

LATE SCHOLASTIC THEORIES OF THE PASSIONS Controversies in the Thomist Tradition

Introduction

AQUINAS set the agenda for later mediæval discussions of the passions: the masterful analysis in his “Treatise on the Passions” (*Summa theologiae* IaIIae.22–48) largely eclipsed the work of his predecessors, discussing the material with such depth and clarity that later thinkers could do no better than to begin with his account, even when they disagreed with it.¹ He found order and structure in the apparent chaos of feelings, emotions, and moods: eleven essentially distinct species of passion, sorted into two kinds and for the most part occurring in conjugate pairs—the six concupiscible passions of love and hate, desire and aversion, joy and sadness; the five irascible passions of hope and despair, confidence and fear, and, the lone passion with no counterpart, anger.²

The division of the passions into concupiscible and irascible reflects two distinct ways in which the sensitive appetite might respond³ to its cognitive input, that is, two fundamentally different ways in which passions are directed at and hence ‘about’ things. For Aquinas, the passions are physiologically-based powers through which the faculty of sensitive appetite engages the world, much as the different kinds of perception (seeing, hearing, and so on) are powers through which the faculty of sensitive cognition

¹ See the translation and commentary in D’Arcy [1967] and the rest of the ‘Blackfriars’ translation of the *Summa theologiae*; the studies in Jordan [1986] and King [1998]; and the discussions earlier in this volume.

² Respectively *amor*, *odium*, *desiderium*, *fuga*, *gaudium*, *tristitia*, *spes*, *desperatio*, *audacia*, *timor*, and *ira*. Each species may include a variety of phenomena: wrath, rancor, and vindictiveness are grouped together in IaIIae.46.8 as types of anger; love includes friendship (*amor amicitiae*) as well as lust (*amor concupiscentiae*), according to IaIae.26.4. It’s unclear whether Aquinas took these to be subspecies; Bartolomé de Medina, for instance, held that they are merely accidental divisions based on degree or intensity (*Expositio in Primam Secundae angelici doctoris D. Thomae Aquinatis* 204b *ad* IaIIae.23).

³ ‘Respond’: The passions are reactive in nature, triggered by the external world (mediated through cognition), much as seeing or hearing is reactive. The powers of the sensitive soul, whether cognitive or appetitive, are all passive potencies whose actualizations are states of the subject. However, this does not entail that we are merely passive with respect to our passions, since, if nothing else, the passions are more cognitively penetrable than perception: see King [1998] §3.

engages the world. Now as powers, they are determined by the sorts of items to which they apply, spelled out in the notion of the ‘formal object’ of a power—the most general characterization under which something must fall in order to be an object of the power at all. The power of vision, for example, has as its formal object *the colored*, since something must be colored to be visible in the first place. Aquinas argues that the passions, as powers of the sensitive appetite, have the formal object *sensible good*: passions are directed at objects only *qua* an ‘evaluative perception’ of the object, that is, only through perceiving it as good or bad.⁴ Concupiscent passions are directed at *sensible good and evil taken simply*, as described, whereas irascible passions are directed at *sensible good and evil taken as difficult*, that is, at some impediment or obstacle that makes it hard to attain or avoid the perceived good or evil (Ia.81.2).

The passions are therefore occurrent affective mental states that have intentional content. According to Aquinas, the formal objects of the different conjugate pairs of passions are further differentiated according to several forms of contrareity derived from the aristotelian theory of motion (IaIIae.23.2–4). The details are subtle and intricate but need not concern us here, since its results are straightforward. Hope, for example, is directed at the sensible good when the obstacles to its attainment are seen as surmountable; despair, its counterpart, is directed at the same sensible good when the obstacles are seen as insurmountable. The formal object of hope, then, is *sensible good taken as difficult but attainable*, a subclass of the formal objects of irascible passions generally. Similar accounts are available for each of the other passions.

Aquinas provides a wealth of theoretical elaboration and detail to complement the account sketched above. But for our purposes, the points made above are sufficient, since they lie at the foundation of Aquinas’s theory of the passions. To challenge or reject any one of them would amount to replacing Aquinas’s theory with another. Such challenges were eventually made; indeed, even in its day, Aquinas’s theory did not go unquestioned. Duns Scotus, for example, maintained that the proper object of the irascible was not *sensible good taken as difficult* but rather a different simple aspect, *the*

⁴ The mediæval notion of a ‘formal object’ has passed directly into the contemporary debates over the emotions, apparently by way of Kenney [1963] 189; see De Sousa [1987] 121–123. Perception is an activity of the sensitive soul without recourse to higher cognitive functions, much of a piece with the dog recognizing its owner; passions, as functions of the sensitive appetite alone, are common to humans and brute animals, though in the case of humans the presence of higher-order faculties (namely intellect and will) may influence or alter our emotional reactions.

offensive.⁵ Nominalists, who rejected any real distinction among mental faculties, were hardly sympathetic to the sharp distinction Aquinas drew between the concupiscible and the irascible powers. But it was not until ‘thomism’ became established in the latter part of the fifteenth century as a mass intellectual movement, with enough followers of distinction to rival the Scotists and the Nominalists, that an internal critique of Aquinas’s theory of the passions was produced. That is the story I’ll trace in what follows, by looking at four philosophers who claimed to be followers of Aquinas, no matter how much they may have disagreed over fundamentals: Cajetan, who tries to defend Aquinas’s theory against external attacks (mostly Scotist in character); Bartolomé de Medina, who initiates a philosophical exploration of the details of Aquinas’s theory; Francisco Suárez, who radically revises the theory; and John Poinset (John of St. Thomas), who offers a conservative retrenchment against Suárez to defend Aquinas ‘from within,’ as it were. By way of conclusion I’ll take a brief look at how Descartes fits readily into this tradition as part of the broad sweep of the history of affective psychology.

Cajetan (1469–1534)

The 1511 commentary on Aquinas’s treatise on the passions by Cajetan (Tommaso de Vio) is polemical and exegetical, largely defending Aquinas’s theory by textual exegesis and scholarship. His comments on IaIIae.23.1 are an instance in miniature of his overall approach. Aquinas had argued that the concupiscible and the irascible passions are different in kind because they have distinct formal objects. Cajetan takes the opportunity to argue against Scotus’s contention that the formal object of the irascible passions is *the offensive* rather than, as Aquinas maintained, *the sensible good taken as difficult*.⁶

⁵ *Op. Ox.* III d.34 q.un. (358): “The act of the irascible is to be angry... 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*” (Actus enim irascibilis est irasci... obiectum igitur irascibilis est uindicare, uel uerius, si honestus actus eius, uindicabile, quod posset dici irascitium uel—ut usitato modo loquendi—dicatur offendens).

⁶ *Op. cit.* 174a–b: “Scotus in primis, ut in III *Sent.* d.34 apparet, reprehendit dicentes obiectum irascibilis esse arduum, et uolens eius obiectum esse offendens... Nec ullam rationem inuenio nisi forte ex III d.26 quis assumat istam, scilicet quia arduum aut significet absens, aut excedens facultatem potentiae cui dicitur arduum, aut excedens omnia mala sibi contraria; sed nihil horum est; ergo etc. Haec autem petitio, aut distinctio, nihil obstat: quoniam arduum nihil horum formaliter signifi-

Scotus above all, as his *Op. Ox.* III d.34 q. un. makes clear, criticizes those who maintain that the object of the irascible is *the difficult*, wanting its object to be *the offensive* instead. . . I don't see any argument for this except perhaps this one in *Op. Ox.* III d.26: "Clearly 'difficult' signifies either (i) an absence, or (ii) something exceeding the faculty of the power for which it is called difficult, or (iii) something exceeding all the evils contrary to it; but it isn't any of these; therefore, etc." Yet his proposal or distinction doesn't work, since 'difficult' doesn't formally signify any of (i)–(iii) but instead signifies hardship in good or evil. We call things difficult that involve some hardship, and thereby some challenge. . . Now it was said in Ia.81.2 that the arduous good and the absolute good require different powers, and it is shown in IaIIae.23.1 *ad* 3 that the arduous good has the wherewithal to struggle with concupiscence. Therefore, *the offensive* is something contained under the object of the irascible inasmuch as it looks to some passion belonging to it, such as anger; but its adequate object is *the difficult* or *the challenging*.

