

MARTHA NUSSBAUM AND THOMAS AQUINAS ON THE EMOTIONS

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*[Martha Nussbaum in her *Upheavals of Thought: The Intelligence of Emotions* presents a philosophical theory of emotions that interacts with contemporary research in other sciences. Although she has drawn upon the same Aristotelian and Stoic sources as did Thomas Aquinas, she pays scarce attention to his work. The purpose of this present article is to explore the extent to which Nussbaum's book could profit from closer utilization of Aquinas, and, at the same time, could broaden the insights of Aquinas's work.]*

In her book *Upheavals of Thought: The Intelligence of Emotions*, Martha Nussbaum presents a well argued philosophical theory of emotions.¹ The book offers extensive and noteworthy discussions with various ancient and contemporary theories of emotions in order to show the relevance of emotions for moral philosophy. Given, however, Nussbaum's historical interest and the Aristotelian and Stoic traditions she draws upon, it is surprising that in her study hardly any attention is paid to the work of Thomas Aquinas. Aquinas's account not only belonged to the very same intellectual tradition upon which Nussbaum builds; he also composed the most extensive treatise on emotions in his day, one that has had a considerable influence on later Western thought.²

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¹ Martha C. Nussbaum, *Upheavals of Thought: The Intelligence of Emotions* (New York: Cambridge University, 2001). The title of the book refers to a passage in Marcel Proust's *Remembrance of Things Past* where emotions are compared with geological upheavals that shape the landscape of our mental and social lives.

² As Mark Jordan points out, Aquinas's treatise on the passions of the soul displays a rather selective use of sources (Mark Jordan, "Aquinas's Construction of a Moral Account of the Passions," *Freiburger Zeitschrift für Philosophie und The-*

Whatever Aquinas's contribution to Nussbaum's theory of emotion might have been, in this article the main focus of interest lies in the opposite direction. The thought of Aquinas, and not in the least his attention to the impact of emotions in moral action, is still of major importance for contemporary moral theology.³ Since the 13th century however things have changed.⁴ Just as Aquinas developed his account of emotions in dialogue with the best sources available in his day, so should we in our time.⁵ Nussbaum's discussion with a wide variety of contemporary authors on psychology and human (and animal) behavior provides a valuable resource for evaluating Aquinas's account.

Given the extensive corpus of writings from both Aquinas and Nussbaum, my exploration remains limited but representative.⁶ First, I introduce Nussbaum's theory of emotion by giving an overview of the content of her book, often in her own words. Thus a framework for the discussion of details is designed and elements needed for the second section of my study are highlighted. My second part is devoted to the question how Nussbaum's neo-Stoic account might shed light on the problems and perspectives of using Aquinas's theory of emotion today.⁷

ologie 33 [1986] 71-97). For the sources of Aquinas's treatise on the passions of the soul, see also Alexander Brungs, *Metaphysik der Sinnlichkeit: Das System der Passiones Animae bei Thomas von Aquin* (Halle: Hallescher Verlag, 2002).

³ See Servais Pinckaers, "Les passions et la morale," *Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques* 74 (1990) 379-91. Apart from philosophical and historical considerations, important theological reasons for studying Aquinas nowadays include the power and flexibility of his intellectual heritage, and the ongoing impact of his thought on the official teaching of the Roman Catholic Church.

⁴ Amélie Oksenberg Rorty, "From Passions to Emotions and Sentiments," *Philosophy* 57 (1982) 159-72. See also her "Aristotle on the Metaphysical Status of *Pathe*," *Review of Metaphysics* 38 (1984) 521-46 where she sketches the story beginning with Aristotle.

⁵ A classical example of this approach is Stephanus Pfürtnner, *Trieleben und sittliche Vollendung: Eine moralpsychologische Untersuchung nach Thomas von Aquin* (Fribourg: Universitätsverlag, 1958). Pfürtnner is in dialogue with D. Katz, J. von Uexküll, W. McGougal, and S. Freud. Some critical corrections to Pfürtnner's study can be found in Alexander Brungs, *Metaphysik der Sinnlichkeit* (n. 2 above).

⁶ *Upheavals of Thought* is composed of 16 chapters, more than half of which were previously published in a somewhat different form during the 1990s. Here I focus only on this 750-page book that can be considered as a unit in which the entire range of the author's scholarly attention is represented: from ancient Greek to modern literature, from ethical-political to feminist and global developmental issues, including discussions with scholars and scientists from various disciplines.

⁷ For an overview of Aquinas's theory of *passiones animae*, see Peter King, "Aquinas on the Passions," in *Aquinas's Moral Theory*, ed. Scott MacDonald and Eleonore Stump (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University, 1999) 101-32; G. Simon Harak, *Virtuous Passions: The Formation of Christian Character* (New York: Paulist, 1993);

NUSSBAUM'S NEO-STOIC ACCOUNT

Nussbaum's book consists of three parts. In the first part, in which little is written about normative questions, she develops her own cognitive view on emotions. In the second and third part, she focuses on compassion (part 2) and love (part 3) in order to deal with three problems that are posed by her account and that might lead toward a rejection of the role emotions can play in normative judgments. These three problems concern (a) the vulnerability that is revealed by emotions, compromising the dignity of human agency; (b) the partial and unbalanced viewpoint of emotions as they develop in connection with particular attachments in early childhood; and (c) the ambivalence of emotions toward their objects, stemming from the morally subversive combination of love and resentment.

Part 1: Need and Recognition

Nussbaum develops her theory of emotion in a few stages. In the first chapter she presents its general structure, which in turn is refined and reshaped during the next four chapters. In her view, emotions "involve judgments about important things, judgments in which, appraising an external object as salient for our own well-being, we acknowledge our own neediness and incompleteness before parts of the world that we do not fully control."⁸ Beginning with an autobiographical story of loss and grief and developing her view in discussion with accounts that consider emotions as unthinking bodily energies, she makes clear that emotions always imply an object, are intentional by nature, embody certain beliefs about the object, and are concerned with value. Emotions eventually tell about a person's flourishing, and are as such "eudaimonistic" (in the sense of ancient Greek, hence the spelling) by nature. They look at the world from the subject's own viewpoint.

Nussbaum calls her view neo-Stoic, because she modifies the Stoic account of emotions as evaluative judgments in a number of ways that differ from her ancient Greek predecessors. These modifications are helpful both for presenting her view more clearly and for making a comparison with Aquinas's account of emotions. A first category of modifications entails rejections of ancient Stoic ideas.

and most recently Kevin White, "The Passions of the Soul (Ia IIae, qq. 22-48)," in *The Ethics of Aquinas*, ed. Stephen J. Pope (Washington: Georgetown University, 2002) 103-15 (with many references). See also Carlo Leget, "Moral Theology Upside Down. Aquinas' Treatise *de passionibus animae* Considered through the Lens of Its Spatial Metaphors," *Jaarboek Thomas Instituut 1999* (Thomas Instituut te Utrecht, 2000) 101-26.

⁸ Nussbaum, *Upheavals* 19.

