

EMOTIONS IN MEDIEVAL THOUGHT

No single theory of the emotions dominates the whole of the Middle Ages. Instead, there are several competing accounts, and differences of opinion – sometimes quite dramatic – within each account. Yet there is consensus on the scope and nature of a theory of the emotions, as well as on its place in affective psychology generally. For most medieval thinkers, emotions are at once cognitively penetrable and somatic, which is to say that emotions are influenced by and vary with changes in thought and belief, and that they are also bound up, perhaps essentially, with their physiological manifestations. This ‘mixed’ conception of emotions was broad enough to anchor medieval disagreements over details, yet rich enough to distinguish it from other parts of psychology and medicine. In particular, two kinds of phenomena, thought to be purely physiological, were not considered emotions even on this broad conception. First, what we now classify as drives or urges, for instance hunger and sexual arousal, were thought in the Middle Ages to be at best ‘pre-emotions’ (*propassiones*): mere biological motivations for action, not having any intrinsic cognitive object. Second, moods were likewise thought to be non-objectual somatic states, completely explicable as an imbalance of the bodily humours. Depression (*melancholia*), for example, is the pathological condition of having an excess of black bile. Medieval theories of emotions, therefore, concentrate on paradigm cases that fall under the broad conception: delight, anger, distress, fear, and the like.

The enterprise of constructing an adequate philosophical theory of the emotions in the Middle Ages had its counterpart in a large body of practical know-how. The medical literature on the emotions, for instance, was extensive, covering such subjects as the causal role of emotions in disease and recovery, the nerves as connecting the brain to the organs involved in the physiological manifestations of the emotions, and the effect of diet and nutrition on emotional responses. Many Arabic philosophers in the Middle Ages were also physicians, and their discussions of the emotions centre on such medical questions. Another fund of practical know-how is the penitential and confessional literature: topics as diverse as how to induce a proper feeling of repentance, how to comfort a grieving widow, how to defuse anger, and the like are touched on. Christian doctrine, of course, gives a central role to the

emotions; not only are people enjoined to love one another and to love God, complex emotional states like contrition and compassion are key elements in leading a Christian life.

As rich and interesting as medieval practical knowledge about the emotions may be, however, we are concerned here with medieval attempts to understand the emotions as psychological phenomena in their own right. This effectively limits our focus to the philosophically-inclined theologians of the Latin Christian West – the Arabic philosophers dealt with such matters largely as physicians; the Byzantines were scholiasts rather than systematic thinkers; the Christian laity, and much of the clergy, were content with folk psychology rather than trying to construct speculative psychological theories of the emotions. Hence the task was left to the only intellectuals left standing in the Middle Ages: Christian theologians with an interest, and possibly training, in philosophy.

The starting-point for later medieval discussions of the emotions was Augustine (§1), whose treatment of the emotions allowed for divergent interpretations. One strand of Augustine's account, the notion that emotions are closely bound up with volition, was initially explored in the twelfth century by Anselm and Abelard (§2). With the 'aristotelian revolution' of the thirteenth century came a new impetus to systematic speculation, picking up a different strand from Augustine and developing it into a organized scheme (§3), eventually given its masterful exposition in the writings of Aquinas (§4). In contrast to this, an alternative inspired by the thinkers of the twelfth century was formulated at the end of the thirteenth and the beginning of the fourteenth centuries, most notably by Franciscan thinkers, including Scotus and Ockham (§5). Later scholastic thought tended to recapitulate the earlier debates, incorporating advances in medical knowledge, but also betrayed an increasing impatience with the earlier systematic classificatory schemes, preparing the way for their eventual rejection in Renaissance and early modern philosophy (§6).

A final warning. Research in medieval thinking about the emotions is in its early days. The survey sketched here is up-to-date with current knowledge, but it will, no doubt, need to be revised as our knowledge increases.

1. THE BEGINNINGS: AUGUSTINE

Augustine (354–430) offers an extended treatment of the emotions in his late work *The City of God*, in Book 9.4–5 and throughout Book 14. His target there is the Stoic theory of the emotions, at least as presented by Cicero, Seneca, and other Latin authors; while Augustine's knowledge of Stoicism is neither scholarly nor technical, it is enough to convince him that it clashes

with Christian doctrine. In its place Augustine advocates an eclectic mix of ancient theories of the emotions.

Augustine endorses Cicero's claim that the Stoic account of the emotions differs from the Platonist and Peripatetic accounts merely in terminology, at least to the extent that it is correct (*City of God* 9.4). His syncretistic conviction that there is a core of truth in theories of the emotions which is common to Platonists, Aristotelians, and even the Stoics dominates his discussion. Thus he adopts Stoic terminology, often calling the emotions 'disturbances' or 'upheavals' (*perturbationes*) when not using the neutral 'affections' (*affectiones*) or the Peripatetic 'passions' (*passiones*), and agrees with the Stoics that emotions are often contrary to reason and upset the mind – at least, in this life, as part of the punishment for original sin (*City of God* 14.9). The Stoics are mistaken, however, in thinking that this is true of all emotions, even in this life, and drawing from their mistake the mistaken conclusion that the ideal condition is to be free of emotions, the 'emotionlessness' (*apatheia*) of the Sage. At the least, this encourages insensitivity (14.9), but more than that some emotions should not be extirpated, for instance compassion (9.5). Christian doctrine bids us to feel emotions: to love enemies, be angry at sinners, fear God, be distressed when faced with temptation (9.5 and 14.9). Even Jesus wept; His emotion, Augustine maintains, was not feigned but a function of His assumption of human nature, and as such his emotions must be altogether fitting and appropriate (14.9). Nor do the Stoics really believe that all emotions are objectionable, Augustine points out, for they allow that some emotions are not contrary to reason, the so-called 'good-feelings' (*eupatheiai*). Augustine argues that these are neither special emotions nor restricted to the Sage: "when affections are exhibited where they are appropriate, they are in accordance with right reason, and who would then dare to declare that emotions are 'diseases' or objectionable?" (14.9). The fear of God is to be cultivated, not overcome.