Note that Cajetan argues directly against Scotus while ignoring the later scotist tradition. For all his remarks indicate, they might have been written two centuries earlier. Cajetan's arguments are basically literary in nature, taken from what he has found in the texts of Aquinas or of Scotus; they are scholarly, or 'scholastic' in the pejorative sense of the term. He is certainly right to insist that hardship is a constituent notion of difficulty, but how that supports his claim that offensiveness is subordinate to the difficult is obscure.

Part of the obscurity may be due to the fact that Cajetan doesn't take the distinction between the formal objects of the concupiscible passions and the irascible passions to support further subdivision into species:⁷

When Aquinas distinguishes *the difficult good* into *good* and *difficult* in his text, this isn't a distinction into a subject and an accident but

cat, sed difficultatem in bono uel malo. Arduas enim res dicimus quae difficultatem ac propterea celsitudinem quandam habent. . . Quod autem bonum difficile et bonum absolute egeant diuersis potentiis in Prima Parte dictum est; et in responsione ad tertium hic ostenditur, ex eo quod bonum difficile habet unde repugnet concupiscentiae. Offendens ergo est unum contentum sub obiecto irascibilis, pro quanto spectat ad aliquam eius passionem, puta iram: adaequatum autem obiectum est difficile siue arduum."

⁷ *Ibid.* 175b *ad* IaIIae.23.2: "Et cum in littera distinguitur bonum arduum in ly bonum et ly arduum, non est distinctio in subiectum et accidens sed unius fundamenti in plures particulares seu inadaequatas rationes: sicut distingueretur nigredo in id quod habet luminis et id quod habet obumbrationis."

rather of a single foundation into several particular and inadequate aspects, as blackness might be distinguished into what brightness it has and what darkness it has.

Hence *good* does not function as a genus that is differentiated into sub-species in the division of the concupiscible and the irascible passions, and, by implication, so much the less so in the distinction of the eleven subordinate kinds of passion. While Cajetan faithfully reproduces Aquinas’s complex analysis of the different kinds of opposition that constitute the distinct kinds of passion in his commentary on IaIIae.23.4, along the way reconciling apparent conflicts in Aquinas’s *œuvre* and refuting another objection from Scotus,⁸ he is careful not to characterize the resulting eleven kinds of passions as species. He does not assert that they aren’t species—he could scarcely do this against Aquinas’s assertion that “there are thus eleven different species of passion” (IaIIae.23.4: *Sunt ergo omnis passiones specie undecim*)—but he is careful to speak only of how they are diversified, rather than differentiated, from one another:⁹

The object of the appetite isn’t the thing but rather the thing as apprehended, and accordingly the formal differentia of the passions is not merely taken from the thing but from the thing as apprehended.

Thus the passions of hate, anger, and the like are not diversified in species by different evils, such as death, whipping, imprisonment, and so on; the difference in their natures occurs materially rather than formally.

Cajetan returns to the topic in his commentary on IaIIae.60.5, addressed to the question whether moral virtues are distinguished from one another by the different objects at which the passions are directed. In his discussion Aquinas concludes that moral virtues are distinct because of their circumstances, the passions involved, or their objects, and Cajetan interprets this as three separate and nonequivalent ways of classifying them (392b: *non*

⁸ Aquinas, in his *Sent.* III d.26 q.1 art.3 *ad* 3 and 5, classifies enjoyment (presumably synonymous with joy) as an irascible rather than a concupiscible passion. Cajetan admits the problem but asserts that Aquinas “changed to the better theory when he taught the opposite view here” (178b). Scotus’s contention in *Op. Ox.* III d.34 q.un. 360 that sadness is an irascible passion is dealt with much more harshly; Cajetan even calls Scotus’s argument for this claim good for a laugh (178b: “Ratio . . . risu digna uidetur”).

⁹ *Ibid.* 177b *ad* IaIIae.23.4: “Obiectum namque appetitus non est res sed res apprehensa. Et propterea differentia formalis passionum non solum ex distinctione rei sed distinctione rei ut apprehensa constat. Et hinc habes quod passio odii et irae et similitum non diversificantur specie ex diuersitate malorum, puta mortis, uerberis, carceris, et cetera: differentia enim naturarum materialiter et non formaliter concurrit.”

subordinatos sed disparatos). He allows passions to vary while the circumstances and objects remain the same, and objects to vary while the passions and circumstances remain the same. Hence the formal objects of the passions do not serve to define them as species. The clear implication is that the formal objects distinguish the passions accidentally, but Cajetan is too cautious to say so explicitly.

Bartolomé de Medina (1527/8–1580)

Unlike Cajetan, who offers an article-by-article close commentary on the text of Aquinas, Bartolomé de Medina analyzes Aquinas's thought in his *Expositio in Primam Secundae angelici doctoris D. Thomae Aquinatis* on a question-by-question basis, usually addressing the problems systematically rather than exegetically. He is able to do so by building on the work of his great predecessor: Medina explicitly names Cajetan as having refuted Scotus's contention that the formal object of the irascible is *the offensive* rather than *the sensible good taken as difficult* (205b *ad* 6), as we have seen in the preceding section. Since Cajetan has laid the ghost with his attention to detail, Medina can comment more freely on Aquinas's theory. He takes the opportunity to investigate the fundamental division of the passions into concupiscible and irascible.

In his analysis of IaIIae.23, Medina flaunts his renaissance erudition by offering no fewer than seven positive arguments derived from classical sources to prove that the concupiscible and the irascible are distinct powers or faculties (*virtutes*): one from Hippocrates, one from Plato, and five from Aristotle. In keeping with his scholastic background, though, Medina holds that only the arguments drawn from Aristotle are proper demonstrations.

Medina begins with an argument that points to the wide variety of emotions we find in experience:¹⁰

Whatever argument Hippocrates, chief among physicians, used to prove that the human body is composed of different elements may also be used to prove what we want to establish. For surely if these potencies were not diverse, we would not find so many varied emotions in our soul; but we recognize nearly an infinity of emotions in it; hence they must be reduced to different principles.

¹⁰ *Op. cit.* 204b: "Nam qua ratione Hippocrates, medicorum princeps, demonstravit corpus humanum ex pluribus elementis esse compositum, eadem ratione id quod probare intendimus confirmari posset. Si namque istae potentiae diuersae non essent, nequaquam in anima nostra tam uariae perturbationes inuenirentur; in ea autem infinitates* pene conspiciamus perturbationes; illae ergo in diuersa principia sunt reducendae." [*Emending from *infinitas* in the text.]

Putting aside the oddity of merely alluding to Hippocrates’s argument, it is clear that this first stab at establishing the distinction between the concupiscible and the irascible is inadequate. On the one hand, there is no reason to think that a single source might not account for the variety of felt emotions. On the other hand, if we grant that a single source is insufficient, there is no reason why we should think there are only two.

Medina’s next argument is drawn from Plato, *Republic* 4, namely the famous “Interference Argument” given in 436B–441C (the ancestor of Aquinas’s first argument in Ia.81.2 to establish the distinction between the concupiscible and irascible passions): since one person can simultaneously have attitudes toward the same object that interfere with one another, as *e. g.* anger towards the beloved can diminish desire for her, they must stem from different sources (204b–205a). Although Medina seems to be directly acquainted with Plato’s text, he presents the Interference Argument as consisting in two distinct arguments, corresponding to its first and second halves, the first distinguishing reason from the concupiscible passions (436B–439E), the second distinguishing concupiscible from irascible passions (440A–441C).¹¹ However, this peculiarity in his construal of the text doesn’t get in the way of the conclusion he wants to draw from the Interference Argument. In any event, Medina remarks, Plato’s arguments could not in fact be demonstrative (*si recte considerentur tantum sunt topicae*), since they would then establish that there are two distinct faculties in the intellectual appetite (the domain of the will) rather than the sensitive appetite (the domain of the passions), presumably because Plato argues for the distinction of the concupiscible and the irascible on the grounds that the will’s free choice is then opposed by some other faculty. To have a genuine demonstration of the distinction, Medina holds, we need to begin with the clear understanding of the organization of psychological faculties into sensitive and intellectual on the one hand, cognitive and appetitive on the other. This only emerges in Aristotle.

