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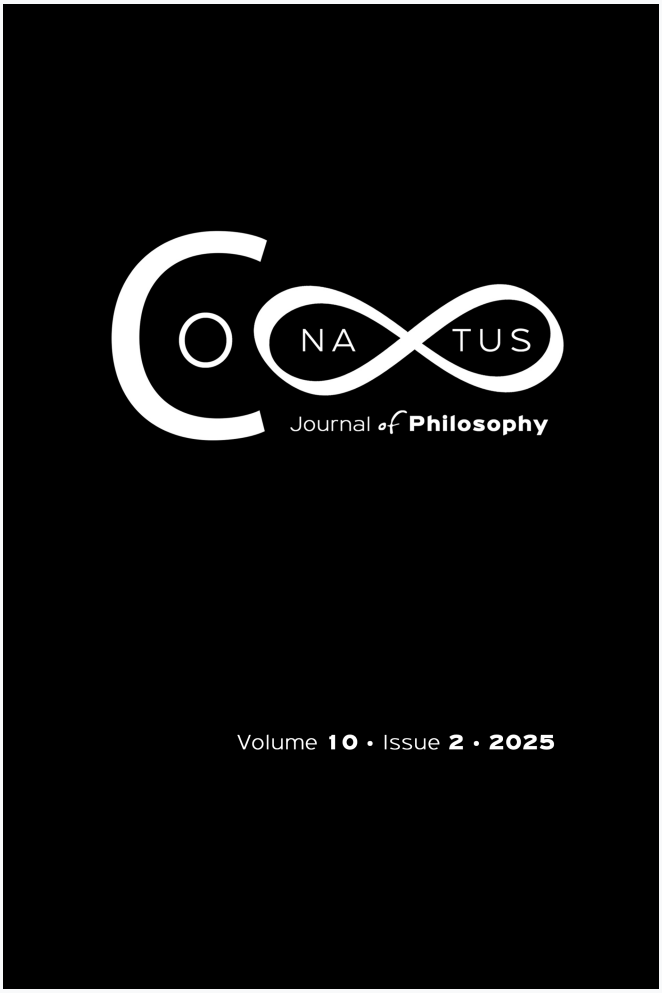

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The non-Thomistic Character of Aristotle's (and Thomas's) Ethics

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Abstract

Even today, some Thomists follow the Early Modern, Neo-Scholastic tradition in reading Thomas Aquinas's ethics as an Aristotelian, reason-dominant model in which emotions play a secondary role in the virtuous life. The virtuous person is one for whom reason is superior to and rules over the emotions. Alternatively, Eleonore Stump dissociates Thomas Aquinas's ethics from Aristotle in an effort to overcome intellectualist interpretation. In this paper, I draw on Eugene Garver's Aristotle scholarship to offer a reading of Aristotle's ethics free of its Neoplatonic intellectualist reception in the Thomistic Commentary tradition. In doing so, I support Thomists who see emotivist elements in Thomas Aquinas's ethics but do not yet see them in Aristotle. For these Thomists, Thomas Aquinas's ethics will turn out, once again, Aristotelian.

Keywords: *Aristotle's ethics; Thomas Aquinas's ethics; emotions; reason*

I. The non-Thomistic character of Thomas Aquinas's ethics

Members of the Early Modern Commentary Tradition on Thomas Aquinas's *Summa theologiae*[1] exhibit the early stages of an emphasis on reason and the conceptual over emotion and the ineffable, an emphasis which would reach a zenith in Modern philosophy with the ethical rationalism of Immanuel Kant. Perhaps the most

[1] Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (Benziger Brothers, 1947).

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visible representative of such a ratiocentric trend is the 16th-century Jesuit, Francisco Suárez.[2] For Francisco Suárez, theology as such requires no faith in the truth of its claims, given the sufficiency of the proposition (propositio sufficiens) to carry the content of divine revelation.[3] For Francisco Suárez, metaphysics begins philosophy and is a systematic study of the concept of "being," which is graspable by the human intellect; that is, philosophy begins with ontology.[4] Francisco Suárez and many of his Thomistic contemporaries believed that when Thomas Aquinas receives the moral philosophy of Aristotle, he receives it with Plato's intellectualist privileging of reason over emotion intact.[5] All as such, it is not surprising that when Francisco Suárez comments on Thomas Aquinas's treatment of emotion and moral virtue in the *Prima Secundae*, he offers an "intellectualist" reading of Thomas Aquinas's ethics, that is, for Suárez's Thomas Aquinas, in the morally virtuous person, emotions are inferior and obedient to the intellect, their master.[6] Whether or not Thomas Aquinas himself accepts a ratiocentric

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[2] It should be noted that for the medievals, *intellectus* and *ratio* are not identical powers, and the former is closer to non-inferential intuition while the latter closer to conceptual reasoning. The distance between the two is progressively narrowed in the increasingly rationalist epistemologies featured in Early Modern to Modern thought. Huw P. Owen, "The Evidence for Christian Theism," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 64 (1963): 130-132.

[3] For discussion in relation to the notion of Christian revelation see Jean-Luc Marion, *D' ailleurs, la révélation* (Grasset, 2020), 88.

[4] See Francisco Suárez's preface at Francisco Suárez, *Opera omnia*, ed. Charles Berton (Apud Ludovicum, Vivès, 1856-1878) 8-9. "Ontologia" appears first in the contemporaneous Rudolf Golcenius, *Lexicon philosophicum, quo tanquam Clave Philosophiae fores aperiuntur* (Mathäus Becker, 1613), 16 ("ontologia, philosophia de ente"), but was popularized in Modern thought with Christian Wolff, *Philosophia prima, sive ontologia* (Rengeriana, 1730), 1. The equation of "being" and the conceptual in Modern ontology is a defining feature of that period's rationalism.