Augustine generally endorses the Stoic fourfold classification of the emotions in which the fundamental kinds of emotions are distinguished on the one hand by their objects, directed at something good or something evil, and on the other hand by their temporal orientation, directed at either a present object or a future object (14.5–6):

	present	future
good	<i>delight</i>	<i>desire</i>
evil	<i>distress</i>	<i>fear</i>

These emotions – delight (*laetitia*), desire (*libido/cupiditas/appetitus*), distress (*aegritudo/dolor*), and fear (*metus*) – are the basic types; all other emotions

may be classified as subtypes of these. Despair, for example, is the emotional response to an unavoidable future evil, and hence is one of the varieties of fear. According to this typology, emotions are intrinsically objectual, bound up with a conception of their targets as good or evil. We are not merely distressed but distressed by (or ‘at’ or ‘over’) something. Furthermore, whatever is distressing must be something taken as a present evil; it literally makes no sense to speak of the object of distress in any other way.

Augustine makes regular use of the fourfold division when writing about the emotions. When he asks which emotions are natural to human beings, for instance, he recasts the question as whether Adam and Eve in their prelapsarian condition experienced delight, distress, fear, and desire (14.10–26). He replies that fear and distress are not part of sinless human nature, and are therefore not present in Heaven (14.10); it is with original sin that humans have become “disturbed by conflicting and fluctuating affections” (14.12), most notably by the emotions of lust and anger (14.19). Prior to the Fall, all emotions, even these, were in our control; sexual arousal involved feelings no stronger than those felt nowadays in seeding crops (14.23). Since all emotions are included in the Stoic fourfold division, Augustine’s answer is complete and exhaustive.

Augustine identifies a common element in the four basic emotions: “willing is in them all, or rather, they are all nothing other than kinds of willing” (14.6). Accepting the Stoic thesis that the agent has the ability to assent, or to refrain from giving assent, to impressions, and the further claim that emotions are the result, Augustine concludes that emotions are intimately bound up with the will; “what is desire and delight but willing with consent the things we will for? What is fear and distress but willing in dissent from the things we will against?” (14.6). The endorsement or rejection of an object as good or bad is, at least in part, an act of the will, and hence the corresponding emotional response depends on an act of will. And this in its turn is simply an expression of the kinds of loves that the agent has. Hence, Augustine concludes, rather than joining the Stoics in condemning all emotions we need to look at the will’s choice of object to see whether it is appropriate: the uprightness or perversity of the will is at stake in moral assessments of the emotions, not the mere fact of having an emotion (14.7).

The burden of Augustine’s extended treatment of the Stoic theory of the emotions has been to purge it of elements it does not share with what he takes to be the core tradition, common to Platonists and Peripatetics. The corrected Stoic theory is grafted on to a Platonic-Peripatetic distinction among the kinds of emotions. In a discussion of shame, Augustine writes: “those philosophers who have come closer to the truth than others have acknowledged that anger

and lust are the vice-ridden parts of the soul, in that they are turbulent and disorderly emotions, inciting us to acts which reason forbids" (14.19). Anger (*ira*) and lust (*libido/concupiscentia*) make up the irrational part of the soul, providing an alternative classification of emotions – at least, of irrational emotions – into 'irascible' or 'concupiscible', a distinction stemming ultimately from Plato (*Republic* 436A–441C) and adopted by Aristotle (*Nicomachean Ethics* 1.13 and *Rhetoric* 1.10). Augustine does not try to reconcile this distinction among emotions with the Stoic fourfold division; he accepts them both, though he is careful to say that the former is adopted by "philosophers who have come closer to the truth."

Augustine's discussion of the emotions in his *City of God* was not only authoritative for later thinkers, it was the only extended discussion inherited by the Latin Christian West. The few comments of a theoretical nature about emotions made by others with a direct knowledge of ancient philosophy, such as Origen and Boethius, were sketchy and, as far as could be told, compatible with Augustine – a compatibility that was all the easier to find given Augustine's eclectic belief in a core tradition he never described in detail. Later medieval thinkers made of Augustine what they could, often in strikingly different ways.

2. THE TWELFTH CENTURY: ANSELM AND ABELARD

The disintegration of the social institutions of the classical world, and the slow forging of a new social structure to replace it, left little room for speculative psychological inquiry. When things finally settled down again, many centuries had passed, and a new monolingual and religiously homogenous culture had come into being: the Latin Christian West. By the middle of the eleventh century, a large measure of social stability and prosperity had been regained, and the establishment of monastic centres of learning, soon to be followed by the founding of universities, gave a new impetus to intellectual activity. At first this was little more than reclaiming the heritage of antiquity. William of St-Thierry (1075?–1148), in his work *The Nature of Body and Soul*, repeats without elaboration Augustine's presentation of the Stoic fourfold division of emotions and the Platonic-Aristotelian distinction between the concupiscible and the irascible powers (2.88–89). The latter had been given additional support in the discussion of emotions in the work *On Human Nature* by Nemesius of Emesa (ca. 400), translated from Greek into Latin in the second half of the eleventh century; some of this material was used by John Damascene (676–749) in his *The Orthodox Faith*, likewise translated from Greek into Latin in the middle of the twelfth century. Forging a single coherent account from Augustinian materials was a challenge taken up in short

order. Isaac of Stella (1100?–1169), in his *Letter to Alcher on the Soul*, offered a solution that was widely adopted. There are four kinds of affections, Isaac declares, which depend in good Augustinian fashion on what we love or hate: things we love may be present (delight) or future (hope), and things we hate may be present (distress) or future (fear). Hence “delight and hope stem from the concupiscible power, whereas distress and fear stem from the irascible power” (1878D). Isaac’s substitution of hope for desire was thought to be a mere terminological refinement: ‘hope’ is the emotional response to a future good, which includes the desire for it as part of taking it as a good. The reconciliation was not perfect; why hate is correlated with anger is not clear, for instance. But Isaac’s solution worked well enough to give many philosophers a single unified scheme that could reasonably be presented as what Augustine had in mind, as well as a starting-point for further investigation of the types and subtypes of emotions.

