nor is my flesh of bronze*, i.e., without perception (*sine sensu*), because, however strong a mortal man's reason can be, nevertheless, it is necessary to perceive the sensation of pain (*sensus doloris*) in the flesh. This rules out Eliphaz's accusation, who had reproached the blessed Job for experiencing suffering (*tristitia*)" (Thomas de Aquino: *Expositio super Iob ad litteram* 6:12, ed. Leonina 26, Rome 1965, p. 43, ll. 151–160). While for Gregory and Albert stone and bronze refer to two distinct, though similar, aspects, for Thomas they both represent the absence of perception. The fortitude of stone and bronze is the mere hardness of inanimate objects lacking the capacity to feel which is distinctive of human beings, whose fortitude, on the contrary, entails the sensation of pain. It is thus clear that Thomas, as much as Albert, is inimical to conceiving fortitude as the ability to suppress suffering in the face of hardship. See Chardonnens, Denis: *L'homme sous le regard de la providence. Providence de Dieu et condition humaine selon l'*Exposition littérale sur le Livre de Job *de Thomas d'Aquin*, Paris 1997, pp. 186–190; Vijgen, Jörgen: "Job, Aquinas, and the Philosopher", in eds. Matthew Levering/Piotr Roszak/Jörgen Vijgen: *Reading Job with St. Thomas Aquinas*, Washington, D.C. 2020, pp. 42–67: 50–52.

[41] Job 6:5 (Vulg.): "Numquid rugiet onager cum habuerit herbam? Aut mugiet bos cum ante praesepe plenum steterit?"

[42] Albertus Magnus *Super Iob* 6:5, ed. Weiss, col. 99, ll. 14–36: "*Numquid rugiet onager* [...] *cum habuerit herbam*? [...] [E]t ostendit propositum in opposito, ac si dicat: In praesentia

As Aristotle maintains in the *Politics*, animals are only in possession of a φωνή/*vox* with which they convey sensations of pleasure and distress, whereas the λόγος/*sermo* to communicate also the expedient and the inexpedient, the just and the unjust, the good and the evil is proper to man alone.[43] The wild ass and the ox of the Bible thereby exemplify a common feature of animals. In commenting upon Job 6:5, Albert argues that if even animals that are devoid of reason lament the absence of their goods, should one marvel at the fact that Job, a human being capable of rationally pondering his condition, complains about his plight? If animals endowed with sense perception alone and lacking any deeper evaluative ability suffer, *a fortiori* man cannot but suffer for the loss of his goods. In other words, for a human being, it is the absence of lamentation rather than its presence that is abnormal: it is the sign of a dense, numb mind. The sensation of pain, instead, derives from the rational appraisal of a situation, the "rational perception" of it: with greater intelligence comes greater sorrow.

4. The Virtuousness of Job's Lamentation

One could wonder if the methodological angle adopted in this article, i.e., reading the *Super Iob* through the lens of Albert's philosophical ethics, is a legitimate one. In fact, in the wake of some of the Dominican's statements, scholars have usually considered his theology and hermeneutics strictly separate from his philosophy, as if the commentator of Aristotle had very little to do with the theologian and the biblical exegete.[44] However, by laying excessive emphasis on the distinction between the two realms, we risk presenting Albert as a rather schizophrenic mind, with the result of being led astray from understanding the profound intention of his unitary intellectual enterprise. As recent contributions

delectabilis non rugiet, sed in absentia. [...] Et inducit secundam similitudinem sicut prius propositum probans in opposito: *aut mugiet bos*, necessitate sc. famis, *cum ante plenum praesepe steterit?* quasi dicat: non. [...] Ac si dicat: si animalia irrationabilia, quae poenas suas ponderare nesciunt, rugiunt amisso delectabili, quid mirum, si ego rationabilis, qui culpas et poenas pondero, in amissione tantorum rugio bonorum"; trad. Harkins 2019, pp. 151–152 (modified).

[43] Aristoteles *Politica* I, 2, 1253a7–18. Elaborating on this passage in his commentary on the *Politics* (after 1264), Albert defines human *sermo* as *significativus*, *articulatus*, and *litteratus*: through the articulation of speech, it allows men to express meanings that can be codified with graphic signs (Albertus Magnus: *Politica* I, 1, ed. Auguste Borgnet [Opera Omnia 8], Paris 1891, col. 14a). The contrast between animal *vox* and human *sermo* is further developed by Albert in the *De animalibus* (1258–1263 ca.). See Resnick, Irven M./Kitchell, Kenneth F., Jr.: "Albert the Great on the 'Language' of Animals", in *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 70/1 (1996), pp. 41–61: 45–48; Perfetti, Stefano: *Nature imperfette. Umano, subumano e animale nel pensiero di Alberto Magno* (Philosophica), Pisa 2020, pp. 35–42, who provides further bibliographical references.