First, then, Nussbaum accepts the view that emotions confront us with human vulnerability because they concern our response to objects we do not fully control. But she rejects the Stoic presupposition that this vulnerability is a negative feature and that we should try to escape from it by learning to become unattached.⁹

Second, although Nussbaum endorses the eudaimonistic nature of emotions, she rejects some significant limitations of the ancient Stoic account. Ancient eudaimonism overestimates the amount of order and structure in most people's schemes and goals.¹⁰ There are many goals and ends that people consider valuable for themselves, but are not especially commendable for others. People cherish and value things that they do not really think good. It may be very important for certain emotions not to engage in reflective weighing of the goodness of the object, e.g., in the case of non-chosen relationships such as the parent-child relationship, that require unconditional love.

Third, Nussbaum does not follow the Stoic idea that emotions involve the acceptance of proposition-like entities corresponding to sentences in languages.¹¹ The narrowness of this point of view made the ancient Stoa (Chrysippus) conclude that animals could not have emotions, and gave rise to a counter theory (Posidonius, Galen) that viewed emotions as nonreasoning movements. Nussbaum refuses to choose between both views, since both share the false premise that animals are incapable of intentionality, selective attention, and appraisal. Studying current experimental work in cognitive psychology and detailed narrative accounts of interaction between animals and human beings, some new modifications to her theory present themselves: the cognitive appraisals inherent in emotions need not all be objects of reflexive self-consciousness, intense perceptual focusing is (although not strictly necessary) an important feature of emotional experience, and biology can tell us much about the pathways of emotional response.¹² All this helps to distinguish emotions from bodily appetites and moods, and to see how they are related to action.

Fourth, the Stoic account of emotions had a problematic relation to the past. Their taxonomy made no place for emotions directed at past events; they failed to give prominence to the way in which past events influence present emotions. Nussbaum corrects this omission by exploring how the developments of emotions in infancy and childhood influence the emo-

⁹ Ibid. 42-44.

¹⁰ Ibid. 49-52.

¹¹ Ibid. 89-138.

¹² This, however, does not mean that language cannot and does not have a great impact on experiencing emotions (ibid. 126-28). However, as Nussbaum explains in her chapter on Music and Emotion (Chap. 5) emotions do not need language.

tional landscape of the adult.¹³ Present objects somehow represent earlier objects in a chain of representations ranging back to our earliest childhood. Hence anger, hatred, and disgust are rooted in our ambivalent relation to our lack of control over objects and the helplessness of our own bodies. Any picture of character that tells us to bring every emotion into line with reason should reckon with this human ambivalence and neediness in order to avoid an overly simple and cruel picture. This attention to the fact that emotional development is accompanied with the genesis of a darker set of connections that link love with anger, shame, envy, and disgust, is an important theme in Nussbaum's book, leading to questions to Aquinas in the second half of my article.

Apart from rejections of Stoic ideas, Nussbaum introduces some refinements. In order to capture the multilayered texture of emotions, she distinguishes between general and concrete evaluative judgments, and between background and situational judgments.¹⁴ The first distinction is meant to deal with the given fact that often in one emotion different evaluative judgments are at work that are difficult to disentangle. Thus, for instance, one can speak of grief over the death of a parent on a general level, without clarity about what concrete evaluative judgment is most salient. The second distinction tries to capture the difference between often nonconscious evaluative judgments that persist through situations of numerous kinds – such as the background joy of doing fine – and judgments that arise in the context of some particular situation.

A further refinement, made in her chapter on emotions and human societies, consists in tracing and defining the influence of cultural differences on the emotional life of the individual.¹⁵ The Stoics acknowledged this influence: their cognitive/evaluative view of emotions enabled them to propose that societies could rid themselves of pernicious emotions. Nussbaum does not follow the Stoics in this negative judgment of emotions, but develops an account of the cultural influence between two extreme camps: the theorists who completely ignore the role of society on the one hand and the social constructionists who are blind to the variations of individuals on the other. She provides a matrix for understanding the sources of intersocietal differences in the emotional life: physical conditions, metaphysical beliefs, practices, language, and social norms. Next to these sources, the social variation of emotions is established by differences in the criteria for their appropriate behavioral manifestation, judgments about the worth of an entire emotion category, views about the appropriate objects for an emotion, and emotion taxonomies.

¹³ Ibid. 174-237.

¹⁴ Ibid. 67-79.

¹⁵ Ibid. 139-73.

Part 2: Compassion

After having laid down her theory of emotion in the first part, Nussbaum then shifts her attention toward answering the question what positive contribution emotions can make to ethical deliberation, both personal and public. She develops some normative suggestions, relying heavily on the analysis of the first part of her book. At the same time, she stresses that her theory of emotion can also be worked out toward a different ethical theory from the one she prefers.

Since she is convinced that the normative elaborations are best developed through a detailed focus on particular emotions in turn, Nussbaum selects two cases: compassion and love. Compassion – important for the public sphere – is seen as providing a good foundation for rational deliberation and appropriate action. Love – paramount in private life – is considered to be an ambivalent source of both human flourishing and great moral danger. Here I will not be able to do justice to the 158 pages that Nussbaum devotes to compassion. I touch on only some important features of her account, so as to give the reader an impression of the book as complete as possible.

Simply stated, Nussbaum describes compassion as “a painful emotion occasioned by the awareness of another person’s undeserved misfortune.”¹⁶ The importance of compassion for ethics is evident, as it widens the circle of people about whom one is concerned. Analyzing the cognitive structure of compassion, Nussbaum clarifies its connection with empathy and altruism. But she is also aware of the highly unstable basis of compassion, given the way that shame, envy, and disgust are connected to the awareness of one’s own vulnerability. “Throughout history, certain disgust properties – sliminess, bad smell, stickiness, decay, and foulness – have repeatedly and monotonously been associated with, indeed projected onto, groups by reference to whom privileged groups seek to define their superior human status. Jews, women, homosexuals, untouchables, lower-class people – all of these are imagined as tainted by the dirt of the body.”¹⁷ This projection is an effective excuse for not having compassion.

Nussbaum extensively discusses three classical objections to compassion (compassion is taken to be unworthy of the dignity of both giver and recipient, and is based on false beliefs about the value of external goods; compassion presumes partiality and narrowness; and compassion is connected to anger, revenge, and cruelty). She devotes an entire chapter to the question how a liberal democracy can cultivate appropriate compassion. In this way, she links her theory of emotion to the human capabilities ap-

¹⁶ Ibid. 301.

¹⁷ Ibid. 347.

proach that she endorses with respect to the basic entitlements that should be guaranteed for every human being on this planet.¹⁸

Because of space constraints here, I can not provide further attention to compassion and the political strand of Nussbaum's argument. As will be clear in the three benchmarks of comparison below, there are important connections between her accounts of compassion and (personal) love.

Part 3: Ascents of Love

Personal, erotic love is an important emotion in the life of each human being. From the moral point of view, however, it is highly ambivalent. Because of the partiality and vulnerability that it involves, personal love is almost inevitably connected with jealousy and anger. Thus it shows a tension between its energy for good and its subversive power. For this reason thinkers in the Western tradition proposed either a complete "extirpation" or a purification of its ambivalence and excess in order to keep its creative force. Nussbaum discusses three traditions of purification or – using the metaphor of an ascent – ladders of love: an account that focuses on contemplation of the good and beautiful, a Christian account and a Romantic account. The three ladders seek to improve defects of former versions. So they can be used as an ascent toward an ideal ladder. Finally, Nussbaum comes with her own proposal, suggesting an inversion of the canonical ladder, restoring love and attention to the phenomena of daily life.