The first, second, and fifth arguments Medina derives from Aristotle—though they are no more from Aristotle than from Aquinas—identify criteria for distinguishing powers: the first by means of acts, the second and the fifth by means of (formal) objects. The bulk of Medina’s discussion, however, goes into showing that these criteria really do apply to the passions, rather than trying to show that the criteria are sound (as we might prefer). We shall see why he does this. Now in the first argument (205a), Medina

¹¹ Medina clearly separates them. He introduces the discussion of the irascible passions by *aliam demonstrationem habet in eodem loco*, as though they were independent.

devotes his energies to Aquinas's parallel in IaIIae.23.4 between the passions and natural phenomena. Just as fire has two distinct types of action, namely *rising upwards* and *burning other objects* (understood as 'overcoming' obstacles to its initial tendency to rise), so too the sensitive appetite has the actions of naturally tending to or away from something, evinced by the concupiscible passions, and prevailing over obstacles, evinced by the irascible passions. Now whether these actions count as 'distinct' depends in large measure on how they are described, and this in turn seems to be a matter of what they are aimed at, *i. e.* a matter of their objects. Thus in his second argument Medina reverts to the familiar assertion that the concupiscible and the irascible have different objects, the former *the enjoyable good* and the latter *the difficult good*. Yet when Medina turns to the fifth argument, which takes up the same point but in the particular case of the mind, his reasoning exposes a weak point in the traditional account:¹²

Fifthly, mental powers are most sharply distinguished by their objects, as remarked earlier. But the irascible and the concupiscible have different objects. Therefore, they are distinct. Proof of the minor premiss: the concupiscible has for its object the good enjoyable through sense, whereas the irascible aims at the insensible good.

According to Aquinas and Cajetan, the formal object of the irascible passions is *the sensible good taken as difficult*, not *the insensible good*. Furthermore, it is hard to see why an action of the sensitive appetite should have the *insensible good* as its object.¹³ Since it is obviously possible to be angry at someone, Medina cannot mean that the items at which the irascible passions are directed are immaterial. But if we insist that the object of the sensitive appetite is the sensible good *taken* in some way, as Aquinas does, then we can reasonably ask what such 'taking' consists in. It does not seem to be a matter of simple perception, and therefore is 'insensible.' Aquinas, when pressed, admits that even animals must have a faculty for grasping these evaluative features (*intentiones*) of things, "which the exterior senses do not perceive" (Ia.78.4); it is the 'estimative power' in animals, and 'par-

¹² *Ibid.* "Quinta, uires animi, ut supra dictum est, ex obiectis potissime distinguuntur; sed irascibilis et concupiscibilis habent distincta obiecta; ergo etc. Probatur minor: Concupiscibilis habet pro obiecto bonum per sensum delectabile, irascibilis uero tendit in bonum insensibile."

¹³ Levi [1964] 23 asserts that Medina "has not understood the principle distinguishing sensitive and rational appetites," a remarkable charge to lodge against the author of such a detailed and extensive commentary! Closer attention to the details of Medina's text shows that his view is neither ill-considered nor a misunderstanding, but a recognition of some of the philosophical difficulties in Aquinas's theory, as I shall argue.

ticular reason' in humans, that does the job.¹⁴ Now Medina prefaces his positive arguments with six objections (204b), in good scholastic *quaestio*-format, and the fourth of these objections returns to this problem. It runs as follows. Sensitive cognition, despite the existence of the different senses, is nevertheless a single faculty; sensitive appetite should analogously be a single faculty rather than split into the concupiscible and the irascible, a conclusion confirmed by the singleness of the will (the faculty of intellectual appetite). Medina replies:¹⁵

Even in the abilities belonging to sensitive cognition there are two powers: (*i*) for items that affect the senses, namely the estimative power; (*ii*) for items that don't affect the senses, which is called 'imagination.' The same line of reasoning establishes two faculties in the sensitive appetite, namely the concupiscible and the irascible; the former is designed for the good enjoyable through sense, the latter for the insensible good, as explained above... Again, we find only two kinds of goods that can be pursued in sensible things, namely those that can be perceived by the senses and those that do not affect the senses; hence only two powers are constituted in the sensitive appetite.

The objection itself isn't compelling; there is no intrinsic reason why all faculties, even those parallel to each other, need be structured in the same way. The interest here is not so much in Medina's reply itself as in its details, since they clearly show that Medina thinks of the irascible passions as going beyond what is (merely) apparent to the senses. Hence it is at least plausible to characterize the objects—Medina carefully does not say

¹⁴ That is, *vis aestimativa* and *ratio particularis*; see King [1998] §4. Medina may have been inspired by Cajetan's remark in his commentary on IaIIae.23.1 that an examination of Aquinas's *De ueritate* 25.2 and *Sent.* III d.26 yields the result that "the object of the concupiscible is the good as sensed whereas the object of the irascible is the good as assessed in value; sensible species promote the former, elicited *intentiones* the latter" (*obiectum concupiscibilis est bonum sensatum, irascibilis uero aestimatum: illam movent species sensibilium, istam intentiones elicita*).

¹⁵ *Ibid.* 205b: "Ad quartum respondetur, etiam in uirtutibus apprehensiuus partis sensitiuae geminam esse potentiam: una est eorum quae non immutat sensum, et haec est aestimatiua; altera uero est illorum quae sensum immutant, quae imaginatiua uocatur. Eadem ratione statuimus duas in parte appetitiuae sentiente facultates, irascibilem scilicet et concupiscibilem: hanc constituimus ad bonum delectabile secundum sensum, illam uero ad insensibile bonum, sicuti paulo ante expositum est... Rursus inter ea bona quae in sensibilibus appeti possunt, tantum duo genera inueniuntur: unum est eorum quae sensu percipi possunt, alterum eorum quae sensum non immutant; et ideo duae tantum constituuntur potentiae in parte appetente sensitiua."

“the formal object”—of the irascible as the insensible good.¹⁶ And there is good reason for Medina to do so, since it thereby suggests a difference in the underlying powers that reach to such different objects. Yet the question still remains: Why can’t a single power be responsible for all these features?

The first three objections Medina proposes focus on exactly this point. First, it might seem that it is the province of one and the same power to deal with contraries, as vision perceives both light and dark. Medina agrees with the principle wholeheartedly, pointing out that the concupiscible passions deal with what is both attractive and unattractive, whereas the irascible passions overcome obstacles both to attain the good and to avoid evil; their formal objects are different, but not themselves contraries.

The second objection points out that the same power both approaches one extreme and withdraws from the other, and as the irascible withdraws from what is unpleasant and, since the concupiscible approaches what is pleasant, there should be only a single underlying power. Likewise, the third objection points out that moral virtues, such as charity, are responsible for both striving to attain the good and detesting the evil it tries to replace; the same point could be made as regards the sensitive appetite. Medina offers a single reply to both objections, arguing that they conflate ‘withdrawal’ or ‘detesting’ with ‘struggling to overcome’; the former are the job of the concupiscible passions, the latter of the irascible passions. If the proper functions are genuinely different, they should be the province of distinct powers, as noted in the reply to the preceding objection.¹⁷

Along the same lines, the fifth objection proposes that the irascible passions formally include the concupiscible passions, since they are “engendered from them and terminate in them” (as Medina’s fourth aristotelian argu-

¹⁶ Why doesn’t Medina likewise characterize the objects of concupiscible passions as insensible, given that they are also ‘taken’ in some fashion? Aquinas, and his others in his wake, vacillates between describing the formal object of the concupiscible as *sensible good* simply, and *sensible good taken simply*. Only the latter is strictly correct, but Aquinas often slides from it to the former, and the former seems to require no more than physiological facts about perception. Cajetan explicitly endorses the slide in his commentary on IaIIae.23.2 (174b): “Consequently, it is as though one said that the object of the concupiscible is *the sensible good*, with nothing more added, whereas the object of the irascible is *the good taken as difficult or challenging*; the former is simple and the latter somehow composite” (Perinde est ac si diceretur quod concupiscibilis obiectum est bonum sensibile, nullo addito; irascibilis uero bonum determinatum ad rationem ardui seu difficilis; ita quod illud est simplex, hoc est quasi compositum).

¹⁷ The sixth objection tries to undercut Medina’s proofs by arguing that the objects of the concupiscible and the irascible passions are actually the same, since they are both directed at the good. In reply Medina simply defers to Cajetan’s arguments in his commentary on IaIIae.23.1 (see the discussion in §1 above).

ment has it in 205a). Hope, for example, includes desire for the good to be possessed; anger, achieving vengeance, results in joy. Put another way: the irascible can discharge the functions of the concupiscible. Since powers are above all distinguished by action and function, the grounds for imputing a distinction between the concupiscible and the irascible are taken away. Medina, in his reply, agrees that if the irascible were to be able to discharge the functions of the concupiscible, there would be no reason to postulate both powers. But to think that it does discharge its functions is a mistake, Medina argues, since the evidence only supports causal connection among the different kinds of passion. For one passion to engender another, or for one to terminate in another, is just to say that the one causes the other, which is another matter altogether from whether the one includes or somehow subsumes the functions of the other. The smell of food may make my mouth water, but the olfactory power does not thereby take over the functions of the gustatory power: smell isn't taste, and likewise concupiscible passions aren't irascible passions.