[5] Francisco Suárez comments on Thomas Aquinas's treatment of the passions in *Summa theologiae* I–II in the following treatises: *De ultimo fine hominis* ("On the Ultimate End of Man"), *De voluntario et involuntario* ("On the Voluntary and the Involuntary"), *De bonitate et malitia actuum humanorum* ("On the Goodness and Evil of Human Acts"), *De passionibus et habitibus* ("On Passions and Habits"), and *De vitiis atque peccatis* ("On Vices and Sins"), which appear together at Francisco Suárez, "*Tractatus quinque ad primam secundae D. Thomae*," in *Opera omnia*, 456-512. Suárez's more explicitly ratiocentric interpretation of Thomas Aquinas appears also, for example, in vol. V, *De legibus ac deo legislatore* ("On Laws and God the Lawgiver"), 1-48, presented as a commentary on Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, 90-108.

[6] On the question of the suitability of emotion for the wise man: "For it must be supposed that without freedom no act is morally good or bad: in turn, the sensitive appetite as such has no freedom in its operation [...] Secondly, it is certain that such movement (motus, emotion) can take place (cadare) in the wise man [...] because it does not contain the appetite *such that it never precedes reason* [...] It is certain that these emotions (motus) are occasionally bad, occasionally good, relative to the object and circumstance, made so by the consent of the will (consensu voluntatis) [...]. The reason for this is that when the appetitive motion (motus appetitus) is properly ordered, *if it follows the will's consent* in the end, it will be good, proceeds from

account of moral virtue, his Early Modern commentators, represented here by Francisco Suárez, read him as so doing.

Attributing a ratiocentric ethics to Thomas Aquinas will not go out of fashion, however, after the 16th century. Neo-Scholastic Thomism sees a revival in the 19th and early 20th centuries and today continues to have representatives in the broadly Anglo-American philosophical tradition.[7] According to this interpretative tradition, Thomas Aquinas holds an Aristotelian ethics in which the virtuous person is one in whom reason rules over the passions, directing them away from excessive and deficient expression and determining them as fitting in relation to the good.[8] To be sure, Thomas Aquinas's moral theory is in-

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a good cause, and tends to a good object; thus, it is aligned with the *rational nature* itself (naturae rationali), and in a certain way necessary for the completion of the work. For it is easier for a man to work well, whenever appetites assist toward (facilius) a good work, and therefore it often benefits the wise man to arouse these movements. which are like a kind of kindling energizing virtue, *as Plato said*, and like soldiers serving their leader, or as weapons of virtue, as Aristotle used to say (referenced by Seneca) [...], for which reason *Plutarch*, in his *Virtute Morum*, said that it is not wise to uproot the radical affections (sapientis affectus radicitus) because it is neither possible nor useful, but to order them properly. We can confirm that the affections of the wise man hold good effect, such as is clear from the fear of punishment, mercy, and from the sorrow of the sin committed, etc., and pleasure by its nature accompanies virtue. All this to say, virtue does not destroy nature, just as health does not destroy the humours nor their quality, nor does music destroy sound but moderates it." Francisco Suárez, "*De ultimo fine hominis*," in *Tractatus quinque ad primam secundae D. Thomae,* 456-457 (emphases mine).

[7] For a principal representative of the Neo-Scholastic school see Réginald Garrigou-Lagrange, *Le réalisme du principe de finalité,* (Desclée de Brouwer, 1932): 148, 209 and 285; Réginald Garrigou-Lagrange, *La synthèse thomiste,* (Desclée de Brouwer, 1946): 109-114. For recent representatives see, Wim Decock, Bart Raymaekers and Peter Heryman, eds., *Neo-Thomism in Action* (Leuven University Press, 2021); Edward Feser, "Natural Law Ethics and the Revival of Aristotelian Metaphysics," in *Natural Law Ethics*, ed. Tom Angier (Cambridge University Press, 2019), 276-296. Francisco J. Romero Carrasquillo centers ratiocentric passages seeming to render Thomas Aquinas's anthropological views misogynistic (without denouncing the views) in Francisco J. Romero Carrasquillo and Hilaire K. Troyer de Romero, "Aquinas on the Inferiority of Woman," *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 87, no. 4 (2013): 685-710.

[8] For example, John Finnis describes Thomas Aquinas's theory as follows. "The virtues, like everything else in one's will, are a response to reasons [...]. Aquinas accepts Aristotle's notion that every virtue is a mean between too much and too little, and he constantly stresses that it is reason – with the principles and rules (regulae) it understands – that settles the mean and thus determines what is too much or too little. Indeed, the principles of practical reason (natural law) establish the ends of the virtues: *ST* II-II q. 47 a. 6." And "Although Aquinas subscribes to Aristotle's thesis that practical reasonableness (phronesis, prudentia) concerns means rather than ends." And "although Aquinas subscribes to Aristotle's thesis that practical reasonableness (phronesis, prudentia) concerns means rather than ends, he eliminates any quasi-Humeian reading of that thesis by emphasizing that what "moves" *prudentia* is not one's passions but one's underivative understanding of the first practical principles and of the intelligible goods to which they point (synderesis movet prudentiam: *ST* II-II q. 47 a. 6 ad 3)." John Finnis, "Aquinas's Moral, Political, and Legal Philosophy," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (2021), ed. Edward N. Zalta, https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2021/entries/aquinas-moral-political.

debted to Aristotelian ideas, such as the idea of virtue being a mean between extremes.[9] Also like Aristotle, Thomas Aquinas divides human powers into divisions such as the sensitive and the intellectual, of which the former houses the "passions," that is, emotions in their basic sense.[10] On an intellectualist reading, however, moral decision-making is primarily a matter of the intellect and will, and passions either get in the way or follow suit. Peter King puts it this way: "Thomas Aquinas holds *contra* Hume, that reason is and ought to be the ruler of the passions; since the passions *can* be controlled by reasons they *should* be controlled by reason."[11]

In contrast, Eleonore Stump's work has helped to overcome the Neo-Scholastic intellectualist influence on Thomistic interpretation by drawing attention to the three-tiered account of the passions in Thomas Aquinas's anthropology. Beyond the psycho-physiological passions in the sensitive appetite (sensus appetitus sensitivus)[12] which are inferior to reason, Thomas Aquinas, Eleonore Stump tells us, includes the "analogue of the passions" in the intellect, a higher order emotion, and moreover, incorporates the theological Fruits and Gifts of the Holy Spirit, which infuse spiritual emotion and second-personal contact with God, elevating natural, acquired virtue to a level required for realizing virtue in its truest sense.[13] Thomas Aquinas's virtue ethics is, for Stump, non-intellectualist in the sense that emotions feature at

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[9] Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae,* Q.64.