Because the third part of her book presents a number of philosophical meditations on literary and musical texts from various historical contexts, Nussbaum needs some benchmarks of comparison.¹⁹ She chooses three desiderata that are emphasized by many otherwise different ethical theories: the supportive role this love plays for general social compassion, the degree to which this love contains reciprocity and supports other reciprocal relationships, and the recognition of the individuality (in the sense of separateness and qualitative distinctness) of the human beings involved.

The first ladder Nussbaum tests is the contemplative ascent developed by thinkers and authors as different as Plato, Spinoza, and Proust.²⁰ The general idea behind this ascent pattern is that understanding one's love brings the cure. The three versions of this first ladder, however, do not lead

¹⁸ An interesting comparison between Nussbaum's "capabilities approach" and the more Thomistically inspired "basic goods approach" of John Finnis is found in Sabina Alkire, "The Basic Dimensions of Human Flourishing: A Comparison of Accounts," in *The Revival of Natural Law: Philosophical, Theological and Ethical Responses to the Finnis-Grisez School*, ed. Nigel Biggar and Rufus Black (Burlington, Vt.: Ashgate, 2000) 73-110.

¹⁹ Nussbaum, *Upheavals* 478-81.

²⁰ *Ibid.* 482-526.

us toward a purified and better love since they all begin with an understanding of love that expresses a pathological narcissism longing for omnipotence and complete control of the good. Thus the ladder leads toward a position too high above the world to be really involved with specific people, their concerns and their suffering.

The second ascent of love, a Christian modification of the former, is discussed in two versions: the one developed by Augustine, the other by Dante. Some progress is made here. Moreover, we come closer to the position of Thomas Aquinas, via the Bishop of Hippo who was such an important inspiration for Aquinas's thinking, and the classical Italian poet for whom Aquinas was such an inspiration.

In Augustine's works one can discover a development.²¹ In his earlier works, he endorses a version of the Platonic ascent in seven stages. But from the *Confessions* onwards he develops a twofold criticism of Platonism: the goal is not attainable in this life – as his deep grief over his mother's death and the power of his sexual desires taught him – and even more importantly: Plato's ascent is not an appropriate Christian aim, since it fails to mention grace as crucial factor. The Platonist goal of godlike self-sufficiency is in fact nothing else than the sinful belief that one can live according to oneself and under one's own control. This pride runs contrary to the humility and openness of the true Christian who lives an instable life of longing and invoking God as "my intimate doctor." Augustine's achievement consists in situating ascent within humanity, renouncing the Platonic wish to depart from the human condition.

But there is also a price paid for his solutions and this is revealed by the three desiderata. As regards individuality Hannah Arendt already concluded that the Christian can love all people because each one is only an occasion to reach beyond the beloved to God. As for reciprocity, Augustine portrays the ascending Christians as radically isolated in their confessional zeal. Equality is built on original sin, and thus fellow citizens appear as participants in sinfulness. Too little room is left for the dignity of agency and the possibility of building up social relations. As for compassion, the direction of Augustine's longing is so otherworldly that he loses interest for the pain and suffering, the hunger and thirst on this world.

Dante's ladder of love is more promising.²² He was a devotee of Aristotle and Aquinas; he attempted a fusion of what is best in the pagan and Christian traditions. His journey to hell, purgatory, and heaven gives him an opportunity to work out different versions of love: unreformed love (hell), pagan love (purgatory), and Christian love (heaven). Since Dante managed to make a fruitful marriage between the Augustinian rehabilita-

²¹ Ibid. 527-56.

²² Ibid. 557-90.

tion of the passions and the classical Aristotelian respect for the dignity of agency, he has the most promising account so far. Nevertheless, Nussbaum has questions about the three desiderata; “questions with which the Thomistic tradition has continued to wrestle.”²³

As for reciprocity, Nussbaum shows great approval for the right balance between the conception of the human agent, combining both independence (freedom) and dependence (neediness). But despite this politically promising starting point there is also a strong message of control and scrutiny. The strong role of the church authority and the role of disgust – cordoning off good Christians from sin – are stratagems that are a threat to real reciprocity.²⁴

As for individuality, Dante’s Christian lover can embrace many elements of the particular person that Platonic love could not embrace. Despite his heritage to a Thomistic Aristotelian psychology according to which the embodied nature of the soul is an essential part of its very identity, however, love is better the closer that it is to chastity (procreation in marriage excepted). Thus, there is no real place for erotic love.

As for compassion, Dante makes compassion for human suffering a fundamental part of the ascent. Higher even than Aquinas are the Just Rulers. But again there are tensions. His refusal of compassion to the damned souls in hell strikes the modern reader, and the compassion of the souls in heaven is in tension with their representation as complete and lacking in nothing. Compassion is incomprehensible without mourning; and beatitude excludes mourning.

Nussbaum’s last four chapters are dedicated to four works of art that question the Christian ascent of love as encountered in their day. What these works have in common is that they all address the reader or listener from the perspective of an outsider or alien. For all four texts, a primary obstacle to the social success of love’s ascent is a ubiquitous hatred and fear of the alien. All four have been met with fear and disgust by the audience and critics of their day, but they all considered themselves in their strangeness the true brothers of Christ.

The first two of the four works discussed are versions of a Romantic ascent. In Emily Brontë’s novel *Wuthering Heights* Nussbaum distinguishes between two levels of critique on the Christian ascent.²⁵ The first level is a critique of the Christianity depicted in the novel. Four grave charges are made against the characters who embody this degenerate form of Christianity: they are hypocritical, justifying their selfish and vindictive behavior

²³ Ibid. 579.

²⁴ Thus, according to Nussbaum, Dante’s Aristotelianism points in two directions: toward the type of Catholic liberalism of thinkers such as Jacques Maritain, John Courtney Murray, and David Tracy on the one hand, and toward Augustinian abjectness and shame on the other (See *ibid.* 583).

²⁵ Ibid. 591-613.

using images of divine anger and retribution; they support a world of social hierarchy that excludes the poor and the strange, the dark-skinned and the nameless; focusing on a static paradise they denigrate their own movement and striving, to cultivate small virtues rather than the large risk-taking virtues (a point made much later by Nietzsche); and none of them can imagine the life of another person with vivid imagination.

On a deeper level, all of these effects are traced to deeper human motives that not only are not cured but also are very much nourished by the version of Christianity in the novel. The Christian characters fear and are ashamed of being given to and for others, which means that they fear following the image of Christ. True Christian love requires us to be in our insufficiency, accepting our helplessness, nakedness, and vulnerability. But the Christians in the novel project these aspects of human beings on the body and its erotic passions. The latter two are met with fear and shame and result in mechanisms of defense and aggression toward everything that represents the elements that threaten our helpless insufficiency. It is no surprise then that the attitude toward women and aliens is influenced negatively by these mechanisms.