Medina's third aristotelian argument takes a different tack. It distinguishes the concupiscible from the irascible as a contrast of passive to active: "The concupiscible... tries to join itself to something appropriate to it, whereas the irascible seems to produce effects and to prevail."¹⁸ Concupiscible passions carry the agent along towards something, as though merely passive; irascible passions actively try to overcome obstacles. Medina doesn't develop the theme any further—though Poinset does; see §4 below—but even with this sketch it's easy to see his line of reasoning. If concupiscible passions are fundamentally passive while irascible ones are active, then they must reflect different powers, since the distinction between active powers and passive powers is one of the most basic.

Unlike Cajetan, Medina seems concerned both to explore the details of Aquinas's theory and to confront it with genuine challenges. It is not surprising that in Medina's work we see greater awareness of some of the trouble spots in Aquinas's account of the passions. Yet he stops short of revising Aquinas's theory, preferring instead to explicate and defend it against challenges where possible, and with the intellectual honesty to face up to serious philosophical difficulties. It was left to later philosophers to draw the unpalatable conclusion that Aquinas's theory has to be radically modified, if not simply rejected. And that is how Suárez enters the story.

¹⁸ *Ibid.* 205a: "Cupiditas aut concupiscibilis uidetur esse condita ad recipiendum: laborat namque ut sibi commodum coniungatur. At irascibilis, effecta uidetur ad agendum et superandum."

Francisco Suárez (1548–1617)

Suárez discusses the passions at length in his *Tractatus quinque ad Primam Secundae D. Thomae Aquinatis* IV disp. 1, and again in his lectures on psychology, edited by Alvarez after his death and first published in 1621: the *Tractatus de anima* V.iv–vi. Both works present the same radical revision of Aquinas’s theory, motivated in part by the problems that beset Medina. He begins his analysis in each by describing the “old theory” (*antiqua sententia*) that puts forward the “most popular division of the passions” (*vulgatissima passionum diuisio*), namely into the concupiscible and the irascible; this view is certainly held by Aquinas, Pythagoras, Plato, and Gregory of Nyssa, and is usually attributed to Augustine, Jerome, and Galen as well (*Tractatus de anima* V.iv.2 761b). To give the old theory its due, Suárez, in good scholastic fashion, presents several arguments used to support it:¹⁹

These authors use the following arguments: (1) In the case of material powers, any distinction among formal objects is more than enough to distinguish them, since they aren’t universal powers; the given distinction among objects will certainly work for the present instance. (2) A multiplicity of powers is given in sensitive cognition; thus also for sensitive appetite. (3) The irascible often acts contrary to the inclination of the concupiscible; they are therefore completely distinct potencies. The antecedent is clear, since the irascible always loves sad things so that it may struggle against contraries, whereas loving sad things is against the inclination of the concupiscible. (4) The passions stemming from these powers are contrary, since burning anger lessens desire; therefore, etc.

Despite these arguments—some of which, like (3) and (4), have venerable histories—Suárez is clear that the old theory should be discarded. The arguments don’t entail the conclusion that there is a real distinction between the concupiscible and the irascible powers:²⁰

¹⁹ *Op. cit.* 761b: “Prima horum auctorum ratio est: In potentiis materialibus quaelibet distinctio obiectorum formalium ad eas distinguendas abunde sufficit, cum non sint potentiae adeo uniuersales: allata ergo distinctio obiectorum sat erit in praesenti. Secundo. In potentiis cognoscentibus sensitiuis datur multitudo potentiarum; ergo etiam appetitiuis. Tertio saepe irascibilis appetit contra inclinationem concupiscibilis; ergo potentiae distinctae sunt omnino. Antecedens patet, quia irascibilis semper amat tristia ut repugnet contrariis, amare autem tristia inclinationi concupiscibiliis aduersatur. Quarto passiones harum uirium sunt contrariae, nam ardens ira minuit concupiscentiam; ergo etc.”

²⁰ *Tractatus de anima* V.iv.3 761b: “Rationes propositae non uidentur certe concluditur

The arguments presented above don't seem to definitely entail a real distinction between these 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').

There is at most a conceptual distinction between the concupiscible and the irascible, as Suárez tells us explicitly:²¹

Therefore, we can explain the reasons behind the names 'irascible' and 'concupiscible' in another way. In my opinion, they don't signify two appetites but one and the same conceived in different ways, since they can be considered as two in the object, [rather than the subject], of the appetite: (i) the 'appetible' good and whatever follows upon it of itself; (ii) what prevents the pursuit of such a good and deprives us of the beloved good. The appetite insofar as it desires the good is called concupiscible; insofar as it rises up against whatever gets in the way of this sort of good, so as to protect its good, it is called irascible.

The sensitive appetite, according to Suárez, 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 passions are concupiscible; in the latter, irascible. But 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.

The burden of the objections recounted by Suárez above, of course, is to deny that this is possible. While Suárez has asserted that they fail to establish their conclusion, he hasn't yet given us any reason to accept his

distinctionem realem inter has potentias: facile enim dici posset unicam esse potentiam sensitivam ordinatam ad bonum quod per sensum apprehenditur illamque habere actus quibus prosequitur, atque ut sic dici concupiscibilem; actus item quibus tueatur a contrariis, eoque pacto irascibilem nuncupari."

²¹ *Tractatus quinque ad Primam Secundae* IV disp. 1 §3.2 458b: "Aliter ergo possumus rationes nominum 'irascibilis' et 'concupiscibilis' explicare. Opinor enim non duos appetitus sed eundem diuerso modo conceptum significari, in obiecto enim appetitus duo considerari possunt. Primum ipsum bonum appetibile et quae ad illud consequendum per se conferunt; alterum est id quod impedit talis boni consecutionem et bono nos priuat amato. Appetitus ergo quatenus bonum appetit concupiscibilis dicitur; quatenus uero insurgit in eum qui huiusmodi bonum impedit ut suum bonum tueatur, irascibilis dicitur."

contention. He sets out now to do just that, by taking up each objection in turn and demonstrating how it falls short of proving its conclusion. To (1), the claim that any distinction among formal objects suffices for a real distinction among material powers, Suárez replies:²²

It should be denied that these diverse objects are sufficient to distinguish powers, since they are included under the single aspect of an adequate object, and they are subordinated to one another in such a way that they can't easily be attributed to diverse powers.

The single adequate object is *the sensible good*, and the interrelationship of concupiscible and irascible passions sketched above shows how deeply intertwined these notions are: 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, doesn't put much weight on the distinction of formal objects anyway; he tells us that it isn't an important issue since the concupiscible and the irascible aren't really distinct, though we can treat them as though they were two, since they are conceptually distinct, if we please.²³ Nor is the argument given in (2) compelling, since the parallel between sensitive cognition and sensitive appetite—if there is such a parallel—should be drawn not from the external senses but from the internal sense, as Suárez has done.²⁴ Hence there is no need for a real distinction on these grounds.

The other two arguments, (3) and (4), each present versions of Plato's 'Interference Argument' described by Medina, the former pointing to the phenomenon of 'contrary motion' in the passions and the latter the effect of one kind of passion on another. With respect to (3), Suárez denies that the contrareity is ever really complete.²⁵

²² *Tractatus de anima* V.iv.4 762a–b: “Ad primum ergo argumentum prioris opinionis: negandum rationes illas diuersas obiectorum sufficientes esse ad distinguendas potentias, eo quod comprehendantur sub una ratione adaequati obiecti; cum inter se subordinentur ut nequeant commode diuersis potentiis tribui.”

²³ *Tractatus de anima* V.iv.8 763b: “De distinctione quoque obiectorum irascibilis et concupiscibilis, cum eas non realiter non distinguamus, non multum curandum est; quia uero ratione saltem distingui possunt, proindeque de illis loquendum tanquam de multis, in hunc modum possunt illis assignari obiecta, et utraque uersetur ad bonum sensibile.”