[10] For Aquinas's treatment of the passions of the sensitive appetite, see Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, QQ.22-48. For Aristotle's psychic faculties, a sense of "passions" beyond the sensitive appetite, see Guy C. Field, *The Works of Aristotle:* De anima, trans. John A. Smith (Clarendon Press, 1931), II.2, 413b4-413b 7, 429a 9-429a10. Aristotle's "intellect" (nous) will feature later in our discussion of moral knowledge.

[11] Peter King, "Aquinas on the Passions," in *Aquinas's Moral Theory*, ed. Scott MacDonald and Eleonore Stump (Cornell University Press, 1999), 126.

[12] Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, Q. 75, a. 1.

[13] Eleonore Stump, "Aquinas's Ethics: The Infused Virtues and the Indwelling of the Holy Spirit," *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses* 95, no. 2 (2019): 269-281; Eleonore Stump, "Aquinas's Virtue Ethics and its Metaphysical Foundation," in *Was ist das für den Menschen Gute? / What is Good for a Human Being*, eds. Jan Szaif and Matthias Lutz-Bachmann (Walter de Gruyter, 2004), 209-228. Eleonore Stump's arguments are promoted in Andrew Pinsent, *The Second-Person Perspective in Aquinas's Ethics: Virtues and Gifts* (Routledge, 2011). On Thomas Aquinas's psychology of "passions" in the basic sensitive appetite sense, see the following monographs: Nicholas Kahm, *Aquinas on Emotion's Participation in Reason* (The Catholic University of America Press, 2019); Diana Fritz Cates, *Aquinas on the Emotions: A Religious-Ethical Inquiry* (Georgetown University Press, 2009); Robert Miner, *Thomas Aquinas on the Passions: A Study of summa theologiae* (Cambridge University Press, 2009), 1a2ae 22-48; Nicholas E. Lombardo, *The Logic of Desire: Aquinas on Emotion* (The Catholic University of America Press, 2011). Of these, Nicholas Kahm's gives most attention to emotion's role in moral judgment, but his Thomas Aquinas has reason despotically ruling over the never praise or blameworthy passions.

every level of moral decision-making, which includes divinely infused and "intellectual" emotion.

However, to reclaim Thomas Aquinas's ethics from its Neo-Scholastic influence, Eleonore Stump thinks she has to reject Aristotle's influence on Thomas Aquinas. For Stump, Thomas Aquinas's non-intellectualist ethics is non-Aristotelian. To be sure, Aristotelian "acquired virtue" isn't yet a theologically elevated virtue as in Thomas Aquinas. But if Saurez's Thomas Aquinas is unduly influenced by ratiocentric presuppositions, can we not say the same about Thomas Aquinas's Aristotle? The Scholastics received Aristotle through the Neo-Platonists and their intellectualist ethics. If that's right, then for Thomists to restore emotivist elements to a non-intellectualist ethics in Thomas Aquinas, they may not need to part from Aristotle in the process.

In the remainder of this paper, I argue that they do not.[14] To do this, I first propose to read Aristotle as giving a motivational theory of emotion. Emotions are motivational states or their dispositional equivalent. Secondly, I show that, for Aristotle, moral deliberation, or practical reasoning, makes no sense apart from these motivational states. "Reasoning" about what I ought or ought not to do is just my having and reflecting on motivations. Finally, I show that virtues, which are indispensable to right practical reasoning, are simply emotional dispositions. These three features of Aristotle's ethics make this ethic decidedly non-intellectualist and, after all, closer to Hume than some Thomists would want to admit.

II. Emotions as motivations

> Now, there are three elements in the soul which control action and truth: sense perception, intelligence, and desire.
> Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*[15]

Aristotle's theory of motivation is not limited to emotional states (pathe). Sometimes, he talks about our desires being subordinate to our reasons for desiring.[16] Other times, he speaks of desires without ex-

[14] I set aside contemporary Aristotelian scholarship supportive of a non-intellectualist reading of Aristotelian ethics to focus my aim on persisting neo-scholastic influence on our reading of Aristotle vis-a-vis Thomas Aquinas. For Aristotle scholarship on this topic, see the important Jonathan Barnes, Malcolm Schofield, and Richard Sorabji, eds., *Articles on Aristotle: Volume 2 Ethics and Politics* (Duckworth, 1977); Sarah Broadie, *Ethics with Aristotle* (Oxford University Press, 1991).

[15] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. Martin Oswald (Prentice Hall, 1999), 1139a 206.

[16] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1149a 25-1149a 35. Aristotle speaks of general desire (orexis) for example in *De anima* (433a 27-433a 28) as for the real or apparent good. Giles Pearson notes that cognizing the good intended by *orexis* cannot be restricted to reason since

ternal reasons for having them, for example, when we hate a person in their person and not for any other reason.[17] What matters here is that emotions motivate, not that they are the only faculty that does so.

To show that emotions are motivations, first consider what Aristotle says about desire:

> Choice is the starting point of action: it is the source of motion but not the end for the sake of which we act, (i.e., the final cause). The starting point of choice, however, is *desire and reasoning* directed toward some end.[18]

But since thought alone moves nothing, "choice is either intelligence motivated by desire or desire operating through thought, and it is as a combination of these two that man is a starting point of action."[19] Without desires for anything, all the reasoning in the world will not motivate us to act. But what is a desire? Aristotle gives us a clear example at the heart of his reflections on emotions in *Rhetoric*. "Let anger be understood as a desire, accompanied by pain, for revenge for a perceived belittling of oneself or anything of one's own, when that belittling is not appropriate."[20] Anger is an emotion. So, if Aristotle's extensional definition of desire is a list of emotions, and desire is clearly the motivational foundation for action, then emotions are motivations.