Anselm of Canterbury (1033–1109) and Peter Abelard (1079–1142) took a different approach to Augustine’s legacy. Putting aside the disputed question of how to reconcile the classificatory schemes presented in the *City of God*, Anselm and Abelard each focus on Augustine’s suggestion that emotions are forms of willing (*uoluntates*). More exactly, they each take Augustine to be making a general claim about the nature of emotions, not about the relation of psychological faculties. For neither Anselm nor Abelard take Augustine’s remarks to describe the relation between the psychological faculty that is the will, the faculty responsible for choice and decision, and individual acts of will, but instead to be making the claim that all emotions have motivational force: they are forms of ‘wantings’, broadly speaking, a claim we would express by saying that emotions are fundamentally desires motivating the agent’s actions. Then their accounts diverge.

Anselm, in his work *The Fall of the Devil* 12–14, argues that an agent has to be given a *uoluntas*, a motivation, in order to act at all. He proposes a thought-experiment. If God were creating an angel and endowed it with a will (and hence the bare capacity to initiate action), but had not yet supplied it with any motivation, then that angel would never initiate action, since it would have no reason to act in one way rather than another. Hence agents must be equipped with a motivational structure. Fortunately, most creatures are given the motive to seek their own happiness or well-being, which Anselm generally terms their ‘advantage’. The individual emotions are instances of this generic template. I fear something that appears to conflict with what I take to be my happiness, whatever that may be, which therefore counts as an evil; hence fear is the emotional response to the threat of a thwarted motivation. Anselm argues further that moral agents need to have two distinct

kinds of motivations. In addition to being motivated by one's happiness, a moral agent must also be capable of being motivated by moral concerns, or, as Anselm puts it, by 'justice'. We are moral agents because these two types of motivations may conflict: delight in my happiness may be tempered by shame at attaining it unjustly, for instance. Anselm clarifies his view in his later work *The Harmony of Grace, Predestination, and Foreknowledge with Free Choice*, where he explicitly calls these motivations 'affections' (Augustine's preferred term for the emotions) of the will, roughly permanent dispositions to choose certain objects as goods, and to reject others as evils. The upshot is a reconceptualization of human emotions as volitional phenomena of two distinct types, which are broadly speaking moral and non-moral.

Like Anselm, Abelard refers to all forms of motivation as 'wantings' (*uoluntates*). In his *Ethics* Abelard sketches the following account. An agent is equipped with a variety of emotions, each of which, by definition, has motivational force. An agent then may give assent (*consensus*) to one or another of these emotions, which will generate an *intention* to act in a certain way. (In his *Commentary on "Romans"* §§207–209 Abelard spells out the details a bit more fully: any emotion involves desire for an object and pleasure when it is attained, and the approval of an emotion simply is intending to act so as to attain its pleasurable object.) For Abelard, unlike Augustine or Anselm, emotions have no intrinsic moral value, no matter how independent of reason they might be. Moral assessment rides strictly on the agent's intentions, not on the emotions as such, or even the actions the agent actually performs. We are constructed in such a way, Abelard declares, that feeling delight is inevitable in certain situations, and therefore cannot be morally objectionable or the penal consequence of original sin, as Augustine had claimed. If sexual pleasure in marriage is not sinful, for instance, then the pleasure itself, inside or outside of marriage, is not sinful; if it is sinful, then marriage cannot sanctify it – and if the conclusion is drawn that such acts should be performed wholly without pleasure, then Abelard remarks they cannot be performed at all, and it was unreasonable (of God) to permit them only in a way in which they cannot be performed (*Ethics* 20.1–6). Emotions are natural to human beings.

Anselm and Abelard each explore Augustine's suggestion that emotions form a single natural kind of psychological phenomena, namely motivational states. Neither wrote systematically on the emotions, preferring to keep their discussions on a general plane. Their contributions, though innovative, were initially swamped by the wave of 'new philosophy': the recovery of Aristotle, which begins a new phase in the history of theories of the emotions.

3. THE EARLY THIRTEENTH CENTURY

The intellectual resources of the Latin Christian West were occupied from roughly the middle of the twelfth century to the middle of the thirteenth century with a dual project: finding and translating the works of Aristotle into Latin, with accompanying materials; and attaining philosophical mastery of them. It is important to recognize that, from the inception of this project, medieval thinkers understood that they were engaged in critical assimilation. Aristotle provided a wealth of philosophical tools and a methodological approach that were adopted because of their power and flexibility. That is quite different from adopting the contentful philosophical views he held, which were not automatically endorsed. Because of the depth and difficulty of Aristotle's work, the first order of business was to sort out what he was claiming; because of the profundity of his philosophical insight, his views were given a measure of presumptive authority. But Aristotle's positive philosophical doctrines were only as good as the arguments he gave for them, and they were variously accepted, rejected, or revised. In short, the cultural consensus in the Latin Christian West on aristotelianism as its intellectual framework neither entailed nor enjoined consensus on Aristotle's particular doctrines.

This fact is all the more apparent in the case of the emotions, where Aristotle provides a theoretical context, namely a sketch of the science of psychology, but no ready-made doctrine of the emotions – indeed, he has little more than the bare Platonic distinction between the concupiscible and the irascible, fleshed out with unsystematic remarks about particular emotions in his *Nicomachean Ethics* and *Rhetoric*. Here the native medieval tradition stemming from Augustine, supplemented by medical information from the Arabic commentators, were combined to produce a unique and comprehensive theory of the emotions. It was given its highest expression by Thomas Aquinas, who built on the work of many predecessors, most notably Jean de la Rochelle and Albert the Great.