²⁴ *Tractatus de anima* V.iv.4 762b: “Ad secundum argumentum respondetur non recti sumi ex sensibus exterioribus, quia non mouent appetitum immediate, sed sumendum potius esse ex interiori sensu, ut iam fecimus.”

²⁵ *Ibid.* “Ad tertium dicito cum irascibilis sit tota propter concupiscibilem, numquam posse illi totaliter contrariari, quod si appetitus sensituius interdum amat tristia, ex eo amat, ut consequatur delectabilia quae magis appetit, quod non aduersatur incli-

Since the irascible is a whole with respect to the concupiscible, it can never be wholly contrary to it; if the sensitive appetite at times loves sad things, it does so for the reason that there will follow enjoyable things it takes more delight in, and this isn't against the inclination of the concupiscible—instead, it takes its place, since it's working for the things that are desired.

Suárez actually gives two lines of reply here. On the one hand, he asserts that since the concupiscible and the irascible are the same, they can't be wholly in opposition; this implies, though it does not say, that they can be opposed in part—a conclusion he will draw explicitly in his reply to (4) below. On the other hand, Suárez holds that the vaunted opposition is merely apparent. In reality, the irascible merely works for the concupiscible in a more subtle fashion, by directing the concupiscible toward present pains for the sake of future pleasures (or the mediæval equivalent). The two do not interfere; they cooperate. Hence (3) doesn't establish a real distinction between the concupiscible and the irascible.

Matters are no better in (4), the other argument depending on some sort of incompatibility or tension, which describes the case of anger interfering with desire (namely by lessening it):²⁶

The case described here isn't sufficient [to establish the real distinction], since it doesn't stem from the diversity of powers but rather from the multiplicity of acts. One power, while it exercises some act, may be turned aside by others. Accordingly, it even happens that a strong desire for one thing is lessened from desire for another thing. The case can also arise from some incompatibility found among the acts. Love takes away hate in this fashion, since they are contrary acts, though each pertains to the concupiscible. Therefore, the case isn't sufficient.

Suárez is surely correct to point to the similar instances of interference among like passions, or passions of the same kind; if they do not entail a real distinction in powers, why should the tension between anger and desire entail a real distinction of powers? In addition, Suárez implicitly offers

nationi ipsius concupiscibilis sed potius stat pro illa cum pro concupitis laboret.”

²⁶ *Ibid.* “Ad quartum occures, allatum signum non esse sufficiens, cum non proueniat ex diuersitate potentiarum sed ex pluralitate actuum: una quippe potentia dum actum aliquem exercet distrahitur ab aliis: unde etiam contingit ut ipsamet concupiscentia uehemens circa rem unam diminuat ex concupiscentia circa rem aliam: potest etiam id signum oriri ex aliqua repugnantia inter actus inuenta, sic amor odium remouet, quia actus sunt contrarii, licet uterque pertineat ad concupiscibilem: non ergo signum sufficiens.”

an explanation of interference phenomena, namely that they are no more than conflicts among coordinate acts of the same power. Without further argument, (4) doesn't entail a real distinction among powers. But that is the last, and perhaps the best, of the grounds for postulating a real distinction.

Thus Suárez has described a conceptually coherent position regarding the concupiscible and irascible powers, and given a point-by-point refutation of the major arguments given against it. He rounds off his case by giving three positive arguments to establish that the distinction between the concupiscible and the irascible powers is merely conceptual. His first positive argument runs as follows:²⁷

There is a single universal power among the sensitive cognitive powers that apprehends every sensible object; hence there corresponds a single appetitive power that corresponds to it, universal to the extent that it loves and pursues every sensible good.

The 'single universal power' Suárez refers to is presumably the common sense—the internal faculty that unites the disparate deliverances of each of the five external senses. According to orthodox Aristotelian doctrine, each external sense, associated with a specific sense-organ, is reduced from potency to act in the way characteristic of the sense-faculty associated with the organ: vision is actualized by color in the eye, hearing by sound in the ear, and so on. These sensations then affect the single internal organ of common sense (the precise location of which was disputed), so that the visual appearance of something, for instance, is integrated with the tactile feel of it. As for sensitive cognition, Suárez maintains, so too for sensitive appetite; there need be only a single power lying at the root of all its acts.

The second positive argument Suárez offers is more of case of throwing down the gauntlet:²⁸

Irascible and concupiscible acts are so intertwined and linked that they can't readily be separated and attributed to diverse powers; hence they are more properly attributed to the same power. We used a similar argument previously to conclude that there is a unique inner sense that isn't in any way really multiple.

²⁷ *Tractatus de anima* V.iv.3 762a: "Probatur autem primo quia in potentiis cognoscen-
tibus sensitiuis una est potentia uniuersalis in illo genere quae apprehendit obiectum
omne sensibile; ergo illi correspondet una appetitiua, uniuersalis etiam in tali gradu
quae amat et prosequitur omne bonum sensibile."

²⁸ *Ibid.* "Secundo arguitur quia actus irascibilis et concupiscibilis adeo inter se connexi
sunt et ordinati ut non possint commode separari et diuersis potentiis attribui; rec-
tius ergo attribuuntur eidem. Simili enim argumento supra conclusimus unicum dari
sensum interiorem, neque ullatenus multiplicari realiter."

Whether they are too “intertwined and linked” to be separated might well be thought to be in the eye of the beholder. Nor is it entirely clear what Suárez has in mind here. Love might give rise to jealousy (say), but that could be a purely contingent causal connection, much as the smell of dinner might trigger pangs of hunger. Perhaps aware that the challenge flung down here is too abrupt, Suárez provides a confirmation of this second argument:²⁹

The irascible rises up against anything getting in the way of its pursuit of a desired good; hence it seeks to recognize what gets in the way of its pursuit; hence it also seeks that pursuit; hence there is a single power seeking both the good and likewise obstacles to it.

If this is meant to be an example of the intertwining of the concupiscible and the irascible, it needs more explanation. The key move is the transition from the irascible seeking to recognize obstacles to a given pursuit, to seeking the pursuit as such. At first glance, the reasoning seems to be predicated on a mistake. The mechanics who work in the racetrack pit have the job of changing tires as rapidly as possible so that their contestant’s car can get back into the race, but it is not the goal of the mechanics to win the race, even if they do seek to make it possible for the racecar driver to attain his goal of winning the race. So too the irascible makes it possible for the concupiscible to attain its end, but need not thereby be pursuing the same end. Yet Suárez may have a more subtle point in mind, namely that the irascible faculty’s goal is a constituent part of the concupiscible faculty’s goal, and, as such, there is no reason to think that it belongs to a distinct power. This is at least a plausible reading of how ‘intertwined’ the two are, and why they can’t be easily disentangled.

Suárez’s third and final positive argument has a different character and dialectical underpinning:³⁰

If these powers were postulated to be distinct, then which of them would be the more perfect? The irascible seems to be more perfect for the reason that a higher and more noble object is attributed to it. But it also seems less perfect because it is subordinate to the

²⁹ *Ibid.* “Explicatur et confirmatur amplius. Nam irascibilis insurgit contra impediendum concupiti boni assecutionem; ergo appetit agnoscere quod ipsam assecutionem impedit; ergo etiam appetit assecutionem eandem; ergo una est potentia appetens bonum atque ipsius obstacula similiter.”

³⁰ *Ibid.* “Tertio arguitur: Si hae potentiae distinctae ponantur, quatenam illarum erit perfectior? Hinc enim perfectior apparet irascibilis quia illi tribuitur obiectum altius atque nobilius; illinc uidetur minus perfecta cum tota ordinetur ad bonum concupiscibile seu ad defensionem illius, unde passiones concupiscibilis creduntur nobiliores, scilicet amor et desiderium etc. Neutrum ergo potest dici conuenienter.”

concupiscible good (or to its defense) as a whole, and accordingly the concupiscible passions (namely love, desire, and so on) are believed to be more noble. Neither can really be given as the answer.

Neither the concupiscible or the irascible is more perfect than the other, since a case could be made for each on distinct grounds. But any two really distinct items should be able to be ranked with respect to each other.³¹ Since they cannot be so ranked, we're naturally led to suspect their distinctness. If they are really the same power, of course, the question doesn't arise—yet another reason to be skeptical of the real distinction between the concupiscible and the irascible.