Another way to see the motivational character of emotions is by considering the basic pleasure/pain dichotomy underwriting Aristotle's motivation theory. For Aristotle, all of our actions are fundamentally motivated by pain or pleasure. "Every man is motivated by what is pleasant and noble in everything he does."[21] Furthermore, "it is painful to act under constraint and involuntarily, but the performance of pleasant and noble acts brings pleasure."[22] Without any perception or feeling of pleasure or pain toward anything, we cannot be motivated

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animals also grasp it. Giles Pearson, *Aristotle on Desire* (Cambridge University Press, 2012), 62. Humans desire (boulêsis) higher rationally grasped goods, Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1113a 23-1113a 24.

[17] Plato and Aristotle, *Plato* Gorgias *and Aristotle* Rhetoric, trans. Joe Sachs (Focus Publishing, 2009), 1382a.

[18] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1139a 30-1139a 35.

[19] Ibid., 1139b 4.

[20] Plato and Aristotle, *Plato* Gorgias *and Aristotle* Rhetoric, 1378a 30.

[21] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1110b 11.

[22] Ibid., 1110b 12.

to act, which means that motivations to act do not depend solely on our power to reason. Says Aristotle:

> In matters of action, the principles or initiating motives are the ends at which our actions are aimed. But as soon as a man becomes corrupted by pleasure or pain, the goal no longer appears to him as a motivating principle.[23]

Our being moved toward or away from an object of choice depends on our responsiveness to positive and negative states or dispositions. In fact, even without external reasons for acting, our choices can make sense on the basis of these responses. For example, when asked why I chose to go see this film instead of that one, I can answer that I wanted to see this film instead of that one. This answer is legitimate even if I have no further reasons to give. Similarly, Aristotle thinks that we can have hatred for a person without having any reason to hate them, and this is what separates hatred from anger.

> For someone who is angry wants to see the other person suffer, but in the other case [hatred] that makes no difference [...]. The former feeling [anger] is also accompanied by pain, while the latter [hatred] is not, since someone who is angry is pained and someone who feels hatred is not [...]. The former [anger] wants the person to suffer in return, while the latter [hatred] wants the person he hates not to exist.[24]

Hatred begins with anger, which is a response to pain, but moves beyond it. Our motivational states move beyond reasoning, even beyond immediate considerations of pleasure and pain.

If this is right, then it is a quick step to see the importance of emotions for decision-making. The experience of pleasure and pain is just an emotion. Aristotle defines emotions (passions) as follows:

> The passions are all those sources of change on account of which people differ in their judgments *that are accompanied by pain and pleasure*; examples are anger, pity, fear, and everything else of that sort, as well as their opposites.[25]

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[23] Ibid., 1140b 15-1140b 20.

[24] Plato and Aristotle, *Plato* Gorgias *and Aristotle* Rhetoric, 1382a.

[25] Ibid., 1378a 20.

Insofar as pleasure and pain are motivational experiences, they are also emotional experiences. And since all of our actions are motivated by pleasure and pain, emotions are motivations too. This line echoes a passage from David Hume, which reads as though it were written by Aristotle himself:

> Ask a man *why he uses exercise*; he will answer, *because he desires to keep his health.* If you then enquire, *why he desires health,* he will readily reply, *because sickness is painful.* If you push your enquiries farther, and desire a reason *why he hates pain,* it is impossible he can ever give any. This is an ultimate end, and is never referred to any other object. Perhaps to your second question, *why he desires health,* he may also reply, that *it is necessary for the exercise of his calling.* If you ask, *why he is anxious on that head,* he will answer, *because he desires to get money.* If you demand *Why? It is the instrument of pleasure,* says he. And beyond this it is an absurdity to ask for a reason. It is impossible there can be a progress *in infinitum*; and that one thing can always be a reason why another is desired. Something must be desirable on its own account, and because of its immediate accord or agreement with human sentiment and affection.[26]

Without any reference to motivational states or emotions, our deliberation faces an infinite regress of reasons. Aristotle's deliberation theory does not face this objection since he does not reduce choice to reasoning without emotion.

It might be objected that emotions cannot be identified with motivation because some emotions are clearly non-motivational. Consider the shame one feels after having done something wrong.[27] Or consider the love (charis) one feels for another person and their needs.[28] These emotions do not entail a desire for any particular action. So, emotions are not just motivations.

However, even if some emotions are not an immediate desire for a particular course of action, this does not mean that these emotions are not motivational in any sense. I can be motivated by shame in the sense

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[26] David Hume, *Enquiries Concerning Human Understanding and Concerning the Principles of Morals*, ed. Lewis Amherst Selby-Bigge (Clarendon Press, 1975), 285-294.

[27] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1128b 15-1128b 20.

[28] Plato and Aristotle, *Plato* Gorgias *and Aristotle* Rhetoric, 1385a 15-1385a 20.

that my past actions stand out to me as important and regretful, even if this importance does not lead me to immediate action. I can later be motivated to act from my shame, say, to apologize to my victim. After all, feeling shameful is, for Aristotle, voluntary because we praise or blame people for the feeling.

> That actions of this kind are considered as voluntary is also shown by the fact that sometimes people are even praised for doing them, for example, if they endure shameful or painful treatment in return for great and noble objectives.[29]

Similarly, my feeling of love towards the other can later lead to a motivation to act on their behalf. Not all motivation is immediately action-oriented.

Moreover, Aristotle distinguishes between motives or desires that are natural, "thoughtless," reactions, and those desires which are responses to reasons.

> For reason and imagination indicate that an insult or a slight has been received, and anger (*thymos*), drawing the conclusion, as it were, that it must fight against this sort of thing, simply flares up at once.[30]

However,

> Appetite (*epithymia*), on the other hand, is no sooner told by reason and perception that something is pleasant than it rushes off to enjoy it. Consequently, while anger somehow follows reason, appetite does not.

This distinction between higher and lower-order desires helps remove ambiguities about the motivational status of emotions. For example, Aristotle gives a second definition of emotion later in *Rhetoric*: "By passions I mean anger, desire, and the sorts of things we have been discussing."[31] If desire were not disambiguated, this definition would seem to contradict our earlier understanding of anger as a desire. But here Aristotle is talking about *epithymia* (irrational reactions to pleasure and pain, appetites) and not *thymus* (anger which is a response to

[29] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1110a 20.

[30] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1149a 30-1149a 33.