For Aristotle, psychology is the branch of natural philosophy dealing with things whose nature it is to be alive. From the sketchy remarks in *On the Soul* 1.1, medieval philosophers understood Aristotle to be engaged in constructing a 'faculty psychology', explaining psychological phenomena in terms of quasi-independent interacting principles and capacities whose interaction cause or constitute the phenomenon under investigation. In the case of human psychology, medieval philosophers read Aristotle as proposing two cross-cutting distinctions: (a) a distinction between the cluster of principles and capacities that account for movement and sensation, known as the *sensitive* part of the soul, and the cluster of principles and capacities that account for thought and volition, known as the *intellective* part of the soul; (b) a distinc-

tion between the apparatus of powers whereby information about the world is acquired and assimilated, known as the *cognitive* or apprehensive potencies, and the apparatus of powers whereby one engages the world, known as the *appetitive* potencies. Now (*a*) and (*b*) have to be combined: the intellective and sensitive parts of the soul each have cognitive and appetitive faculties; cognition and appetite take place in both the intellective and sensitive parts. There are thus four fundamental departments into which psychological experience is divided. The principle of cognition in the intellective part of the soul is the intellect itself, where thinking and reasoning take place. The principle of appetite in the intellective part of the soul is the will, responsible for volition and choice; the will is literally ‘intellective appetite’. The principle of cognition in the sensitive part of the soul is called ‘sensing’, where sensation and perception occur. The final department of psychological experience encompasses the principles of appetite in the sensitive part of the soul, namely the emotions (*passiones animae*). The task of a theory of the emotions, like that of any aristotelian branch of knowledge, is to organize the subject by a taxonomic classification of its fundamental principles.

The earliest efforts to formulate a theory of the emotions along aristotelian lines, then, gave pride of place to organizing the apparent chaos of emotional life into proper genera and species. John Blund, whose *Treatise on the Soul* (1210) was one of the first, if not the first, to attempt this task, proposed to divide emotions by their contrary objects. On this score, the basic distinction among emotions is that some are oriented toward good and others toward evil. Following Isaac of Stella, Blund aligns the distinction of contrary objects with the distinction between the concupiscible and the irascible, so that the concupiscible emotions of love, delight, and desire are directed at the good, and the irascible emotions of hate, distress, and aversion are directed at evils. Blund did not explain why we should classify opposed emotions (love/hate, delight/distress, desire/aversion) as belonging to fundamentally different kinds, a failing that perhaps explains why his proposal was not widely adopted, Alexander Neckham (1157–1217), an early follower of Anselm, being his most noteworthy convert.

The impulse to systematize, and hence understand, the emotions persisted. A breakthrough came in the *Summary Treatise on the Soul* by Jean de la Rochelle (1235). Jean suggested, first, that distinction between the concupiscible and the irascible emotions could itself be understood as a matter of the distinct formal objects to which they are oriented, the former being directed at the pleasureable or painful, the latter at the difficult (2.107), a distinction that apparently originated in the 1220s and employed before Jean by Phillip the Chancellor (1160?–1236). Now Jean’s reasoning seems to be that we may

be either straightforwardly attracted or repelled by something, in the manner of simple ‘push/pull’ Lockean affective psychology, or our attraction and repulsion may involve some sort of effort on our part, and hence not be immediately explicable in terms of simple attraction and repulsion. For example, a dog will straightforwardly be attracted to a bone; if Smith holds the bone away, teasing the dog with it, at some point the dog will shift the focus of his activity from the bone (the desired object) to the obstacle to attaining the bone (Smith), attacking Smith even if Smith drops the bone. Any obstacle or effort in the pursuit or avoidance of something will fall under the difficult. Second, Jean suggested that emotions can be grouped in contrary pairs as part of their taxonomic classification. Under the generic heading of the concupiscible, for instance, we find conjugate pairs of contrary emotions such as love/hate, desire/avoidance, delight/distress, and three further pairs; under the irascible we find hope/despair, pride/humility, reverence/contempt, two further pairs, and two that have no contrary, namely anger and generosity. In neither case are contrary emotions grouped into coordinate species which are exclusive and exhaustive, defined by opposite differentiae; instead, Jean puts forward a multiplicity of criteria that allow several pairs of contraries at the same level. In point of fact Jean does not offer strict criteria that produce his list and no others. He often appeals to the medical literature, and above all to Avicenna, for physiological grounds to underpin his classifications.

Jean de la Rochelle at a stroke laid out the basic elements of a solution to the challenges facing the construction of an aristotelian taxonomic theory of the emotions. Bonaventure and Albert the Great, to name only two, adopted Jean’s suggestions and much of his positive account. Albert in particular tried to further systematize Jean’s classification of the emotions by compounding it with physiology and physics (*Treatise on the Good* 3.5).

4. AQUINAS

It was left to Albert’s student, Thomas Aquinas (1224/5–1274), to think through Jean de la Rochelle’s discoveries in his lucid and compact ‘treatise on the emotions’ (*Summary of Theology* 1a2ae qq. 22–48), a treatment so masterful that it eclipsed the works of his predecessors. Aquinas’s particular improvement on Jean’s work was to take the variety of disorderly principles on which Jean based his classification and underwrite them with clear and careful argumentation.

Aquinas identifies eleven essentially distinct types of emotion, sorted into two kinds and for the most part occurring in pairs of contraries: the six concupiscible emotions love/hate, desire/aversion, delight/distress; the five irascible emotions hope/despair, confidence/fear, and anger (as with Jean having

no contrary). Each type is a genuine kind, including a variety of subtypes. Anger, for example, includes wrath, rancor, and vindictiveness; love is divided into friendly (*amor amicitiae*), which seeks the good of its object, and covetous (*amor concupiscentiae*), which seeks the object for one's own good. In contrast to Jean de la Rochelle, Aquinas holds that the formal object of concupiscible emotions is the sensible good, although he accepts a modification of Jean's view about the formal object of the irascible emotions, which he takes to be the sensible good as difficult (1a q. 80 art. 2). Not too much emphasis should be put on 'sensible': Aquinas means only that, as the sensitive appetite depends on sensitive apprehension (perception), its object must be capable of being perceived. He certainly does not mean to exclude non-present targets of the emotions, and he permits some passions to be directed at things simply in virtue of the kind of thing they are.