Suárez makes a powerful case for a deep and fundamental revision of Aquinas's theory of the passions with these arguments. But if we give up the real distinction between the concupiscible and the irascible, what grounds are there for retaining their conceptual distinctness? Surprisingly, Suárez concludes that there really aren't any—and, furthermore, that the identification of eleven fundamental kinds of passions is arbitrary. He offers instead four criteria that can usefully divide up the passions:³²

Note that we can distinguish these acts in a variety of ways: (1) according to their general accounts and ways of tending to their objects; (2) considering the lowest species of such acts; (3) insofar as they stimulate distinctive motions and alterations in the body; (4) as they have some excellence and require their own consideration in the heart for human virtues and activities.

These criteria yield different accounts of the number of the passions. The first, Suárez tells us, leads us to six passions: love, desire, and pleasure, directed to the good; hate, fear or avoidance, and pain or sadness, directed to evil (*ibid.*). The second produces an indeterminate number (*non possint certo numero comprehendere a nobis*), since there are, for example, an unlimited number of subdivisions of love or desire (§12.3). The third does result in the traditional set of eleven passions. The last depends on the authority consulted. The upshot, for Suárez, is that questions about the structure of

³¹ Why? This premiss seems false, or, at best, highly contentious: it amounts to assuming the ordinal comparability (at least) of all goods, no small assumption.

³² *Tractatus quinque ad Primam Secundae* IV disp. 1 §12.2 475a: “Aduertendum tamen est posse nos distinguere actus hos multipliciter: primo secundum generales rationes et modos tendendi in obiecta; secundo considerando usque ad species ultimas actuum; tertio prout in corpore excitant peculiarem motum et alterationem; quarto ut habent quamdam excellentiam et propriam considerationem requirunt in corde ad uirtutes et operationes humanas.”

the passions are purely instrumental.³³

From all of this it's clear that the division into eleven passions is largely accommodated to the scheme of a [given] theory; it isn't particularly necessary—it could be set down even with other modes, as other thinkers do.

It is not merely the distinction into concupiscible and irascible that is conceptual; all distinctions among the passions are conceptual. Suárez follows out this train of thought to the bitter end, concluding that there are no hard facts about the passions, or more exactly no facts that do not depend on a particular set of interests. To preserve continuity with the tradition we can continue to privilege Aquinas's scheme, though the grounds for doing so are purely pragmatic:³⁴

We should stick to Aquinas's division into the eleven passions, since it's the most common and is easier for explaining the origin and connection among all the affections.

With remorseless consistency Suárez has relegated Aquinas's theory to a familiar and pedagogically useful device. So radical was his revision of the traditional theory of the passions, it's no wonder a conservative retrenchment was in the offing.

John Poinot, a.k.a. John of St. Thomas (1589–1644)

John Poinot, a contemporary of Descartes, was also known as 'John of St. Thomas' for his ardent conviction that Aquinas's views on any given issue were better than anyone else's, a conviction he put into practice by publishing a complete treatment of philosophy "according to the precise, true, and authentic intent of Aristotle and the Angelic Doctor":³⁵ his massive *Cursus philosophicus thomisticus*, which incorporated his earlier 1635 treatise *De ente mobili animato*, covering the passions, as the fourth part of his treatment of natural philosophy. He singles Suárez out for careful criticism, intending to put a halt to the spread of his revisionist views, sketched in §3 above. When Eustace of São Paulo (1573–1640), for instance, in his 1609 work *Summa philosophiae quadripartita*—a work singled out for

³³ *Ibid.* §12.5 475b: "Ex quibus etiam patet diuisionem hanc undecim passionum ad methodum etiam doctrinae. . .satis esse accomodatum, quamuis non sit adeo necessaria, cum aliis etiam modis tradi posset quod fecerunt alii."

³⁴ *Ibid.* §12.6 475a: "Diuisio uero sancti Thomae in undecim passiones nobis retinenda est, quia et magis recepta est et facilius ad explicandum originem et connexionem omnium affectuum."

³⁵ That is: "secundum exactam, ueram, genuinam Aristotelis et Doctoris Angelici mentem."

praise by Descartes, though it is little more than a standard textbook—adopts Suárez’s contention that the concupiscible and the irascible are not really distinct powers.³⁶ Now Poinot takes up the division of the sensitive appetite as the “second difficulty” confronted in the analysis of the appetitive faculties (the first article of q.12), after establishing their existence. He insists that the concupiscible and the irascible passions are (really) diverse powers, not reducible to a single principle. He recounts Suárez’s arguments with some care (382a9–b11), but he puts off replying to them until he has fully stated the truth of the matter. Poinot offers in defense of Aquinas’s view—which, as he understands it, *is* the truth of the matter, maintaining a real distinction between the concupiscible and irascible passions (382b12–17)—one argument *a priori* and two *a posteriori* for his conclusion.

Poinot’s *a priori* argument runs as follows (382b25–39). The formal object of the faculty of sensitive appetite is the ‘appetible’ good as sensed. Thus distinctions among formal objects must, in this case, be a matter of different ways of taking the sensible good; since concupiscible and irascible passions differ precisely in the way they apprehend the sensible good, they have distinct formal objects, and a formal distinction of objects is sufficient for a real distinction among powers. Now whether one agrees with the conclusion there is no denying the ingenuity of his argument, and Poinot spends a fair amount of work shoring up its most controversial assumptions: (a) the claim that the formal objects of the concupiscible and irascible passions are distinguished solely by reference to the sensible good, and (b) the claim that distinct formal objects entail really distinct powers.

In defense of (a), Poinot argues that all passions should logically have their formal objects spelled out in terms of the sensible good, since that is the formal object of the faculty of sensitive appetite in general. That is to say, Poinot rejects the ordinary reading of ‘sensible good’ as embracing both perceived goods and perceived evils, and insists that the passions be characterized by the perceived good alone. The challenge is in seeing how the traditional version of the formal object of the irascible passions, namely *sensible good taken as difficult*, can be understood solely as a matter of perceived good and not perceived evil. Poinot explains his position as follows:³⁷

³⁶ *Summa philosophiae quadripartita* II.iii.2 q.1(a) p.53. Descartes himself, of course, rejects the conceptual as well as the real distinction between the concupiscible and the irascible: see §5 below.

³⁷ *Cursus philosophicus thomisticus* Nat. phil. IV q.12 art.1 383a28–b5: “Quare bonum sub ratione uincentis malum est obiectum irascibilis, non ipsum malum ut fugiendum praecise. Nam potius hoc pertinet ad concupiscentiam, quae fugit malum per tristi-

Accordingly, the object of the irascible is *the good taken as overcoming evil*, not precisely the evil itself as something to be avoided. This is more relevant to the concupiscible, which avoids evil in the case of sadness. But the object of the concupiscible is *the good taken as appropriate*. Now these things, in the formal aspect of the good as something ‘appetible,’ involve contrary and diverse formal aspects. For the concupiscible appetite is simply attracted to whatever is attractive, whereas *the difficult*, in comparison, seems instead to involve revulsion and withdrawal because it operates in the contrary manner, namely by presenting the good as laborious, hard, and challenging, and as prevailing by virtue and strength to get rid of those difficulties. Hence they are related to these goods in a distinct and contrary manner in the very aspect of the appetible good, as though they were just a matter of the difference between the active and the passive, which usually distinguishes potencies to the greatest degree.

The irascible passions are indeed defined through the sensible good, though they represent it as challenging and laborious whereas the concupiscible passions represent it as appropriate and attractive. In terms reminiscent of Bartolomé de Medina in §2 above, Poinsot holds that the irascible passions are ‘active’ in that they strive to prevail over difficulties; the concupiscible passions, by contrast, are almost ‘passive’ in that the agent is carried along towards the perceived good, which is taken as something alluring and desirable.³⁸ Hence the passions are divided into two distinct kinds by what is effectively a traditional aristotelian differentia, being determined by two contrary features of their formal objects, much as the genus *animal* is divided into two kinds by the contrary features *rationality* and *irrationality*.

In defense of (b), Poinsot argues that the distinctness of powers follows on the distinctness of their objects, as long as there is nothing higher capable of unifying them (382b40–44). He makes this qualification with an eye to

tiam; bonum autem sub ratione conuenientis est obiectum concupiscibilis. Haec autem in ipsa ratione formali boni ut appetibilis contrarias et diuersas rationes formales inducunt. Nam ad alliciendum appetitum concupiscibile simpliciter allicit, arduum uero comparatione illius potius uidetur horrorem et retractionem inducere, eo quod contrario modo procedit, scilicet proponendo bonum laboriosum, asperum et difficile et ut uincens per uirtutem et uim ad propellendas illas difficultates. Ergo in ipsa ratione boni appetibilis contrario et distincto modo se habent ista bona, et quasi reducuntur ad differentiam actiui et passiui, quod maxime distinguere solet potentias.”