The second example of a Romantic ascent is found in Gustav Mahler's Second Symphony.²⁶ Nussbaum describes how the composer wrestled with creating a fusion of the Christian ascent with the Romantic emphasis on striving and imagination, adding a Jewish emphasis on this worldly justice and bodily existence. According to Nussbaum, Mahler presents the most completely satisfying ascent among the ones considered. Both the personal involvement of the author displayed in the subtle analyses of texts and music, and the imaginative room left for those who listen to the Second Symphony, however, make this chapter the one most difficult to translate into a philosophical point of view.²⁷ As Nussbaum rightly notices, two questions remain. First, there is too little specificity here to know how this view should be developed further. Second, Mahler's acceptance of all humanity goes hand in hand with disgust and repudiation at everyday life and its shortcomings.

The same emphasis on the acceptance of vulnerability, corporeality, and sexuality as a necessary prerequisite of compassion and social justice is met in the work of Walt Whitman, the political poet who fought against the repression of blacks, women, and homosexuals in the United States of the

²⁶ Ibid. 614-44.

²⁷ Given Nussbaum's great affinity with music such as that of Mahler and her emphasis on imagination, freedom, and the importance of being passionately moved, it is not so strange that she prefers the vision of Mahler's Second Symphony above Dante's static heaven.

19th century.²⁸ Although Whitman can be read as making the political aims and connections of Mahler's vision more concrete, he has a major problem in acknowledging the messiness of everyday life, just as the two Romantic versions of the ascent who attempted to critically correct the Christian ascent. In order to correct this "flaw" Nussbaum turns in her final chapter to her fourth example, James Joyce's *Ulysses*.²⁹ This book is read as an upside-down ladder, reminding us that imperfection is just what we ought to expect of our human ideals and people.

In the end, Nussbaum does not come up with a total text, a new and perfect ladder of love. She leaves the reader with insights from many idealistic pictures that one may try to incorporate into the greater chaos of one's life. Her message, however, is clear: any ascent of love that should be saved from producing simultaneously an ascent of hate and disgust should stay in touch with the messiness of people's mortal and sexual bodies in everyday life.

SOME QUESTIONS

In a critical article published in *The Thomist* in 1992, L. Gregory Jones accused Martha Nussbaum of an evasive attitude toward Christianity.³⁰ He depicted her neo-Aristotelian version of ethics as an elitist enterprise, lacking a real life community, and endorsing forms of pluralism "that seek to marginalize and exclude people who write and think from particular commitments such as Judaism, Christianity, Marxism, or Feminism."³¹ Considering the kind of works that Nussbaum has published in the last ten years, some things have changed. Nussbaum's work has shifted toward a great attention to the position of women in different societies in the world, especially in the poor countries.³² In *Upheavals of Thought* she explicitly "puts her cards on the table" as regards her attitude toward Christianity and she devotes two entire chapters to Christian versions of the ascent of love.³³ Nevertheless, the book raises a number of questions. Confining criticism to the focus of this article, and working back from her discussion

²⁸ Nussbaum, *Upheavals* 645-78. ²⁹ *Ibid.* 679-714.

³⁰ L. Gregory Jones, "The Love Which *Love's Knowledge* Knows Not: Nussbaum's Evasion of Christianity," *The Thomist* 56 (1992) 323-37.

³¹ *Ibid.* 330, n. 5.

³² See Nussbaum, *Women and Human Development: The Capabilities Approach* (New York: Cambridge University, 2000).

³³ "To put my cards on the table, then, what I shall say henceforth is said from the point of view of someone who has converted from Christianity to Judaism . . ." (*Upheavals* 549). She chose to focus on Mahler in Chapter 14 in order to investigate the relationship between Judaism and the Christian ascent.

of love toward her general theory of emotions, I offer these following remarks.

As regards the relation to the Christian ascents of love she has sketched, the chapters on Augustine and Dante – although fitting very well in her own beautifully composed story – raise various questions. Admittedly I am not an expert on the two medieval authors, but it is hard to believe that Nussbaum's account does justice to their works. Nussbaum is aware of the internal complexity of Augustine and Dante and the problem that, based only on the selections of texts made, their viewpoints can not be justly measured.³⁴ Even if she were correct, and both authors picture the love of God as competing with love of human beings, this should be considered one of the infelicitous ways in the Christian tradition has developed, but certainly not a representative account of the best of this tradition. Theologically speaking, the challenge is precisely to avoid speaking of love of God and love of human beings as competing on the same level, something that would reduce God to an oversized creature.

In this light the question cannot be avoided why Nussbaum did not devote any attention to Aquinas. Given the fact that he has composed the most comprehensive systematic treatise on the passions of the Middle Ages³⁵ – based on Aristotelian and Stoic foundations – one wonders about the neglect by a historically interested philosopher such as Nussbaum. Moreover, the concept of love (*amor*) plays a pivotal role in Aquinas's philosophy and theology as a metaphysical principle being analogically attributed to all being, ranging from the lowest material creatures to the uncreated Creator.³⁶ Within this larger framework he is able to situate both human and personal love (*amor*) and infused divine love (*caritas*) in a way that avoids either treating God on the same level as creatures, or playing down the personal character of a relationship with the triune God.³⁷ Nussbaum's lack of attention to Aquinas is even more surprising since she acknowledges that he gave rise to a tradition of thought that is still vital in our day. Leaving aside a strand of thought so fruitful in philosophy and theology, one so close to her authors and so pertinent to her subject, requires some explanation.

This leads to the question why the Christian ascent does not get a second chance after Dante's early-14th-century version. Because she ends her book with a series of criticisms of the Christian ascent, one is inclined to

³⁴ Ibid. 530-31.

³⁵ *Summa theologiae* (hereafter cited as *ST*) 1-2, qq. 22-48.

³⁶ See the classic study of Albert Ilien, *Wesen und Funktion der Liebe bei Thomas von Aquin* (Freiburg: Herder, 1975).

³⁷ See e.g. the subtle analysis of the *ordo caritatis* in *ST* 2-2, q. 26 where Aquinas explicitly deals with the balance pertaining to the love of God, oneself, and one's neighbor.

conclude that she judges this as a religious tradition that has been superseded. In none of the ascents discussed after Dante's does the love of God play a serious role.

Subsequently, one may have doubts whether Nussbaum is always aware of the differences in emotions produced by the historical and cultural distance of the texts she reads. Although she explicitly deals with the differences of emotions in various cultures, she seems to lose this hermeneutic respect when she deals with historical texts from the Western tradition. When she deals with Dante's account of hell, for instance, as a modern reader she is jolted by the disgust for the inhabitants of hell and the refusal of compassion for the damned souls in hell, and reports it as a tension in his work.³⁸ From a historical perspective, however, and remembering Nussbaum's own list of sources of intersocietal difference and social variation of emotions, one can doubt to what extent rich and healthy readers living in a secularized 21st-century culture can really understand and share the experiences and emotions that Dante tries to evoke. The combination of a strong theocentric metaphysical and religious framework on the one hand and fragile, poor, and insecure circumstances of life on the other, are likely to contribute to a different view of the human condition from our own.³⁹ Moreover, although medieval theology noticed and wrestled with the compatibility of beatitude and knowledge that some souls were damned, its perspective seems to have been so theocentric that in the end the tension between the divine and the human perspective was – in written texts – never resolved at the expense of doubting God's justice and mercy.⁴⁰ Considerations such as these should alert us against presuming too easily that we really understand the mentality and emotions of cultures at a historical distance.