Aquinas opens his discussion of the emotions by asking about their nature, in particular whether they are cognitive or appetitive (1a2ae q. 22 art. 2). Citing Augustine's discussion in his *City of God* 9.4 as precedent, Aquinas argues that emotions can only motivate action, as they unquestionably do, if representations of their objects occur in a context in which they move the agent (as in the appetite) rather than one in which such representations are merely assessed for the information they convey (as in cognition). Hence the passions must belong to the appetitive part of the soul. Now earlier Aquinas had drawn a distinction between two ways in which the bodily organs used by the soul may undergo change (1a q. 78 art. 3): immaterially, when it receives the representation (*intentio*) of the object in the organ, and materially, when the organ itself undergoes a physical change. In visual perception the immaterial reception of the representation is essential, but any change in the eye is merely incidental (the eye does not itself become coloured). Emotions are disanalogous to perceptions on this score, however. An emotion – that is, an actualization of the sensitive appetite – is “essentially an instance of the second type of change; accordingly, in the definition of the movements of the appetitive part, some natural change in an organ is materially given, so that anger, for example, is said to be the boiling of blood around the heart” (1a2ae q. 2 art. 2 *ad* 3). For Aquinas, the somatic manifestations of an emotion are essential to it. More precisely, Aquinas argues that the formal element in an emotion is a motion of the appetitive power as defined by the formal object of the emotion, so that fear, for instance, is the response to a future evil difficult to avoid, whereas its material element is the physiological change, such as trembling and chattering teeth. Unlike sense-perception, the emotions are not associated with bodily organs (with the possible exception of sexual lust); the somatic manifestations of an emotion are an essential part of the emo-

tion, but what the manifestations are is not essential but accidental. (Aquinas argues that male impotence proves that sexual desire is distinct from bodily arousal.) It is no proper function of the teeth to chatter, any more than it is of the eye to become tired after long exercise; it is merely a concomitant side effect. Aquinas examines the somatic reactions associated with each emotion in considerable detail. The effects of fear, for instance, are a matter of the vital spirits being concentrated in the higher region of the body, deflected from the heart, which is contracted; this chills the rest of the body and may produce trembling, teeth-chattering, and fluttering in the stomach. Depending on the kind of fear, blood may rush into the head to produce blushing if the object is shameful, or away from the head to produce paleness if the object is terrifying. Should the onset of fear be sudden and sharp, control over bodily limbs and functions will be lost, resulting in shuddering, knees knocking, difficulty in breathing, or worse, perhaps even general paralysis, so that one is ‘frozen with fear’ (1a2ae q. 44).

Having established that emotions are complex psycho-physical objectual states, Aquinas then turns to the distinction he inherits from Augustine (among others), namely the concupiscible and the irascible. Unlike many of his predecessors, Aquinas sets out to establish the distinction on a firm philosophical basis. His treatment in 1a2ae q. 23 art. 1 hearkens back to his earlier examination of the distinction in 1a q. 81 art. 2, in which he offers three arguments that the concupiscible emotions and the irascible emotions “are not reducible to a single principle”:

- *The Interference Argument.* The two kinds of emotions must be different in kind, because they can interfere with one another: stirring up anger lessens lust, and conversely stirring up lust can lessen anger.
- *The Submission Argument.* Sometimes the soul ‘submits’ to distress against the inclination of desire, so that it may fight against things opposed to it.
- *The Champion Argument.* The irascible emotions arise from the concupiscible emotions and terminate in them; anger, for example, may be born from distress and, in taking revenge, end in delight.

Each calls for comment.

The Interference Argument, which is ultimately derived from Plato’s *Republic*, turns on the fact that the distinct kinds of emotions can be directed at one and the same real thing while nevertheless differing in their formal (intensional) objects: someone can be simultaneously alluring and annoying, features that interfere with one another. While we do speak of the relative strength of the different emotions, such talk is clearly metaphorical. It is not at all like two desires of the same sort in competition, as for instance when I have to choose between chocolate ice cream and vanilla ice cream; in this

case all that matters in making the choice is the relative strength of the desires for each. But that does not seem to be the case when concupiscible and irascible emotions interfere with one another, as Aquinas notes.

The Submission Argument is further clarified by Aquinas in *On Truth* q. 25 art. 2. Sometimes the sensible good taken as difficult is such that the difficulty is an intrinsic feature of the good in question: we want to win the race, earn the Nobel Prize, master quantum physics. But sometimes not: the difficulty is in the surrounding circumstances, not inherent in the object itself. In such cases, Aquinas declares, the end can be unproblematically desired and enjoyed, independent of the difficulties associated with it. In such cases, we can speak of ‘submitting’ to the difficulties for the sake of the object to be attained. The force of the Submission Argument should be clear. Aquinas charges that we cannot understand all behaviour in terms of simple ‘push/pull’ desires, in particular instances of submission to present pain, which involve not merely weighing the relative strength of the desires but at least rudimentary means-ends calculation. On this score, Aquinas notes in his *Commentary on the “Sentences”* 3 d. 26 q. 1 art. 2 that the irascible emotions are “closer to reason” since they involve a more complex cognitive stance toward their objects than do concupiscible emotions.