³⁸ Poinsot says ‘almost’ (*quasi*) because the contrast between them is not really a matter of active *vs.* passive: concupiscible passions can appear active, *e. g.* aversion; irascible passions can appear passive, *e. g.* despair.

the will. Intellective appetite, unlike sensitive appetite, is not split into two parts, ultimately due to freedom of the will: “Especially because the will is not borne determinately to some good but rather is able to accept or reject it after comparing it to another good, and, in virtue of its comparison of one good to another, must therefore be a potency more eminent than either and comprehending both in a higher aspect.”³⁹ Yet putting the will aside, why does Poincot hold that real distinctness necessarily follows on the distinctness of formal objects? Compared with the lengthy analysis in Medina and the refutation of (1) in Suárez, Poincot’s simple insistence that it must so follow seems to be little more than begging the question. Since his argument crucially depends on (b) to work, the absence of any reasons is inexcusable. Perhaps this is why Poincot supplements his reasoning with two arguments of a different type.

The first of Poincot’s *a posteriori* arguments for the real distinction of the concupiscible and the irascible passions is the claim, derived from Galen, that they require different physiological bases:⁴⁰

We can prove empirically that these powers are distinct because they require distinct bodily organs and temperaments. The irascible requires strength and lively spirits, and so has its seat in the heart; anger is accordingly defined as the boiling of blood around the heart. But the concupiscible strives for a more gentle disposition and has its seat in the liver, which is expanded or softened with blood by concupiscence, just as it is constricted by sadness. But a distinction by bodily organs and temperaments entails distinct powers in material things.

Unlike Suárez, who made an attempt to keep abreast of the latest researches in medicine and incorporate them into his philosophy, Poincot’s argument here could have been given by Aquinas himself nearly four centuries earlier.

³⁹ *Ibid.* 383b26–37: “Et praesertim quia uoluntas non fertur in aliquod bonum ut determinata, sed cum quadam collatione et comparatione ad aliud bonum, quod potest comparatiue ad istud accipere uel relinquere; ergo oportet quod talis potentia, ut respicit bonum collatiue et comparatiue ad alterum, habeat eminentiam super utrumque et sub ratione superiori illa comprehendat.” Poincot takes this claim to be best supported by Aquinas (*optime explicat S. Thomas*), Ia.22.5 and *De ueritate* q.25 art.3.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.* 384a38–b4: “A posteriori uero probatur has potentias distingui, tum quia requirunt *distincta organa et temperamenta*. Nam irascibilis requirit multum roboris et uiuaciores spiritus ideoque residet in corde. Unde definitur ira, quod est ‘accensio sanguinis circa cor.’ At uero concupiscibilis petit molliorem dispositionem et residet in hepate; per concupiscentiam enim dilatur seu demulcetur sanguine, sicut per tristitiam constringitur. *Distinctio autem per organa et temperamenta, distinctas potentias infert in rebus materialibus.*”

Be that as it may, the key move here is the last claim that distinct physiological bases are sufficient for really distinct powers, at least in material beings.⁴¹ Such a claim is at least plausible. The senses of sight and hearing depend on pairs of sense-organs, namely eyes and ears, but each pair is of the same type; smell, touch, and taste all depend on a single sense-organ (the skin for touch) and are arguably homogeneous; the heart and the liver perform radically different functions in mediæval and renaissance physiology, and it would be unlikely that such different sense-organs would be associated with a single power.

Poinsot's second *a posteriori* argument depends on his first. It is a variant on Aquinas's presentation of the Interference Argument in Ia.81.2 (first argument), mentioned by Medina and Suárez. Poinsot acknowledges that the concupiscible and irascible passions may conflict and mitigate or extinguish one another. But that isn't enough to establish that they are different powers, he acutely notes, since love and hate, for example, are incompatible as regards the same object but nonetheless make up a single conjugation of concupiscible passion. The real reason must be physiological:⁴²

The opposition isn't because concupiscible and irascible passions interfere with and destroy one another due to the contrareity of their objects, as in the case of love and hate; nor is it due to the difference in local motion regarding expansion and constriction alone; instead, it is due to the difference among qualities and temperaments. For concupiscence expands by touching gently, whereas anger produces exasperation by boiling. These are signs of differing temperaments and bodily organs, and thus powers as well.

The point is that interference, unlike simple incompatibility, depends on different actions that cause results in mutual tension. The variety of effects the concupiscible and irascible passions can have on each other suggest a more complex causal story, which Poinsot ingeniously links up with the

⁴¹ In *Tractatus de anima* V.iv.9 763b–764a Suárez anticipates, and rejects, Poinsot's line of reasoning here, asserting that experience is deceptive (*experientia fallax est*) when it comes to locating the seat of the passions; the truth of the matter, he argues, is that the appetitive power resides wholly in the heart. With this contention, Suárez neatly sidesteps Poinsot's reasoning, since in his view there are not distinct physiological bases for the concupiscible and the irascible.

⁴² *Ibid.* 384b13–24: “Nam contra est quia passiones concupiscibilis et irascibilis non se mitigant et destruunt propter contrarietatem obiectorum, sicut odium et amor; uel propter solum diuersum motum localem dilatationis et constrictionis; sed propter diuersam alterationem et temperamentum, quia concupiscentia dilatat molliendo, ira uero accendo exasperat, quae sunt signa diuersi temperamenti et organi, atque adeo et potentiae.”

different bodily organs for each. Again, his argument is hardly bulletproof; it might well be that a single power could have opposing causal effects in operating through different bodily organs. To the extent we find this implausible, it will be for the reason highlighted in Poinso's first argument, namely that it seems implausible to associate the same power with different sense-organs.

After the presentation of his own view, or more exactly of his version of Aquinas's view, Poinso turns to the detailed refutation of Suárez's positive arguments for a merely conceptual distinction between the concupiscible and the irascible. (His reason for delay is that his replies make use of the philosophical machinery developed in the exposition of Aquinas, though in point of fact only one—his reply to the confirmation of Suárez's second positive argument—seems to.) Now whereas Suárez began by arguing that the sensitive appetite should be parallel to sensitive cognition, and just as the common sense is a single faculty, so too for the appetite, Poinso argues that Suárez's parallel should lead to the opposite conclusion from the one he draws:⁴³

The apprehensive powers are also distinguished as the appetites are, since the common sense and the imagination apprehend sensed things, *i. e.* as appropriate for sense, and so they are able to govern the concupiscible. Now the estimative power apprehends things that aren't sensed, *i. e.* in the aspect *useful and appropriate for the whole and its preservation and defense*, and so can govern the irascible, which looks to the hard and laborious good that isn't sensed or according to sense.

Poinso's idea is clever, and an improvement on Medina's similar reply to the fourth objection (see §2 above). The common sense corresponds to the concupiscible power, since it deals with sensible things; the estimative faculty to the irascible power, since it deals with things not apparent to sense. Medina had suggested that the parallel should be drawn to the estimative power for the concupiscible and the imagination for the irascible; Poinso's claim is more plausible, since we know that the estimative power provides 'non-sensible' evaluative assessments. Precisely how the estimative

⁴³ *Ibid.* 384b25–39: “Ad primum fundamentum Patris Suarez dicitur etiam potentias apprehensivas distingui sicut et appetitus, quia sensus communis et phantasia apprehendunt res sensatas, id est ut conuenienter sensui, et sic poterunt regulare concupiscibilem. Aestimatiua autem apprehendit res non sensatas, id est secundum rationem utilis et conuenientis ad ipsum totum et ad eius conseruationem et defensionem, et sic regulare potest irascibilem, quae respicit bonum laboriosum et arduum non sensatum seu secundum sensum.”

or irascible powers do this is obscure—a point noted in connection with Medina—but that doesn't detract from Poinot's ingenuity in devising an alternative parallel than the one Suárez put forward. That said, Poinot's reply doesn't really damage Suárez's point, since all Suárez was trying to do was present a possible analogy between the sensitive and appetitive faculties; that there might be other parallels, including the one devised by Poinot, is neither here nor there.