[31] Plato and Aristotle, *Plato* Gorgias *and Aristotle* Rhetoric, 1388b 33.

reasons). Emotions in the full sense are perceptions of pleasure and pain, and, in this sense, are conscious motivations either to immediate or subsequent actions.

Even so, could Aristotle's account of willing weakly (akrasia), as when we know the good, we ought to do but are unable to do it, restore an intellectualist character to his ethics? While *akrasia* is certainly relevant to the possibly misleading effect of emotions in moral decision-making, as above, "control" over emotions only features with respect to our lower, irrational desires. In *Rhetoric* 1389a 3, Aristotle observes that the young are quick to carry out their desires, especially the sensual pleasure of bodily desires, of which they lack control (àkratéis "uncontrolled," whence akrasia). However, desire here (both the general and the bodily) is *epithymia*, the lower-order base appetites, and not *boulêsis*, the higher-order "rational" desires. The concept of *akrasia,* therefore, isn't sufficient to re-establish a ratiocentric ethics in Aristotle.[32]

These considerations undercut a non-sentimentalist reading of Thomas Aquinas's account of decision-making. Reason alone is not sufficient to motivate. I next turn to the relation between the reasoning involved in deliberation and emotions.

III. Practical reasons and emotions

> The other element is the seat of the appetites and of desire in general and partakes of reason insofar as it complies with reason and accepts its leadership; it possesses reason in the sense that we say it is "reasonable" to accept the advice of a father.
> Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*[33]

Aristotle distinguishes between different types of reasoning. Theoretical reasoning proceeds from speculative wisdom, which is intellectual intuition or insight into unchanging and universal principles. Scientific reasoning follows from speculative wisdom (nous) in arriving at what can be known through demonstration or deductive reasoning.[34] Practical reasoning about what is right or wrong to do, on the other hand, proceeds from practical wisdom, which is an intuition or insight about which par-

[32] On the non-ratiocentric features of *akrasia*, see Nafsika Athanassoulis, "Akrasia and the Emotions," in *The Moral Life: Essays in Honor of John Cottingham*, eds. Nafsika Athanassoulis and Samantha Vice, 87-110 (Palgrave Macmillan, 2008). This paper goes further than Nafsika Athanassoulis, in motivating an emotivist reading of moral knowledge. See also, Purissima Emelda Egbekpalu, "Aristotelian Concept of Happiness (Eudaimoia) and its Conative Role in Human Existence: A Critical Evaluation," *Conatus – Journal of Philosophy* 6, no. 2 (2021): 75-86.

[33] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1102b 27-1102b 32.

[34] Ibid., VI.2,3,6,7.

ticular course of action is best.[35] Practical reason (phronesis) requires an apprehension of particulars in lived experience, which cannot be universalized to an abstract principle. As such, the principles of right action do not follow from abstract theorizing or deductive demonstrations from truths removed from the immediacy of our lived situation.

Phronesis is further distinguished from the knowledge an artist acquires through technical training (techne). The artist's knowledge is a knowledge *how* which requires a specific skill for a specific task.[36] In contrast, *phronesis* is not a special technique applied to an object (e.g. playing the piano), but a characteristic which permeates the *phronimos* and colors all his actions. The mark of the master technician is to be able to err intentionally in the performance of the art. But the mark of the *phronimos* is that she always correctly determines the right course of action. It is not sufficient to acquire a technique for good moral decision-making – there is no such artificial technique – one must be (possess) good to see what is the right choice to make; *phronesis* is a necessary characteristic (though not sufficient as we will see) for being a good decision maker.

The relation between practical reason and emotions is made clear in considering the route to knowledge of particulars. We know how to behave towards our friends by attending to the particular situation we are in.

> In aiming to avoid giving pain or to contribute to pleasure, he [the *phronimos*] will act by the standard of what is noble and beneficial. For his concern seems to be with the pleasures and pains that are found in social relations.[37]

Theoretical knowledge, or knowledge of abstract, universal principles, is insufficient for practical wisdom because there is another kind of knowledge gained by familiarity.

> If a person were to know that light meat is easily digested, and hence wholesome, but did not know what sort of meat is light, he will not produce health, whereas someone who knows that poultry is light and wholesome is more likely to produce health.[38]

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[35] Ibid., II.8 and II.9.

[36] Ibid., II.4.

[37] Ibid., 1126b 28-1126b 230.

[38] Ibid., 1141b 15-1141b 20.

The poultry worker is more equipped to know the difference because of his lived experience of the particulars of meat. Practical wisdom attains not just any particulars, but ultimate particulars, the ones which are worth apprehending for the sake of right deliberating.

> Not only must a man of practical wisdom take cognizance of particulars, but understanding and good sense, too, deal with matters of action, and matters of action are ultimates [...] For it is particular facts that form the starting points of principles for (our knowledge of) the goal of action.[39]

What does knowledge of particulars have to do with emotion? Since particulars are only encountered in lived experience, we must be physically, not just mentally, present to the object of our feeling. For Aristotle, when we feel an emotion, we "are affected by the matter at the same time as the form."[40] We can think and imagine whatever we like,[41] but feeling is not as voluntary.[42] The reason is that feeling is not completely abstractable from the material particularity in which it occurs. This explains why the perception of ultimate particulars is, at the same time, the arousal of a desire.

> All the things people desire as a result of being persuaded are combined with reason, for people desire to see or acquire many things from hearing about them and being persuaded.[43]

Practical judgment is not enough to produce right action; we also need goodwill (eunoia) which, alongside *thymos*, constitute the basic attitudes toward ourselves and the community. Practical reason requires emotion to motivate the narrowing of choices to this or that particular good.

Here, it might be objected that certain passages in the *Nicomachean Ethics* clearly subordinate emotions to reasoning. Emotions are said to obey reason as a father,[44] and anger is only useful when it obeys:

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[39] Ibid., 1143a 30-1143a 35.

[40] Aristotle, *De anima*, II.12.424b 3 quoted in Eugene Garver, *Aristotle's* Rhetoric*: An Art of Character* (University of Chicago Press, 1994), 133-134.

[41] Ibid., II.5.417a 27, III.3.427b 15-21.