The Champion Argument turns on the fact that the concupiscible emotions are comprehensible in their own terms, whereas the irascible emotions make sense only against the background of the concupiscible emotions. Aquinas presents this as partly a logical claim, partly a causal claim. Overcoming the difficulties means attaining the sensible good, which prompts the emotional response of delight; so much is simple logic. But other connections among the emotions, such as distress, anger, and revenge, are causal rather than logical in nature. Aquinas’s point is that in such causal connections, the irascible emotions “come to the aid” of the concupiscible emotions, the former being “champions” of the latter. They can do so in virtue of being a different kind of emotion, for otherwise they would be a constitutive part of the initial (concupiscible) emotional response to the object, not something further than can come about.

Aquinas’s discussion of the causes, effects, and often the remedies for each passion are wide-ranging, penetrating, and occasionally humorous, as when he considers whether youth and inebriation are causes of hope in 1a2ae q. 40 art. 6 (they are), or whether anger notably interferes with the ability to reason in 1a2ae q. 48 art. 3 (it can). Aquinas investigates serious questions of all sorts, such as whether ecstasy and jealousy are necessary effects of love (1a2ae q. 28 art. 3–4), whether someone can hate himself (1a2ae q. 29 art. 4), whether sympathy from friends can help alleviate distress (1a2ae q. 38 art. 3),

whether love is the cause of fear (1a2ae q. 43 art. 1), and more.

Once he has established the distinction between concupiscible and irascible emotions, Aquinas turns to the principles underlying the differentiation of the six concupiscible and five irascible emotions into pairs of associated contraries (1a2ae q. 23 art. 2–4). The details are complicated, since Aquinas makes the differentiation of the emotions rational by recourse to principles taken from Aristotle’s natural philosophy, on the grounds that emotions are, literally, ‘motions’ of the sensitive appetite. Aquinas therefore mobilizes the resources of the science of motion to explain the complex types of contrariety found among the emotions. Very roughly, the first contrary pair of each type of emotion, love/hate (concupiscible) and hope/despair (irascible) are simple tendencies of the sensitive appetite toward its objects; they are ‘emotional attitudes’ toward the object, pure and simple. The second contrary pairs, desire/aversion and confidence/fear, involve some kind of movement in respect of the object, desire toward and aversion away from it, confidence to confront and fear to shrink from the difficulties facing one. The final group includes the concupiscible contrary pair delight/distress and the solitary irascible emotion of anger; here the appetitive power has attained its object and ‘rests’ in it, taking the full measure of the good or evil (for the concupiscible emotions) or the difficulty (for anger).

This brief discussion only scratches the surface of Aquinas’s theory of the emotions. One topic not considered here is the extent to which our emotional responses are in our control. This is a pressing issue for Aquinas, since he identifies emotions formally as passive potencies of the sensitive appetite – that is to say, as things that happen to us, rather than as something in which we are active: ‘passions’ in the etymological sense. Aquinas recognizes the difficulty, and tries to blunt the edge of it by pointing out that we have a measure of indirect control over our emotional responses: unlike sneezes or digestion, emotions are cognitively penetrable, and so may be influenced by (habits of) thought and belief. Nor are all the emotions equally controllable: desire is simply voluntary, according to Aquinas, whereas fear is involuntary (1a2ae q. 6 art. 7). This is not to say that fear is unaffected by cognition; we can bring other considerations to bear on a situation and thereby lessen our fear through the exercise of what Aquinas calls ‘particular reason’, that is, reason applied to a particular case (1a q. 81 art. 3).

Aquinas’s presentation of the theory of the emotions, while clearly indebted to earlier thirteenth-century thinkers, was widely acknowledged as a classic treatment; both eclipsing earlier work and casting a long enough shadow that later thinkers could do no better than to begin with Aquinas’s account, even when they disagreed with it. Often the disagreements were a

matter of details. But there was also a systematic alternative, one that looked back to the twelfth century and earlier to Augustine, that won its share of adherents at the end of the thirteenth century and the beginning of the fourteenth century.

5. THE EARLY FOURTEENTH CENTURY

John Duns Scotus (1265?–1308) and William of Ockham (1285?–1349) did not write treatises on the emotions, or even discuss them extensively, but their differences with Aquinas are deep and principled, to the point where they can be seen as offering a systematic alternative to his views (which is indeed how later medieval philosophers understood them). Begin with the last point mentioned about Aquinas, namely the extent to which emotions are in our control. Both Scotus and Ockham reject Aquinas's general claim that all emotions are at best only indirectly in our control. Rather, they see at least some emotions as having an active, perhaps volitional, component: they are actions of the will, not mere passions of the will. Scotus explicitly cites Augustine's reduction of the Stoic fourfold division of emotions to kinds of willing, and therefore to love, as an intellectual precedent; while it may not be entirely up to us to experience pleasure or distress, we can choose to love someone, which shows that at least some emotions are in the scope of the will (*Ordinatio* 3 d. 15 q. 1). Earlier thinkers, such as Bonaventure and Henry of Ghent, had spoken of concupiscible and irascible acts of the will, but Scotus seems to have been the first to offer a complete theory of the emotions that rejected the sharp division of psychological faculties assumed by Aquinas and earlier thinkers. For Scotus, emotions were no longer confined to the sensitive appetite; emotions are a feature of the appetitive power generally, intellectual appetite (the will) as well as sensitive appetite (*Ordinatio* 3 d. 33 q. 1). Ockham accepted this view, and argued further that 'passive' emotions, such as pleasure or distress, are the causal by-products of 'active' emotions of the will unless they are explicitly suppressed by other actions or mental events (*Ordinatio* 1 d. 1 q. 3). Both Scotus and Ockham claimed to be following Anselm's theory of affections of the will, each accepting Anselm's claim that the will has intrinsic motivational structure. Scotus identifies the first active emotions of the will to be 'taking a liking to' (*complacentia*) or 'taking a dislike to' (*displacentia*), traditional terminology found in Bonaventure and Jean de la Rochelle, which are not quite choices but not mere reactions either (*Ordinatio* 3 d. 33 q. 1). They are a kind of hybrid phenomenon, partly volitive and partly perceptual.