Suárez's second positive argument maintained that the concupiscible and the irascible were so intertwined that they can't readily be attributed to different powers. Poinot tries to explain their connectedness and how they can yet be really distinct:⁴⁴

As for Suárez's second positive argument: The irascible presupposes the concupiscible and originates in it, like the will presupposes the intellect and is derived from it, or the motive potency presupposes the appetitive and is derived from it. Yet they aren't the same power on this account but rather diverse powers—or rather it is common to all subordinate powers that the inferior presupposes the superior as something that directs and moves it, and yet is distinct from it. Thus the irascible looks to the desired thing in this fashion, as something pursuable by overcoming difficulties, which presupposes that the thing is desired as pleasant and enjoyable; the greater the desire, the more strongly the irascible rises up to struggle against and remove obstacles to it.

Suárez had, in effect, challenged defenders of the real distinction to show how the concupiscible and the irascible powers could be disentangled. Poinot rises to the challenge by giving the orthodox reply: they are causally linked, and one is essentially subordinate to the other, but that doesn't prevent them from being really distinct. Poinot leaves the underlying mechanisms that link the two obscure—how is it that the greater the desire, the stronger the fight to overcome obstacles?—but is sufficient to reply to Suárez's challenge. A complete theory ought to spell out these details, of course.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.* 384b48–385a18: “Ad secundum respondetur irascibilem supponere concupiscibilem et ab ea originari, sicut etiam uoluntas supponit intellectum et ab eo deriuatur, et potentia motiua supponit appetitiuam et ab ea deriuatur. Nec tamen propter hoc sunt eadem potentia sed diuersae, immo hoc est commune omnibus potentiis subordinatis, ut inferior supponat superiorem tamquam dirigentem et mouentem, et tamen distinguantur. Sic ergo irascibilis respicit rem concupitam ut assequibilem uincendo difficultates, quod supponit rem esse concupitam ut fruibilem et delectabilem, et quanto maior est concupiscentia tanto fortius insurgit irascibilis ad pugnandum et tollendum eius impedimenta.”

Poinsot treats Suárez's confirmation of his second argument as though it were an independent line of reasoning, indeed a separate argument in its own right:⁴⁵

The irascible does seek the outcome, but not in the same way the concupiscible does, but in a different way, as has been explained.

Hence *seeking* taken generically does apply to each power, but not under the same specific aspect, as Aquinas tells us in Ia.81.2.

The explanation to which Poinsot refers is the account of the distinct formal objects of the concupiscible and the irascible in his defense of (a) above. Hence Suárez's confirmation mistakenly moves from the irascible's drive to overcome obstacles to identifying the good the concupiscible can then attain as the irascible's object. Suárez is not wrong to take each power as a form of 'seeking' its object, but that doesn't argue for their identity.

Finally, Poinsot thinks there to be a clear answer to Suárez's question whether the concupiscible or the irascible is the more perfect, returning to some of Medina's worries:⁴⁶

As for Suárez's third positive argument: The irascible is simply more excellent than the concupiscible, as Aquinas establishes in *De ueritate* q.25 art.2, since its object is more excellent. As one might expect, the higher good that overcomes difficulties should have more activity, since it has to overcome more resistance, and since it is directed by a greater ruler, namely by the estimative power and by *rationes* that aren't sensed, which have the highest place among sensibles and come closer to reason [than sense].

This is at best only half a reply, since Poinsot does not address Suárez's contention that the concupiscible is more perfect than the irascible because the latter is essentially subservient to the former. The last claim that Poinsot makes should be unpacked, though. The *rationes* or *intentiones* to which he refers are not, strictly speaking, sensible, but they somehow 'arrive through sense' (even though they "come closer to reason"). They ground the irascible passions, since these passions identify something as inimical or useful.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.* 385a33–40: "Ad tertium dicitur quod irascibilis appetit executionem, non tamen eo modo appetit quo concupiscibilis, sed diuerso, ut explicatum est, et ita utrique potentiae conuenit appetere generice sumptum sed non sub eadem specifica ratione, ut Diuus Thomas docet quaestione illa 81 art.2."

⁴⁶ *Ibid.* 385b11–23: "Ad ultimum dicitur irascibilem esse simpliciter excellentiorem concupiscibili, ut docet D. Thomas q.25 De Veritate art.2, eo quod obiectum eius est excellentius, utpote bonum eminens uincens difficultates, quod maiorem actiuitatem debet habere, quia plus resistentiae debet uincere, et quia dirigitur a nobiliori regula, id est ab aestimatiua et rationibus insensatis, quae inter sensibilia summum locum tenent magisque accedunt ad rationem."

But this brings us face-to-face with the problem Medina had raised, that helped to prompt Suárez's revision of Aquinas: How is it that the passions engage the world? Poinsett's energetic defense of Aquinas against Suárez doesn't resolve this difficulty, and, with no resolution available, Aquinas's theory of the passions could not be taken as the last word.

Conclusion

Aquinas's theory of the passions, a marvel of ingenuity, met with serious challenges within the Thomist tradition. Responses varied, but followed roughly one of two patterns. Some philosophers were led by the problems to propose revisions to Aquinas's theory, in the name of producing a better account of the passions. But the problems ran deep, and so did their cure, with the result that the revisions were radical, and there was a serious question whether the revised theory should be considered an 'Aquinean' theory at all—a serious problem for anyone whose philosophical fidelity was pledged to Aquinas. This is the line of development anticipated by Medina and traced by Suárez. Other philosophers were led to reject, or at least to downplay, the significance of the philosophical challenges to Aquinas's theory, and thereby maintained their fidelity to his theory. But this loyalty came at the cost of avoiding the genuine philosophical problems that investigation had uncovered in Aquinas's account, and so tended to produce strident but philosophically shallow defenders of Aquinas. This is the line of development anticipated by Cajetan and traced by Poinsett. Whether the Thomist tradition could in the end have found a way around the apparent impasse isn't clear. What happened instead is that the Suárezian tradition reaped the whirlwind, in the person of Poinsett's contemporary: René Descartes.

In §68 of his *Les passions de l'âme*, published in 1649, Descartes dismisses the entire Thomist tradition with a few rapid strokes:⁴⁷

For those [who have written about the passions] get their list of them by distinguishing two appetites in the sensitive part of the soul, which they label the concupiscible and the irascible. Yet because I don't recognize any distinction of parts in the soul, as I have declared in §30 and §47, this seems to me to mean nothing more than that

⁴⁷ *Op. cit.* 379: "Car ils tirent leur denombrement de ce qu'ils distinguent en la partie sensitive de l'ame deux appetits, qu'ils nomment, l'un concupiscible, l'autre irascible. Et pour ce que je ne connois en l'ame aucune distinction des parties, ainsi que j'ai dit cy dessus, cela me semble ne signifier autre chose, sinon qu'elle a deux facultez, l'un de desirer, l'autre de se fascher. . . je ne voy pas porquoy ils ont voulu les rapporter toutes à la concupiscence ou à la colere."

it has two faculties, one of desiring, the other of being vexed. . .
 Moreover, I don't see why they wanted to refer all the passions to
 concupiscence or to anger.

Descartes is typically breezy in considering his predecessors, but his position is recognizably an extension of Suárez's.⁴⁸ Since he rejects any real distinction in the soul, Descartes can only accept at most a conceptual distinction between the concupiscible and the irascible, which are two powers or faculties of one and the same soul. Furthermore, if the distinctions among the various passions are merely conceptual, there is no reason why the concupiscible and the irascible have place of privilege; we can reclassify the passions as we see fit. On both points Descartes is the inheritor of Suárez, and stands indebted to the complex development played out within the Thomist tradition—not the radical innovator he is sometimes portrayed as. Only closer attention to the fine points of historical and doctrinal detail can allow us to see how the history of affective psychology, like the history of science generally, is a continuous thread.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ The similarities in Descartes's position to Suárez's as sketched in §3 should give the lie to one of the main themes of James [1997] 66–71, namely that the scholastic theories of the passions were washed out with the tide in the more general modern critique of aristotelian natural philosophy and metaphysics (22). The “stock objections” she cites don't come close to explaining how late mediæval affective psychology was replaced. James is quite wrong in her contention that the seventeenth century marks a radical break with its philosophical past—but then again, like all too many students of modern philosophy, she knows all too little about mediæval philosophy.

⁴⁹ A distant ancestor of this paper was presented at a conference in Uppsala in November 1998, and benefitted from numerous helpful comments and criticisms. I'd also like to give special thanks to Jack Zupko for providing me with the text of Medina.

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