[42] Ibid.; Aristotle*, Nicomachean Ethics*, 1106a 2-1106a 3.

[43] Plato and Aristotle*, Plato* Gorgias *and Aristotle* Rhetoric, 1370a 25.

[44] Aristotle*, Nicomachean Ethics*, 1102b 32.

> For in a way, anger seems to listen to reason, but to hear wrong, like hasty servants, who run off before they have heard everything their master tells them, and fail to do what they were ordered, or like dogs, which bark as soon as there is a knock without waiting to see if the visitor is a friend.[45]

Emotions are only useful insofar as they slavishly obey reason, but if they do not, they can be ignored. On this reading, *Rhetoric* isn't giving us an account of the rationality of emotions; but rather suggesting their temporary utility, later to be discarded. The virtuous man no longer needs the aid of manipulated arousal of emotions to see and choose rightly.

However, our previous analysis of anger shows that the anger (thymos), which accompanies reason, is not subordinate to reason as a slave, but drives reason toward the right particulars. While this rightly ordered anger "obeys" reason as a father, it is also itself "reasonable" since "it is correct to say that the appetitive part, too, has reason."[46] Continuing,

> it follows that the rational element of the soul has two subdivisions: the one possesses reason in the strict sense, contained within itself, and the other possess reason in the sense that it listens to reason as one would listen to a father.[47]

Recall that "reason" here is practical wisdom, which, as before, relies on our being motivated by pleasure and pain to deliberate between particulars. As such, when Aristotle talks of an anger like a dog barking at someone before knowing if they're a friend, this is best read as the thoughtless reactionary appetites (epithymia) and not the emotions in their proper sense. In that same passage, Aristotle describes anger, which is "drawing the conclusion that it must fight against this sort of thing [slights]."[48] Desires which are slaves to whatever controls them (impulse or reason) are not responsive to reasons and so are not dialectical in this way.

Moreover, *Rhetoric* gives us a picture of emotions which are responsive to arguments, not just immediate objects of pleasure and pain.

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[45] Ibid., 1149a 25-1149a 30.

[46] Ibid., 1103a.

[47] Ibid., 1103a 4.

[48] Ibid., 1149a 33.

> Three things are responsible for making the speakers themselves be believed, because that is how many things there are, apart from demonstrative arguments, on account of which *we feel trust*. These are judgment (phronesis), virtue (arete), and goodwill (eunoia).[49]

Eunoia is the general feeling of benevolence toward others. The speaker believes that through argument, the proper emotion can be communicated to the audience; if this is right, then emotions themselves enter into the dialectical and rational process of moral deliberation. Recall that emotions are defined as "sources of change on account of which people differ in their judgments." How does this change occur? It cannot be through artificial technique (techne). Eugene Garver explains this change:

> The relative independence of thought, action, and passion allow the emotional coloring of a decision to place a proposed course of action in a context of a wider or narrower range of possibilities, so that it looks like the only thing to do [...]. These further ways in which the emotions can "change" a judgment make all the difference. Without them, it is only weakness that allows us to modify judgments in the light of our feelings, and only efficacy that makes it necessary for the art of rhetoric to include treatments of the emotions. The emotions are part of the *Rhetoric*, however, because they provide accessible evidence for *eunoia*. The orator learns how to appear virtuous and practically wise as a side effect of learning what people think about *arete* and *phronesis* in Book I. But if the speaker is to arouse emotions in the audience, the definitions and expositions of the passions in Book II must be more than reports of what people believe – they must be true. The asymmetry is crucial: the speaker must instantiate commonly held conceptions of virtue and phronesis, but he must *cause* emotions.[50]

My sense perception can be fooled by a magician such that I falsely believe that he has disappeared. Similarly, a salesman might deceive me into believing that he is trustworthy in estimating the economic value of the product he's selling. Both can be learned art forms. However,

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[49] Plato and Aristotle, *Plato* Gorgias *and Aristotle* Rhetoric, 1377b 8-1377b 10.

[50] Garver, 116-117.

the rhetorician cannot trick me into feeling the emotions beneficial to his cause. He must present arguments which themselves cause emotions, such as anger, to arise on account of presenting what is truly upsetting. This account of emotion is incompatible with an account which subordinates it to reason as the only source of morally good decision-making.

Our analysis of practical reason and emotion suggests a surprising claim about emotions: emotions are *rational* processes. Aristotle distinguishes between motions which do not rise to the level of intentional actions, *kenesis*, and motions which are properly actions because the end of the activity is internal to the activity itself, *energeiai*. Emotions, as passive experiences, are *kenesis,* but this is not the whole story. Eugene Garver observes that, when Aristotle "narrows artful rhetoric to argument in contrast to emotion, he means *energeia* as opposed to *kinesis*."[51] This is because there is an artful–rational dialectic treatment of emotions in the *Rhetoric,* which shows that even in the emotions there are *energeia*.[52] In contrast, whenever emotions are subordinated to reason, Aristotle recalls that *kinesis* are incomplete and inferior to *energeia*.[53] This is consistent with what has been said so far. Not all desires rise to the level of proper emotions, and the ones that do engage with the motivations of pain and pleasure in a rational way. Practical reasoning requires this higher-level emotion, a kind of *energeia*, which is responsive to arguments, and decisive for the ultimate particulars upon which moral deliberation proceeds.

IV. Virtues as motivational dispositions

> To be pleased or pained is to act [...] towards what is good and bad.
> Aristotle, *De Anima*[54]

What remains is to show the essential connection between emotions and moral life. *Phronesis* alone is not sufficient for moral action because, without virtue, what we aim at in our practical deliberation is worthless, even if practical reasoning helps us achieve that end.

> There exists a capacity called "cleverness," which is the power to perform those steps which are conducive to a

[51] Ibid., 106.

[52] Ibid.

[53] Ibid.

[54] Ibid., 431a 10-431a 11. All translations of *De anima* in this paper are from Garver.