Finally, both as regards the connection to its Stoic sources and the profiling of Nussbaum's own theory of emotion one misses attention to the taxonomies according to which the different emotions are classified. Nussbaum thinks it is hard to design a cross-cultural taxonomy today. This seems to be one of the reasons that her account is open ended. Neverthe-

³⁸ Nussbaum, *Upheavals* 588.

³⁹ In the 13th century people married, worked, and died young. Although some reached the age of 80, the average expectation for life in the 13th century is estimated at between 30 and 35. See Karl Stüber, *Commendatio animae: Sterben im Mittelalter* (Bern: Herbert Lang, 1976) 27. This average, however, is so low because of the high mortality rate of babies and children. For those who survived the first ten years life expectancy was between 40 and 50 (Ibid. 42-43).

⁴⁰ See *In IV Sent.* d. 50, q. 2, a. 4, qq. 1-3. For a discussion of how Aquinas wrestles with the question how God's mercy can be compatible with eternal damnation, see Carlo Leget, *Living with God: Thomas Aquinas on the Relation between Life on Earth and "Life" after Death* (Leuven: Peeters, 1997) 238-44.

less, highlighting the role of compassion and love, and underscoring the importance of acknowledging the role of fear, hatred, shame, and disgust, her account implicitly puts emphasis on some emotions, leaving others in the shadow. Moreover, remaining within the focus of my article, such attention would contribute to the task of comparing the account of Nussbaum with that of Aquinas.

In light of the minor role that Aquinas plays in Nussbaum's work, a chapter on Aquinas's treatise on the *passiones animae* could have helped her study in a number of ways. As regards her general theory of emotions she would have discovered in Aquinas a medieval companion who sustains many of the modifications of the ancient Stoic account. She would have met a formal taxonomy open to many cultural adaptations while reserving a primary place to the concept of love. As regards this latter concept, knowledge of Aquinas's theory of emotion would have saved Nussbaum from not distinguishing clearly between human (*amor*) and divine (*caritas*) love. This could have helped her to overcome a one-sided picture of the Christian ascent. Considering that the thought of Aquinas is still vital today – something Nussbaum is explicitly aware of – she could have found support for her theory among Christian philosophers and theologians.

However, the focus of interest in my article is the question what it is that students of Aquinas can learn from Nussbaum's theory of emotion? In what follows I address that question.

AQUINAS AND NUSSBAUM

Before comparing the theories of emotion in Aquinas and Nussbaum, it is well to examine whether the "emotions" Nussbaum speaks of are the same phenomena as the *passiones animae* discussed by Aquinas. Or to state it more correctly: what in Aquinas's works corresponds to our contemporary concept of emotions?

Emotions and Passions of the Soul

There are two major reasons why studying emotions is a notoriously confusing challenge. First, every theory of emotion presupposes an anthropological background worked out in a specific philosophical system of thought dealing with matters such as the relation between mind and body, and using different metaphors that are not always easily compatible. Second, classical and modern languages, either diachronically or synchronically considered, show significant and subtle shifts in the meaning of words such as passion, feeling, or emotion. In order to present my interpretation of Aquinas's treatise on the passions of the soul as clearly as possible, allow me to present a short exposition of this matter.

Much of the confusion about Aquinas's conception of *passiones animae*

is due to the fact that one is inclined to conceive and translate *passio* as “emotion.”⁴¹ If this translation were altogether wrong or right, the confusion could easily be clarified, but the problem is that such a translation is sometimes wrong and sometimes right. The translation problem becomes more acute when one considers that some see emotions as irrational forces and others as intentional forms of cognition. According to some, emotions necessarily have a bodily component; according to others, they certainly have no bodily component. What is Aquinas’s position on this?

To clarify Aquinas’s position, it is crucial to review the metaphysical framework of his thought. Two important differences with Nussbaum’s philosophy immediately emerge. First, Aquinas develops his theory of emotion within the larger context of a theological project that includes a theological anthropology for which he uses a specific metaphysical framework. Second, within this metaphysical framework the analogical concept of *amor* (“love”) plays a central role. First, I deal with the metaphysical framework; then I deal with Aquinas’s concept of “love.”

Aquinas’s conception of the human soul is fundamental to his conception of human nature.⁴² The human soul is seen as the unique form (*forma*) of the body, principle of life and ground in which various faculties are rooted. Aquinas distinguishes between three parts of the soul: a vegetative part occupied with nutrition, growth, and generation; a sensate part and an intellectual part. The latter two are divided into apprehensive and appetitive faculties.

Love, hate, fear, pain, and all other phenomena that we label as emotions, are produced by the appetitive faculties of the soul. These faculties are directed at being moved by the good as apprehended either by the intellect or the internal or external senses. Thus they have a passive character.⁴³ In the case of human beings the appetitive faculties are divided into an intellectual and a sensitive part. Love, hate, fear, and all other human emotions can be found in both parts of the appetitive faculty, but Aquinas

⁴¹ See Eric d’Arcy in vol. 19 of the Blackfriars edition of the *Summa Theologiae* (pp. xix-xxxii) who chooses to translate *passiones* with “emotions” and not with “affections” (too narrow), “feelings” (too broad) or “passions” (too vehement, and not covering all eleven *passiones*). See also Shawn D. Floyd, “Aquinas on Emotions: A Response to Some Recent Interpretations,” *History of Philosophy Quarterly* 15 (1998) 161-75; Daniel Westberg, “Emotion and God: A Reply to Marcel Sarot,” *The Thomist* 60 (1996) 109-21. I agree with Westberg’s position.

⁴² Aquinas develops his account of the human soul in *ST* 1, qq. 75-89. An excellent commentary to this part of the *Summa* is Robert Pasnau, *Thomas Aquinas on Human Nature: A Philosophical Study of Summa Theologiae Ia 75-89* (New York: Cambridge University, 2002).

⁴³ *ST* 1, q. 80, a. 2: “Potentia enim appetitiva est potentia passiva, quae nata est moveri ab apprehenso: unde appetibile apprehensum est movens non motum, appetitus autem movens motum, ut dicitur in *III De anima* et *XII Metaphys.*”

carefully keeps them distinguished. The emotions found in the *appetitus sensitivus* are called *passiones animae*. The same emotions insofar as they are found in the *appetitus intellectivus* (the *voluntas* or will) are called *affectus*.⁴⁴ This distinction enables Aquinas to clarify how certain emotions (*affectus*) can be attributed to God, angels and demons, although neither of them has a body.⁴⁵

The *passiones animae* are thus located in the sensitive part of the soul. Therefore they are always accompanied by physical changes. These physical changes are compared with the material part of the *passiones*, whereas the formal part is the “movement” of the *appetitus*.⁴⁶ A human being is a unity that is composed of body and soul. The *passiones animae* reflect this unity by their “formal” and “material” dimension. They enable us to be “moved” in body and soul.