Scotus, and Ockham in his train, found the psychological boundaries among the faculties more fluid than Aquinas in part because they held a dif-

ferent view about the metaphysics of the mind. Aquinas argues at length in his (*Questions on Aristotle's "On the Soul"*) that the soul is really distinct from its faculties and the faculties from one another, or, to put the point another way, that cognitive and affective psychology are distinct disciplines that require distinct foundations. His main line of argument for this conclusion is as follows. If thinking or willing belonged to the real essence of the soul rather than to distinct subordinate psychological faculties, then from the mere existence of the soul it would follow that it (always) thinks and wills, which is manifestly false; likewise for the separate faculties (*Summary of Theology* 1a q. 77 art. 1). Scotus rejects Aquinas's argument, however, arguing that the faculties of the soul are not really distinct from one another and from the soul itself, but are only what he calls 'formally' distinct. Very roughly, this amounts to the claim that different psychological faculties can have causal powers they only exercise in virtue of the kinds of objects to which they are directed, so that intellect and will, or perception and emotion, can differ in terms of their formal objects. We need not pause to iron out the details here, because William of Ockham argued that they were simply not needed: after stating at length and refuting the views of Aquinas, Henry of Ghent, and Duns Scotus, Ockham concludes that the 'parts' of the soul are only conceptually distinct from one another (*Reportatio* 2 q. 20). That is, it is one and the same soul that thinks, feels, wills, and perceives. There is no need to postulate a plurality of entities when one entity can perform many functions – one of the many versions of Ockham's Razor. The upshot for a theory of the emotions is this. If psychological faculties are not really distinct from one another in the world, then there is no reason to think that psychological phenomena need be confined to the boxes in which Aquinas put them. Some emotions might be a function of the sensitive appetite, others of the intellectual appetite; since the underlying subject is one and the same thing, there is no ground for insisting on their sharp separation.

Emotions, then, should be investigated on their own terms. One aspect of this conviction was the rejection of Aquinas's attempt to give a general theoretical grounding for his taxonomy of emotions through aristotelian natural philosophy. Scotus, and to some extent Ockham, instead preferred the view of Albert the Great, according to which emotions are understood as qualities or forms inherent in the soul, not as types of motion. Without the substructure of the theory of motion, though, there is no reason to adopt Aquinas's particular classification of the emotions more than any other. Neither Scotus nor Ockham gives such a classification, in fact, perhaps as a consequence of their open-mindedness about psychological faculties.

Given all the other points on which they disagree, it is no surprise to

find that Scotus rejects Aquinas's claim that the irascible emotions have the common formal object the sensible good as difficult. Scotus proposes instead that irascible emotions have instead the common formal object the offensive (*Ordinatio* 3 d. 34 q. 1). He reasons as follows. The action performed by an irascible emotion is to be angry, and "its object is therefore to overcome, or more exactly what can be overcome, which can be called the 'irascitive' or, in more ordinary language, the offensive." It is not simply a variant, or a variant object, of the concupiscible emotions; it is different in kind. Concupiscible emotions either pull one toward or push one away from their objects. But that is not what happens with irascible emotions, which, on the contrary, try to 'overcome' or defeat their objects, neither pursuing nor fleeing them, but treating them as something that ought to be righted – hence the offensive.

The alternative view staked out by Scotus and Ockham was a popular alternative to Aquinas's account. For instance, Jean Buridan, an influential Master of Arts at the University of Paris in the first half of the fourteenth century, adopted it and made extensive, though not uncritical, use of it in his *Questions on Aristotle's "Nicomachean Ethics"* – a work that was still used in universities in the early seventeenth century. More than anything else, it coloured the development of Late Scholasticism, with the followers of Scotus and the followers of Ockham (Ockhamists *a. k. a.* Nominalists)

It should be noted that there were many individual philosophers who wrote about the emotions and who offered powerful criticisms and alternatives to Aquinas, Scotus, Ockham, and other established thinkers. To mention only one case among many: Adam Wodeham (1300?–1358), a close associate of Ockham, argued for a cognitivist view of the emotions, maintaining that emotions are essentially acts of intellectual evaluation that bring in their train acts of volition, much like an up-to-date version of Abelard's view about intentions. On this score he was opposed by Gregory of Rimini (1300?–1358) and Pierre d'Ailly (1351–1420), who argued that no amount of cognition could ever have intrinsic motivational force, as emotions clearly do. This is, of course, to beg the question; Wodeham was careful to link his cognitive acts of evaluation with acts of volition, so that emotions, on his account, do have motivational force, though not intrinsically.

6. LATE SCHOLASTICISM: SUÁREZ

The general story told about medieval philosophy in the Later Middle Ages is that it is 'scholastic' in the narrow sense: organized into self-identified schools of thought, largely exegetical and polemical, it became increasingly hermetic and ultimately intellectually stale, degenerating into a caricature of itself. There is some truth to the stereotype, to be sure, but it overlooks the

vitality of many parts of the later tradition. Psychology in particular was a central subject of interest all the way through the Renaissance, the Reformation, and the Counter-Reformation, and affective psychology, including the theory of the emotions, remained a lively subject for exploration and debate.

One of the most widely-respected figures of Late Scholasticism, Tommaso de Vio, better known as Cajetan (1469–1534), wrote in 1511 a detailed and careful commentary on Aquinas’s “treatise on the emotions.” In the course of analyzing and expounding Aquinas, Cajetan regularly describes and attacks Scotus’s alternative account of the emotions, with an eye to showing the philosophical superiority of Aquinas’s views. At no point does Cajetan engage with the later Scotist tradition, even when later Scotists had replied to the points he was pressing against Scotus. For all the evidence in his commentary, Cajetan could have been writing two centuries earlier. This is not to say that his objections are without merit. He is sharply critical of Scotus’s claim that the proper formal object of the irascible emotions is *the offensive* rather than, as Aquinas had it, *the difficult*. Cajetan declares that Scotus merely asserts his claim rather than proving it, and that once it is examined carefully it will be seen that it presupposes Aquinas’s view, since *the offensive* is worthy of attack only if it involves a difficulty – otherwise it would be simply avoided (commentary on 1a2ae q. 23 art. 1). Later thinkers, such as Bartolomé de Medina (1527/8–1580), take Cajetan to have proved Aquinas’s point against Scotus, though again without considering the arguments and rebuttals offered by later Scotists.