> goal we have set for ourselves and to attain that goal. If the goal is noble, cleverness deserves praise; if the goal is base, cleverness is knavery.[55]

Practical reasoning without virtue is just cleverness; it is not moral wisdom. A first clue, then, to the non-rationalist character of Aristotle's ethics is that virtue is not reducible to reason in action. Virtue is not a capacity (dynamis), but rather a characteristic or habit (hexis) which is "guided by right reason, but also a characteristic which is united with right reason; and right reason in moral matters is practical wisdom."[56] In other words,

> while Socrates believed that the virtues *are* rational principles – he said that all of them are forms of knowledge – we, on the other hand, think that they are *united with* a rational principle.[57]

Virtues are not rational principles, but instead, they "determine the end, and practical wisdom makes us do what is conducive to that end."[58] This space between reason and principles, which determines the end of action, allows for a greater unity between emotion and virtue.

How are we to understand these characteristics which determine the ultimate particular from which moral deliberation proceeds? I propose to understand virtues as emotional dispositions. That is, whereas emotions in their basic sense are occurrent events – I now feel angry or loving – virtues are the enduring disposition to have occurrent emotions under specific circumstances. And not just any sort of emotion, but the right or appropriate emotion.

> Anyone can get angry – that is easy – or can give away money or spend it; but to do all this to the right person, to the right extent, at the right time, for the right reason, and in the right way is no longer something easy that anyone can do.[59]

Good conduct is rare because appropriate emotions are hard to cultivate, which makes them praiseworthy. The rationalist reading of Ar-

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[55] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1144a 23-1144a 27.

[56] Ibid., 1144b 25-1144b 30.

[57] Ibid., 1144b.

[58] Ibid., 1145a 5.

[59] Ibid., 1109a 25-1109a 30.

istotle's ethics paints virtue as a rational principle with total control and dominance over emotion. In support, some translate *sophrosyne* as "self-control" or "temperance," but these terms have negative connotations. Read this way, practical reason is a whipping hand over emotion, as Robert George says.[60] For example, Aristotle says, "This also explains why we call 'self-control' *sophrosyne*: it 'preserves' our 'practical wisdom.'"[61] In light of our previous analyses, however, a better translation of *sophrosyne* is "cultivated emotion," that is, the *sophron* has developed the higher-order emotions over and against the thoughtless, reactionary appetites, not that he has rational control over all emotion. The passage from *Nicomachean Ethics* in full lends support to my reading of virtue as an emotional disposition:

> This explains why we call "cultivated emotion" *sophrosyne*: it "preserves" our "practical wisdom." What it preserves is the kind of conviction we have described. For the pleasant and the painful do not destroy and pervert every conviction we hold – not, for example, our conviction that a triangle has or does not have the sum of its angles equal to two right angles – but only the convictions we hold concerning how we should act. In matters of action, the principles or initiating motives are the ends at which our actions are aimed. But as soon as a man becomes corrupted by pleasure or pain, the goal no longer appears to him as a motivating principle.[62]

Since we have already seen that the principle motivators are emotions, and emotions are defined in terms of perception of pleasure and pain, it cannot be that all relations to pleasure and pain destroy our convictions. Instead, those immediate and irrational pleasures and pains destroy the deeper cultivated pleasures and pains which are not always occurently felt. In other words, cultivated emotions become dispositions toward or away from the good, virtues and vices, which can be undercut by immediate temptations. Our moral character is constituted by our enduring attitudes toward the good. Aristotle is showing us that those attitudes are just higher-level emotions or their dispositional equivalent.

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[60] Robert George quoted in Eleonore Stump, "The Non-Aristotelian Character of Aquinas's Ethics: Aquinas on the Passions," *Faith and Philosophy: Journal of the Society of Christian Philosophers* 28, no. 1 (2011): 43.

[61] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1140b 11.

[62] Ibid., 1140b 10-1140b 20.

Aristotle, in many places, identifies virtuous action with emotion. "Now virtue is concerned with emotions and actions; and in emotion and actions, excess and deficiency miss the mark, whereas the median is praised and constitutes success."[63] To be sure, virtue is a characteristic involving a choice of the mean between extremes, and this finding of the mean just is practical reasoning.[64] All the same, the mean has its worth for the virtuous person in being an aim desirable for its own sake. "For the mark of someone with practical judgment is seen in the pursuit of something beneficial, while that of a *good* person is seen in the pursuit of something beautiful."[65] And it is a mean "because some vices exceed and others fall short of what is required *in emotion* and in action, whereas virtue finds and chooses the median."[66] It cannot be that virtues stand aloof from emotion and serve to subordinate them, since emotion itself has "requirements." We are required to cultivate the right emotions as motivations for what is right to do.

However, in other passages, Aristotle seems to dissociate virtue and emotion.

> Now the virtues and vices cannot be emotions, because we are not called good or bad on the basis of our emotions, but on the basis of our virtues and vices. Also, we are neither praised nor blamed for our emotions.[67]

Instead, virtues are characteristics which are

> the condition, either good or bad, in which we are, in relation to the emotions: for example, our condition in relation to anger is bad, if our anger is too violent or not violent enough.[68]

Aristotle distinguishes three things in the soul: characteristics, capacities, and emotions.[69] Since virtues are characteristics, it seems that we cannot conclude that they are motivational dispositions. This poses a difficulty to my reading of virtues as emotional dispositions.

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[63] Ibid., 1106b 20-1106b 26.

[64] Ibid., 1106b 25-1106b 40.

[65] Plato and Aristotle, *Plato* Gorgias *and Aristotle* Rhetoric, 1417a 25-1417a 30.

[66] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1107a 4-1107a 5.

[67] Ibid., 1105b 29-1105b 35.

[68] Ibid., 1105b 25.

[69] Ibid., 1105b 20.

One way to resolve this difficulty about virtues and emotions is to emphasize the many passages that do identify emotions and praiseworthy action. Earlier, we saw that enduring shame is praiseworthy.[70] Other passages strengthen this claim. For example:

> A man who abstains from bodily pleasures and enjoys doing so is self-controlled; if he finds abstinence troublesome, he is self-indulgent; a man who endures danger *with joy*, or at least without pain, is courageous; if he endures it *with pain*, he is a coward. For moral excellence is concerned with pleasure and pain; it is pleasure that makes us do base actions and pain that prevents us from doing noble actions.[71]

As before, pleasure and pain feature in the definition of emotion. Here, pleasure and pain are given praise or blame. Eugene Garver is right to put weight on a passage in the *De Anima*: "To be pleased or pained is to act [...] towards what is good and bad."[72] Pleasure and pain are ineluctably tied to the praiseworthy and blameworthy. More generally, emotions themselves garner praise and blame:

> Not every action nor every emotion admits of a mean. There are some actions and emotions whose very names connote baseness, e.g., spite, shamelessness, envy; and among actions, adultery, theft, and murder. *These and similar emotions and actions imply by their very names that they are bad*.[73]

And the emotions in *Rhetoric* are no exception.