However much Aquinas puts emphasis on the material part of *passiones animae* and the fact that they are attributed to the sensitive part of the soul, all this does not entail that they are irrational in the sense of unthinking energies that simply push the person around. The *passiones animae* imply the apprehension of an object which is perceived as good or bad, in itself

⁴⁴ *ST* 1, q. 82, a. 5, ad 1: “Ad primum ergo dicendum quod amor, concupiscentia, et hujusmodi, dupliciter accipiuntur. Quandoque secundum quod sunt quaedam passiones, cum quadam scilicet concitatione animae provenientes. Et sic communiter accipiuntur: et hoc modo sunt solum in appetitu sensitivo. Alio modo significant simplicem affectum, absque passione vel animae concitatione. Et sic sunt actus voluntatis. Et hoc etiam modo attribuuntur angelis et Deo. Sed prout sic accipiuntur, non pertinent ad diversas potentias: sed ad unam tantum potentiam, quae dicitur voluntas.” Notice that the term *affectus* is a synonym of *passio* in the first (and ‘common’) sense in which Thomas introduces the word in *ST* 1-2, q. 22, a. 1, c. It seems, however, obvious that he prefers to speak of *affectus* rather than *passio* in order to avoid confusion. See also *ST* 1, q. 20, a.1, ad 1: “Amor igitur et gaudium et delectatio, secundum quod significant actus appetitus sensitivi, passiones sunt: non autem secundum quod significant actus appetitus intellectivi.” Daniel Westberg (“Emotion and God”, 121) points out that “the modern view of the will has shifted from the biblical and Augustinian view that incorporated affect, to a more decision-making faculty independent of and often opposed to emotion.” For this reason we have often difficulties understanding Aquinas, and for this reason Aquinas did not devote a treatment to the term *affectus* (“which would have helped a great deal”).

⁴⁵ See also *ST* 1, q. 20, a. 1; *ST* 1, q. 3, a. 2, ag/ad 2; *ST* 1-2, q. 22, a. 3, ag/ad 3.

⁴⁶ See *ST* 1, q. 20, a. 1, ad 2: “Ad secundum dicendum quod in passionibus sensitivi appetitus, est considerare aliquid quasi materiale, scilicet corporalem transmutationem; et aliquid quasi formale, quod est ex parte appetitus. Sic in ira, ut dicitur in *I De anima*, materiale est accensio sanguinis circa cor, vel aliquid huiusmodi; formale vero, appetitus vindictae.” See also *ST* 1-2, q. 22, a. 2, ad 3: “in definitione motuum appetitivae partis, materialiter ponitur aliqua naturalis transmutatio organi; sicut dicitur quod *ira est accensio sanguinis circa cor*.”

or in a certain way.⁴⁷ This apprehension may be sensate and thus “nonrational.” Labeling, however, emotions as irrational would suggest that they do not follow some structure according to the rational plan of God as Creator, who aims all things at their appropriate ends by their natural appetites (*appetitus naturales*).

Moreover, in the case of human beings this perception and appreciation is part of an interchange and cooperation of various faculties of the human soul. The representation (*intentio*) of what is perceived by the internal senses on the sensitive level is brought together with the result of the operations of the intellect.⁴⁸ Likewise the lower appetitive faculties participate in reason in a certain way insofar as they are designed to follow the higher part of the soul.⁴⁹ Using a political metaphor, Aquinas calls the relationship between the two parts of the soul a politic one, in that the sensory appetites can resist the mind’s control.⁵⁰

Distinguishing between the different parts of the soul and the way their faculties co-operate one should not forget that in real life emotions are a unity. Just as human beings are a unity of body and soul, the sensitive and the intellectual dimensions of emotions can be distinguished but not separated.

To state it succinctly: since the common sense account of “emotion” is closest to Aquinas’s concept of *affectus* in the broad sense – comprising the movements in the intellectual and sensitive part of the appetitive faculties – any comparison between Aquinas and Nussbaum directly meets with the difficulty that Aquinas’s conception of the human soul brings in a distinction that Nussbaum does not have (or rather: deliberately blurs). Here we come upon the question how to deal with the differences between both conceptions. Having already mentioned some questions that can be asked regarding Nussbaum’s book, in what follows in my article I confine myself to the impact Nussbaum’s account may have on those who want to critically use Aquinas’s theory of emotion today. I focus on those instances where I consider Nussbaum’s project as confirming or amending Aquinas

⁴⁷ *ST* 1, q. 80, a. 2, ad 1: “appetibile non movet appetitum nisi in quantum est apprehensum.”

⁴⁸ *ST* 1, q. 78, a. 4, c: “Considerandum est autem quod, quantum ad formas sensibiles, non est differentia inter hominem et alia animalia: similiter enim immutantur a sensibilibus exterioribus. Sed quantum ad intentiones predictas, differentia est: nam alia animalia percipiunt huiusmodi intentiones solum naturali quodam instinctu, homo autem etiam per quandam collationem. Et ideo quae in aliis animalibus dicitur aestimativa naturalis, in homine dicitur cogitativa, quae per collationem quandam huiusmodi intentiones adinvenit.”

⁴⁹ *ST* 1-2, q. 24, a. 2, ad 2.

⁵⁰ *ST* 1-2, q. 9, a. 2, ad 3; see Pasnau, *Thomas Aquinas on Human Nature* 257-64.

in a critical way. One further note on terminology. When I speak of “emotions” in Aquinas’s work, I mean *affectus* in the broad sense.

Confirmation

Although Aquinas plays no role in Nussbaum’s theory of emotions, the thought of the Angelic Doctor is confirmed in a number of ways. This is hardly surprising since both theories are built on Aristotelian and Stoic foundations.

A first point on which both theories agree is the cognitive orientation of emotions. Although in Aquinas’s view emotions are attributed to the appetitive part of the soul, they clearly imply cognition. Aquinas’s taxonomy of the eleven primary *passiones animae* (love, hatred, desire, aversion, joy, sadness, hope, audacity, despair, fear, and anger) is built on the distinction between objects that are perceived as being either *bonum* (or *malum*) *per se* or *secundum arduum*. These principles of distinction imply an appraisal of the emotion that relates the object to one’s well-being in one way or another. Even if the good perceived is not yet specified as *delectabile*, *utile*, *honestum* or a combination of these, the emotion implies a first appraisal that deepens cognition by bringing relief into the world of objects.

This leads to a second point of conformity, namely, the eudaimonistic nature of the emotions. Emotions tell us who we are by indicating what moves us. The more we are moved by the right “objects,” the closer we come to our human flourishing. One of the great achievements of Aquinas’s theological design is the manner in which he succeeds in developing his account of *appetitus sensitivus et rationalis* in a framework comprising both the natural and the supernatural realms of creation. Thus he is able to show how our natural desires point beyond all finite objects toward their source and Creator.⁵¹

A third interesting point of conformity can be found in Nussbaum’s account of emotions as bringing human vulnerability and receptiveness to the fore.⁵² The second part of Nussbaum’s working definition of emotion says: “we acknowledge our own neediness and incompleteness before parts of the world that we do not fully control.”⁵³ Anyone familiar with the Christian concept of grace cannot fail to acknowledge a strong similarity of emotions and the attitude of receptiveness of the believer. Some have argued that Aquinas stresses the *passiones animae* before developing his

⁵¹ See Harak, *Virtuous Passions* 56-70.