Cajetan does occasionally disagree with Aquinas. For instance, he doesn’t take Aquinas’s distinction between the formal objects of the concupiscible and irascible emotions to support further subdivision into species; the emotions are only diversified from one another, not differentiated in the technical sense. This has the further consequence that putative subtypes of a given emotion, such as irritation and rancor with respect to anger, are not its species; instead, they are different degrees of anger, not different in kind from one another.

In general, Cajetan’s criticism of Aquinas is guarded. Other late medieval thinkers, even those who identified themselves as followers of Aquinas, were not so restrained. Take, for example, the last great scholastic philosopher, Francisco Suárez (1548–1617), as vociferous a supporter of Aquinas as might be found. Suárez wrote extensively on the emotions, once treating them independently (*Lectures on the Soul*) and once by way of discussing Aquinas’s specific views (*On Aquinas’s “Treatise on the Emotions”*). In each work he begins his analysis by describing the “old theory” that puts forward the “most popular division of the emotions,” namely the division into the concupiscible and the irascible. He also runs through a series of arguments to

support the distinction, including the Interference Argument and the Submission Argument, in more or less the form in which Aquinas presents them. Nevertheless, Suárez holds that the distinction should be discarded.

His reasoning is instructive. First, Suárez argues that these arguments do not entail that there is a real distinction between the concupiscible and the irascible powers, “since it could easily be held that there is a unique sensitive power directed at the good apprehended by sense, and that it has acts by which it pursues the sensible good (and as such is called ‘concupiscible’), and again acts by which it protects the sensible good against things contrary to it (in which case it is labelled ‘irascible’)” (*Lectures on the Soul* 5.4.3). Indeed, Suárez argues, this is the correct way to think of the matter. The sensitive appetite, he maintains, should be taken as a single unified whole, which may have two distinct though related functions, namely to pursue the good or to overcome obstacles to the good. In the former capacity the emotions are concupiscible; in the latter, irascible. There is no need to postulate a real distinction here. Just as one and the same person can discharge two different tasks, as (say) bank president and scout leader, so too the same sensitive faculty can have two different functions. Suárez proposes that concupiscible and irascible emotions share a common formal object, namely the sensible good. The pursuit of a good might involve overcoming an obstacle, or it might not, but that hardly seems a sufficient ground for insisting that two kinds of pursuit must be at stake. Suárez, it turns out, does not put much weight on the distinction of formal objects; he tells us that it is not an important issue since the concupiscible and the irascible are not really distinct, though since they are conceptually distinct we can treat them as though they were, if we please (5.4.8). Finally, Suárez rejects the Interference Argument, on the grounds that it cannot establish a distinction among powers from an incompatibility among acts, as he puts it (5.4.4).

Suárez has made a powerful case that we should give up the real distinction between the concupiscible and the irascible – a view in keeping with Scotus and Ockham more than Aquinas, it seems. But if we give up their real distinctness, what grounds are there for retaining their conceptual distinctness? Surprisingly, Suárez concludes that there really are none, and, furthermore, that the identification of eleven fundamental kinds of emotions is arbitrary (*On Aquinas’s “Treatise on the Emotions”* 4 disp. 1 §12.2). He offers instead four criteria that are pragmatically useful in dealing with the emotions: by their general tendencies; by the most basic kinds of acts; by the distinctive movements they involve; by their individual merits. Applying these criteria yield different accounts of the number of emotions. The first, Suárez tells us, leads us to six emotions: love, desire, and pleasure, directed to the good; hate,

fear or avoidance, and pain or distress, directed to evil. The second produces an indeterminate number, since there are, for example, an unlimited number of subdivisions of love or desire (§12.3). The third results in Aquinas's set of eleven emotions. The last depends on the authority consulted. The upshot, for Suárez, is that questions about the taxonomic structure of the emotions are purely instrumental: "From all of this it is clear that the division into eleven passions is largely accommodated to the scheme of a [given] theory and isn't necessary" (12.5). But as the distinction between the concupiscible and irascible emotions goes, so go all other distinctions among the emotions. Suárez concludes that there are no hard facts about the emotions, or, more precisely, there are no facts that do not depend on the purposes being served. We can continue to privilege Aquinas's scheme to preserve continuity with the tradition, though the grounds for doing so are purely pragmatic; it is "the most common and the easiest for explaining the affections" (12.6).

CONCLUSION

The internal critique of the earlier mediaeval theories of the emotions, brought to the brink by Suárez, was mirrored by the emergence of other philosophical movements that dissociated themselves from their medieval heritage. The best-known of these movements is usually called 'Renaissance Humanism', which advertised a return to the models of classical antiquity. For affective psychology, this often meant adopting a Stoic, or neo-Stoic, account of the emotions: figures as diverse as Juan Luis Vivés (1492–1540) and Justus Lipsius (1547–1606) enthusiastically turned to Stoic sources in preference to the detailed tradition of medieval thinking about the emotions.

Cutting the moorings out from under the mediaeval theories of the emotions, as Suárez did, however, finally brought consensus on the emotions among late medieval thinkers: the unitary single soul, having no real distinctions within itself, need not be split up in order to accommodate affective psychology. Furthermore, the taxonomic model of scientific explanation, so successful in various branches of biology, ultimately fails in psychology. The best thing to do is to treat all the hard-fought distinctions and insights about the emotions won throughout the Middle Ages as raw data still in need of a unifying theory. Thus was the ground cleared for the modern revolution in affective psychology initiated by Descartes, Locke, and others.

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