[44] On the separation of the two fields with respect to ethics see Dunbabin, Jean: "The Two Commentaries of Albertus Magnus on the Nichomachean Ethics", in *Recherches de théologie ancienne et médiévale* 30/2 (1963), pp. 232–250; Tracey, Martin J.: "*Prudentia* in the Parisian theological *summae* of William of Auxerre, Philip the Chancellor, and Albert the Great", in eds. Honnefelder/Möhle/Bullido del Barrio 2009, pp. 267–193: 287–288.

have documented, in his biblical commentaries the Dominican amply resorts to his previous philosophical and scientific inquiries, oftentimes recasting them in more elaborate and innovative forms.[45] Hence, the connection between *sacra doctrina* and the achievements of rational investigation is deep and explicit in his *corpus*. From a professional viewpoint, Albert was first and foremost a theologian, a biblical exegete (*magister in sacra pagina*), and a preacher, but he was also profoundly attracted to what science and philosophy had to offer. Regarding them as pivotal allies for his tasks, he thoroughly assimilated the main scientific and philosophical authorities of the time, above all Aristotle, so as to be better equipped to shed light on the contents of revelation and unveil the innermost *intentio* of the sacred page. My reading of the *Super Iob* is also an attempt to rethink the figure of the Dominican in this direction.

As for the specific topic of this article, we can conclude that Albert's exegesis of Job 6:11–12 allowed us to comprehend what Job's patience in the dialogues consists in: even when he laments, Job is truly strong (*fortis*) and patient, provided that we bear in mind some features of Aristotelian fortitude. By referring to the *Nicomachean Ethics*' critique of the madness of the fearless, Albert reminds us—in the cryptic and allusive fashion I tried to decipher—that insensitivity to pain is not fortitude and that complaining about suffering is an indication of virtue, not of vice. When evil tragically befalls men, the perception and exhibition of pain is the moral response appropriate to the situation. Thus, reworked through the confrontation with the *Nicomachean Ethics*, the traditional concepts of *fortitudo* and *patientia* take on a new, Aristotelian form: rather than ruling out the manifestation of pain, they comprise it as a constitutive element. One could say, almost paradoxically, that Job is strong and patient not in spite of lamentation, but *because* of lamentation.

This Aristotelian reading of Job's patience is also instrumental in solving the hermeneutical challenge mentioned in the introduction, i.e., the alleged contrast between the patient Job of the prologue and the apparently impatient Job of the dialogues. The *Super Iob* shows that the protagonist is morally upright both when he accepts God's will and when he seems to boldly defy His order: in the former case his virtue is more evident and traditional, whereas in the latter it must be intended in the way I have illustrated. In both circumstances, however, one can safely talk of virtue. Therefore, Albert succeeds in considerably reducing the opposition between the prologue and the dialogues, thus guaranteeing the consistency of the Book of Job as a whole.[46]

[45] Perfetti 2018; *id.*: "Filosofia naturale e trasformazione morale. Alberto Magno interprete del 'Cantico della vigna' (Isaia, 5, 1–7)", in eds. Luca M. Bianchi/Onorato Grassi/Cecilia Panti: *Edizioni, traduzioni e tradizioni filosofiche (secoli XII–XVI). Studi per Pietro B. Rossi*, Rome 2018, pp. 341–352; *id.*: "*Adveniat regnum tuum*. Dionysian schemes of divine kingship and foundation of the 'political' in Albert the Great's commentary on *Matthew* 6,10", in *Divus Thomas* 122/2 (2019), pp. 79–112; Cerrito 2018; *ead.*: "*Paternitas naturalis* and *Paternitas divina*: Albert the Great on *Matthew* 6,9 and *Luke* 11,2", in *Divus Thomas* 122/2 (2019), pp. 59–79.

[46] It should be borne in mind that also in the prologue Job is not insensitive to pain. When informed by his servants of the loss of his fortune and the death of his children, he immediately arises, tears his clothes, shaves his head, and falls back on the ground (Job 1:20).

Recognizing the legitimacy and righteousness of lamentation is a significant novelty in the history of Joban exegesis. Gregory the Great's *Moralia in Iob*, a landmark for any Christian medieval exegete, are somewhat inconsistent in evaluating Job's conduct.[47] At times, Gregory is at pains to demonstrate that Job is not complaining at all and is for this reason guiltless. More often than not, this conclusion is achieved at the cost of rather unpersuasive allegorical interpretations, which completely reverse the literal meaning of the biblical lines.[48] On other occasions, instead, keeping himself closer to the *littera* of the text, Gregory admits that Job does indeed protest against God, thus committing a very terrible sin. In both cases, his reading rests upon the conviction that any form of protest is *ipso facto* sinful: either Job preserves his integrity by refraining from complaining or, if he complains, he lapses into vice.

With the conceptual tools he had acquired by mastering the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Albert defends instead the virtuousness of Job's lamentation. To protest about the worst sufferings is in no way an act of vicious impatience. On the contrary, it is the expression of the moral virtue that one could label 'Aristotelian patience'. If he did not strongly react to tribulations, Job would be very far from being virtuous. He would be as insensitive as stone.

Albert comments upon the patient declarations of Job 1:21 by referring to the *Nicomachean Ethics*' depiction of the blessed person's reaction to adversities (Albertus Magnus *Super Iob* 1:20, ed. Weiss, col. 37, ll. 28–32). According to Aristotle, the blessed person (*felix*) is certainly foursquare in the face of the blows of misfortune (Aristoteles *Ethica Nicomachea* I, 10, 1100b22). This does not mean, however, that he is insensitive to pain: as Albert points out in his *Ethica*, this is the behavior of silly people and donkeys (*fatui et asini*) and is by no means appropriate to the *felix* (Albertus Magnus *Ethica* I, 7, 12, ed. Borgnet col. 125b).

47 Straw, Carole: "Job's Sin in the *Moralia* of Gregory the Great", in eds. Harkins/Canty 2016, pp. 69–100: 86–99.

48 *Ibid.*, pp. 79–84.