⁵² Nussbaum’s emphasis on human vulnerability and the fragility of human flourishing is one of the central elements throughout her career, as testified by the title of her first book *The Fragility of Goodness* published in 1986.

⁵³ Nussbaum, *Upheavals* 19.

moral theology, because eventually Christian faith can only be an answer to an initiative coming from outside oneself.⁵⁴

A fourth way in which Aquinas's account of emotions is confirmed by Nussbaum's study is the outcome of her discussion with contemporary psychological theories of Martin Seligman, Richard Lazarus, Andrew Ortony, and Keith Oatley. Research in experimental psychology of the past decades displays a shift from behaviorism and physical reductionism toward appreciating the emotions as cognitive value-laden appraisals. In regard to the central place of intentionality in any serious theory of emotions, Nussbaum quotes the psychologist Richard Lazarus who remarks ironically that in the last decades psychology has fought its way back to the place where Aristotle was when he wrote the *Rhetoric*.⁵⁵ The non-reductionistic physiological accounts of neuroscientists like Joseph LeDoux and Antonio Damasio affirm the intentionalistic/evaluative nature of emotions without neglecting the corporeal part of the story. The criticisms of modern research in psychology and neuroscience toward reductionistic materialism and dualism do not directly lead toward embracing Aquinas's hylomorphism (let alone his appreciation of the human person as a mystery). But the affinities between Aquinas and contemporary research as concerns overcoming mind/body dualism and the emotion/reason distinction are a promising starting point for a dialogue.⁵⁶

Amendment

Next to endorsing important elements in Aquinas's theory of emotion, Nussbaum's account of emotions contains some insights that I consider to be amendments to Aquinas's account of emotions and the moral theology within which it functions. Her insights have a common ground in her appreciation of human beings as creatures who are vulnerable in their corporeal condition and their dependency on other vulnerable corporeal creatures in order to flourish. She combines this anthropological position with an acceptance of the messiness and mortality of our corporeal existence. In her ethical reflection Nussbaum's anthropological position works as a heuristic device to detect places where human beings are treated unjustly.

Nussbaum's complementary insights are methodically related to the way she develops her theory in dialogue with contemporary sciences. I shall

⁵⁴ See Harak, *Virtuous Passions* 71-98.

⁵⁵ Nussbaum, *Upheavals* 94. Lazarus's theory is in all essentials the view of emotions that Nussbaum defends; see 109.

⁵⁶ An interesting philosophical contribution, suggesting that Aquinas's account helps us see that the battle lines between dualism and materialism are misdrawn, provides Eleonore Stump, "Non-Cartesian Substance Dualism and Materialism without Reductionism," *Faith and Philosophy* 12 (1995) 505-31.

work out some thoughts that I consider to be amendments to Aquinas's perspective that are worth to be taken to heart, in connection with these sciences. The first set of amendments is related to Nussbaum's developmental approach to human emotions. The second set is connected to her attention to contemporary research on the emotions of animals.

A first interesting point of view which Nussbaum offers, and which concerns emotional life in general, is her attention to the complexities of individual human history, as developed in her Chapter 4. As she convincingly clarifies, in human development a complex emotion such as personal love is not the first emotion that is encountered.⁵⁷ From a developmental point of view fear, anxiety, joy, and hope are likely to be much earlier. From the moment love is developed, it appears as a complex emotion containing a deep ambivalence. The same person who elicits love by loving and caring for the little child, is also a source of anxiety, anger, and hatred because of the fact that no caretaker is unlimited available to the little child. Nevertheless this person is important in providing the safety and trust that is necessary for the gradual relaxing of infantile omnipotence and accepting one's inability to master the world, one's vulnerability and mortality. Nussbaum points out that the relationship to one's body plays an important role in the way different emotions are shaped and connected in early childhood. An important emotion that concerns the borders of the body is disgust. Disgust is related to objects associated with animals and animal products. It wards off human animality and mortality, and does so by projecting the disgust reaction outward. Thus an in-group and an out-group are created. From the moral point of view human equality is threatened.

I consider Nussbaum's "genealogical" perspective on the development of emotions to be in two respects a valuable amendment to Aquinas's systematic account. Firstly, it helps understanding the complexity of the way emotions are rooted in personal history. In Aquinas's works emotions are analyzed from the perspective of metaphysics and salvation history – in the sense that the disorder in the human soul is a result of original sin. The perspective of personal history, however, fails. By stressing and accepting the messiness of everyday life, Nussbaum helps to see that – in terms of Proust's metaphor that compares emotions with geological upheavals – even "mountains" of love contain various layers of different nature and quality. This attention to the profound ambivalence of love and to the

⁵⁷ Not to be confused with Nussbaum's conviction that love is behind all emotions; see the interview with Nussbaum in: Martha Nussbaum, *Wat liefde weet: Emoties en morele oordelen* (Amsterdam: Boom/Parrèsia 1998), 210. This is compatible with Aquinas's idea of *amor* as the most fundamental of all emotions, see *ST* 1-2, q. 27, a. 4, c: "Respondeo dicendum quod nulla alia passio animae est quae non praesupponat aliquem amorem."

darker emotions such as “disgust” is important for those who aspire to be in touch with the divine source of love. A permanent danger is to remove emotional life of all possible contradiction, leaving no room for self-destructive tendencies. In this way too optimistic and simple a picture is sketched of the possibilities of moral goodness and human flourishing.⁵⁸ A possible negative side effect is a culture of (inappropriate) shame and disgust. And as the last four of Nussbaum’s ascents witness, the Christian tradition has often contributed to such a culture.

A second, related amendment that Nussbaum can offer concerns her positive valuation of personal and erotic love. As Nussbaum clearly points out, from its earliest phases onward human love is connected to corporeal experiences. As children develop into adults this corporeal dimension of love continues to play an important role, although of course the erotic nature of this love changes. By introducing the three desiderata of social compassion, reciprocity, and individuality Nussbaum stresses three characteristic features of personal love as it has taken shape in contemporary North Atlantic culture. Thus she sketches a framework which helps us to see the distance in time and culture by which we are separated from Aquinas. Any attempt to use Aquinas in order to clarify our relationship with God in our day, should recognize the fact that our mentality has changed. The experiences of those for whom conjugal love and the love of children plays a primary role in 21st-century daily life constitute a source of practical wisdom that differs from Aquinas’s experiences and perspective.