> In general, some sort of excellence (virtue) and moral goodness are the basis on which good will (eunoia) arises when a person *strikes us as beautiful*, brave, or something similar.[74]

Eunoia is an umbrella term for the political emotions featured in *Rhetoric*. These passages are difficult to make sense of if virtues, after all, are entirely distinct from emotions.

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[70] But see ibid., 1128b 150-1128b 20.

[71] Ibid., 1104b 3-1104b 15.

[72] Plato and Aristotle, *Plato* Gorgias *and Aristotle* Rhetoric, 431a 10-431a 11; Garver, 125.

[73] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1107a 10-1107a 15.

[74] Plato and Aristotle, *Plato* Gorgias *and Aristotle* Rhetoric, 1167a 18-1167a 21.

Moreover, the above-cited passage follows a pattern we saw earlier wherein Aristotle first divides emotion from rational decision-making only to then re-include it. Emotions are said to obey reason like one listens to a father, but then emotions themselves are called "rational." Here we are told that virtues are not emotions since we are not praised for feelings, but, then, the full passage reads:

> Now the virtues and vices cannot be emotions, because we are not called good or bad on the basis of our emotions, but on the basis of our virtues and vices. Also, we are neither praised nor blamed for our emotions: a man does not receive praise for being frightened or angry, nor blame for being angry *pure and simple, but for being angry in a certain way*. Furthermore, *no choice is involved* when we experience anger or fear, while the virtues are some kind of choice or at least involve choice. Moreover, with regard to our emotions we are said to be "moved," but with regard to our virtues and vices we are not said to be "moved" but to be "disposed" in a certain way.[75]

Drawing on our distinction between higher and lower emotions, we can clearly see that Aristotle is only extracting reactionary, lower-level emotions from the definition of virtue. It is not that anger goes without blame or praise, since being angry in a certain way does. As mentioned earlier, the emotions which are responsive to arguments do involve choice,[76] and as such are praise or blameworthy. Finally, as we've already seen that higher emotions are *energeiai* and not only *kinesis*, meaning that they are not only a being moved. All of these considerations clear a path for virtues as emotional dispositions. They also suffice to overcome the famous passage in the *Politics* where Aristotle says that "law is reason without the passions." *Phronesis* generalizes beyond abstract laws and policies because we cannot legislate universally every right choice to make. We need emotions to discern the particulars. And even still, the emotions which pervert judicial discourse can be read as the lower-level emotions. Surely we will still want the right attitudes and dispositions in discerning the goodness or badness of actions of the accused in judicial discourse. So, we will still want underlying emotional dispositions operative in these arguments. Otherwise, our reasoning faces the infinite regress of motivations for actions.

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[75] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1105b 30-1106a 7.

[76] Ibid., 1110a 19.

A final consideration in favor of my reading is that, as Eugene Garver observes, the range and generality of the virtues in *Nicomachean Ethics* mirrors the range and generality of emotions in *Rhetoric*. Certain hinge virtues in *Nicomachean Ethics,* like justice, cover a range of particular civic virtues; so too, benevolence (eunoia) and anger (thymos) cover a range of civic emotions. This suggests that Aristotle is giving an interpersonal ethic where virtues as emotional dispositions are other-directed. In *Rhetoric*, we are told that we feel shame for people we respect, even if we are not the ones who committed the shameful action.[77] And we feel more angry in the presence of people we admire and shame in the presence of those we are close to.[78] This other-directed character of civic emotions lends further support for their relevance to moral action. And since these other-directed emotions can be group-directed, we can hate a class of people or love a family, these emotions are in a further way not limited to the immediate particular but extend, in a way analogous to reasoning, to generalities. For Eugene Garver,

> The fact that emotions have as their objects people, not propositions, does not make them less rational [...]. Even though emotions have people as objects, I can make inferences from one emotion to another just as from one proposition to another: if I am afraid of you, I cannot be angry with you.[79]

But if Eugene Garver is right, then these higher emotions, as civic emotions, are certainly subject to the scrutiny with which one assigns moral praise and blame. I think this shows that virtues and vices, the morally praised and blamed characteristics, clearly include emotional dispositions, civic emotions, if you will, in their definition. If this is right, Aristotle's ethics is clearly not a rationalist ethic in which the morally good man acts on reason and not emotion.

V. Conclusion

I have argued that, contrary to some persistent Neo-Scholastic readers of Thomas Aquinas's ethics, Thomas Aquinas's ethics is not Aristotelian in the way they think. Three features of Aristotle's virtue ethics show a

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[77] Plato and Aristotle*, Plato* Gorgias *and Aristotle* Rhetoric, II.6.

[78] Ibid., 1379b 25-1379b 30 and 1385a 1-1385a 5; Aristotle*, Nicomachean Ethics*, 1126b 20-1126b 33.

[79] Garver, 127.

clearly non-intellectualist character: motivations are emotional states as Aristotle does not distinguish between the "will" and the emotions which allows his view to avoid subordinating the emotions to some other faculty; practical reasoning, that by which we deliberate about what is right to do, is impossible without emotions since emotions perceive particulars, and any talk about reason governing emotions must, then, be read as the sort of reasoning which already presupposes them; and I proposed to understand virtues as kinds of emotional dispositions, since many passages support the close identity of emotions and virtues as praiseworthy features of the virtuous agent. If Eleonore Stump's resourceful re-purposing of higher-order emotions and their corresponding divinely infused Fruits and Gifts is a plausible reading of Thomas Aquinas, then Thomists advancing an emotivist-friendly Thomistic ethics no longer need leave Aristotle behind.

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