Apart from these two amendments – that stress the importance of the perspective of development of emotions – Nussbaum offers a second helpful perspective that concerns the commonality between humans and other animals. Both Aquinas and Nussbaum pay attention to the fact that human beings and animals share many common features. But the way in which this commonality is worked out differs. Aquinas pays much attention to human beings as *animalia* in order to grasp fully what an *animal rationale* is. However much he understands human beings as an inseparable unity of body and soul – uniting the spiritual and the corporal world⁵⁹ – eventually Aquinas is mainly interested in the way human beings are *capax Dei* because of their rational nature. Human beings are created in order to live in communion with God. The theologian’s task is to think about human be-

⁵⁸ This blindness to the darker side of emotions is – unintentionally – well displayed in: Claudia Eisen Murphy, “Aquinas on Our Responsibility for Our Emotions,” *Medieval Philosophy and Theology* 8 (1999) 163-205.

⁵⁹ See *ST* 1, q. 96, a. 2, c: “Respondeo dicendum quod in homine quodammodo sunt omnia . . . Est autem in homine quatuor considerare, scilicet rationem, secundum quam convenit cum angelis; vires sensitivas, secundum quas convenit cum animalibus; vires naturales, secundum quas convenit cum plantis; et ipsum corpus, secundum quod convenit cum rebus inanimatis.”

ings from this perspective *sub ratione Dei*. Contrasting Aquinas's *modus procedendi* with Nussbaum's, an interesting difference appears. In Nussbaum's account the fact that human beings are *animalia* is used as an anchor point for moral action in a way that reveals certain mechanisms or tendencies in the thought of Aquinas. I wish to make this clear with regard to two points: the result of his anthropocentrism for the intrinsic worth of animals, and the heuristic function with regard to mechanisms of rejection.

For Aquinas, the distinction between rational and non-rational creatures constitutes a fundamental difference. Theologically this is worked out in the idea that only rational creatures are *capax Dei*; philosophically this is developed in his conception of the immortality of the rational soul. The rational nature of human beings makes them wanted and loved by God for the sake of themselves. Their dignity and greatness lies in the possibility of becoming God's partner. Animals and plants lack this quality. They are made for the sake of human beings. This makes the relation between animals and human beings one of utility.⁶⁰ Friendship between human beings and animals is no option, and in heaven it is very unlikely that there will be plants and animals.⁶¹ Aquinas's position does not give much credit to the worth of animals as animals and runs the danger of exploiting them. Of course decent stewardship can avoid misuse of animals. In the case of Nussbaum, however, we see how the common sensate part of the human and animal soul is used in order to make us aware of the intrinsic worth of creatures.

All this works out in a second, related point: the killing of human beings. Aquinas's reflection on the legitimacy of killing human beings has an internal coherence which is constituted by a theocentric logic.⁶² But in reflecting on the legitimacy of killing, he loses sight of the corporeal reality which is at stake.⁶³ Of course, abstracting from the concrete situation is important from the viewpoint of justice, most of the "legitimate" instances

⁶⁰ See *ST* 2-2, q. 64 a. 1, c: "Respondeo dicendum quod nullus peccat ex hoc quod utitur re aliqua ad hoc ad quod est. . . ita etiam ea quae tantum vivunt, ut plantae, sunt communiter propter omnia animalia, et animalia sunt propter hominem. Et ideo si homo utatur plantis ad utilitatem animalium, et animalibus ad utilitatem hominum, non est illicitum, ut etiam per philosophum patet, in I Polit. Inter alios autem usus maxime necessarius esse videtur ut animalia plantis utantur in cibum, et homines animalibus, quod sine mortificatione eorum fieri non potest. Et ideo licitum est et plantas mortificare in usum animalium, et animalia in usum hominum, ex ipsa ordinatione divina, dicitur enim Gen. I, *ecce, dedi vobis omnem herbam et universa ligna, ut sint vobis in escam et cunctis animantibus*. Et Gen. IX dicitur, *omne quod movetur et vivit, erit vobis in cibum.*"

⁶¹ Leget, *Living with God* 230-32.

⁶² *Ibid.* 180-206.

⁶³ See Krzysztof Kieslowski's *A Short Film about Killing* (part 5 of *Dekalog: The Ten Commandments*).

of killing can be justified as a defense of innocent human beings, and morally good actions (such as martyrdom) are sometimes completely at odds with what we like to see or do. Nussbaum, in contrast to Aquinas, consistently adopts the perspective of the vulnerable corporeal human being. From this perspective Aquinas's point of view has sometimes a one-sidedness that should warn us from translating his conclusions to contemporary culture. When Aquinas discusses e.g. the questions as to whether it is allowed to kill sinners, he compares the killing with cutting of a rotten limb or killing an animal.⁶⁴ Although I hesitate to judge medieval times – considering the complexity of the history of mentality and understanding the emotions of different cultures – in contemporary society there are better and more humane ways of dealing with those who are a threat to the community.⁶⁵

CONCLUSION

According to an ancient truth in spiritual theology knowing oneself is a necessary component of knowing God. It prevents all kinds of psychological mechanisms from becoming obstacles between oneself and the mystery of the triune God. Learning to know God (with the help of God) is a lifetime adventure, and learning to understand one's own emotional landscape is a task that is hardly easier. Here I have explored to what extent Martha Nussbaum's book *Upheavals of Thought* can contribute to a fresh understanding of Aquinas's theory of emotion, which is on speaking terms with contemporary research done in other sciences.

Although critical questions have been asked and Nussbaum's neglect of Aquinas is viewed as a missed opportunity, Nussbaum's theory of emotion

⁶⁴ See *ST* 2-2, q. 64, a. 2, c: "Et propter hoc videmus quod si saluti totius corporis humani expediat praecisio alicuius membri, puta cum est putridum et corruptivum aliorum, laudabiliter et salubriter abscinditur. Quaelibet autem persona singularis comparatur ad totam communitatem sicut pars ad totum. Et ideo si aliquis homo sit periculosus communitati et corruptivus ipsius propter aliquod peccatum, laudabiliter et salubriter occiditur, ut bonum commune conservetur, modicum enim fermentum totam massam corrumpit, ut dicitur I ad Cor. V." And ad 3: "Ad tertium dicendum quod homo peccando ab ordine rationis recedit, et ideo decedit a dignitate humana, prout scilicet homo est naturaliter liber et propter seipsum existens, et incidit quodammodo in servitutem bestiarum, ut scilicet de ipso ordinetur secundum quod est utile aliis . . ."

⁶⁵ Another passage that illustrates my point is Aquinas's answer to the question whether Abraham was dispensed from the Fifth Commandment when he obeyed the demand to sacrifice his only son (*ST* 1-2, q. 100, a. 8, ad 3). Although his answer is perfectly understandable from the theocentric point of view (See Leget, *Living with God* 202-6), from the viewpoint of the natural love between father and son, and the corporeal reality at stake, the story is horrible. This viewpoint, however, is kept out of sight.

is considered to be an emendation to Aquinas's thought in two respects. Firstly, her developmental ("genealogical") approach helps us to understand the complexity of the way emotions are rooted in personal history and paves the way for a more positive evaluation of personal and erotic love. Secondly, her attention to the commonality between human beings and animals helps us to see the intrinsic worth of animals and plays an important heuristic function as regards the mechanisms of rejection by which violence is made acceptable.⁶⁶

⁶⁶ I am grateful to Matthew Levering for his critical comments on an earlier draft of this article.