

Thomas Aquinas: Questions on the Passions
Summa Theologiae *1a2ae* 22–48

QUESTION 22

The Subject of the Passions

One should next consider the passions of the soul. And first, the passions in general; second, in particular.¹ On the passions in general, four things occur that one should consider about them: first, their subject; second, the differences among them; third, their relation to one another; fourth, their evilness and goodness.²

About the first point, three queries are raised. (1) Whether a passion is in the soul. (2) Whether a passion is more in the appetitive part than in the apprehensive part. (3) Whether a passion is more in the sensitive appetite than in the intellectual appetite, which is called “will.”

Question 22, Article 1
Whether a passion is in the soul.

One proceeds in this way to the first query. IT SEEMS that no passion is in the soul.

[1] Being acted upon (*pati*) is proper to matter. But the soul is not composed of matter and form, as was attested in the *Prima Pars*.³ Therefore no passion is in the soul.

[2] Furthermore, “passion is motion,” as said in *Physics* 3.⁴ But the soul is not moved, as proved in *On the Soul* 1.⁵ Therefore passion is not in the soul.

[3] Furthermore, passion is a road to corruption: for “every passion, the stronger it becomes, casts something off from the substance,” as said in the *Topics*.⁶ But the soul is incorruptible. Therefore no passion is in the soul.

BUT TO THE CONTRARY there is what the Apostle says in Romans 7: “When we were in the flesh, the passions that belong to sins, which were

¹ Questions 22–25 consider the passions in general; Questions 26–48 consider the passions in particular.

² These last two Questions are switched in the actual order of presentation.

³ *Summa* 1a q.75 a.5. ⁴ Aristotle, *Physics* bk.3 chap.3 (202a25). See note below on 23.2 co.

⁵ Aristotle, *On the Soul* bk.1 chap.3 (406a12). ⁶ Aristotle, *Topics* bk.6 chap.6 (145a4).

by the law, were at work in our members.”⁷ Now sins are properly in the soul. Therefore the passions that are said “to belong to sins” are also in the soul.

I ANSWER THAT IT SHOULD BE SAID that “being acted upon” (*pati*) is said in three ways. In one way, generally, according as every instance of receiving (*recipere*) is an instance of being acted upon, even if nothing from the thing is cast off – for example, air is said to be “acted upon” when illuminated. But this is more properly “being completed” (*perfici*) than “being acted upon” (*pati*).

In another way, being acted upon is said, and properly, when one thing is received along with another thing’s being cast off. But this can happen in two ways. For whenever that which is not suitable to a thing is cast off, this is called “being acted upon” – as when an animal’s body is healed because it receives health when sickness has been cast off.

In another way, when the converse happens – just as getting sick is called “being acted upon” because illness is received when health has been cast off. And this is the most proper mode of passion. For “being acted upon” is said from the fact that a thing is drawn toward what acts upon it, and that which withdraws from what is suitable to itself seems especially to be drawn toward something else. And likewise in *On Generation and Corruption* 1, it is said that when a nobler body is generated from one less noble, there is generation *simpliciter* and corruption only in a certain respect (*secundum quid*),⁸ whereas the converse holds when a less noble body is generated from a nobler one.

In these three ways, then, it happens that passion is in the soul. For only in the sense of reception is it said that “sensing and understanding is a kind of being acted upon.”⁹ But there is no passion accompanied by a casting-off except according to bodily change, so that passion properly so called cannot belong to the soul except *per accidens* – namely, insofar as the composite is acted upon. But in this respect also, there is a difference – for when such a change occurs for the worse, it more properly has the aspect of a passion than when a change occurs for the better. So that sorrow is more properly a passion than gladness.

[1] TO THE FIRST ARGUMENT, THEREFORE, IT SHOULD BE SAID that being acted upon, according as it is accompanied by casting-off and change, is proper to matter, so that being acted upon is not found except in composites of matter and form. But if “being acted upon”

⁷ Romans 7.5. ⁸ Aristotle, *On Generation and Corruption* bk.1 chap.3 (318b2).

⁹ Aristotle, *On the Soul* bk.1 chap.5 (410a25).

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denotes only reception, it is not necessary for it to belong to matter. Rather, it can belong to anything that exists in potency. Now the soul, although it is not composed of matter and form, nevertheless has something of potentiality, according to which “receiving” and “being acted upon” is suitable to it, “according as understanding is being acted upon,” as said in *De anima* 3.¹⁰

[2] To the second it should be said that being acted upon and being moved, though not suitable to the soul *per se*, are nevertheless suitable to it *per accidens*, as said in *De anima* 1.¹¹

[3] To the third it should be said that this reasoning proceeds from passion that is accompanied by bodily change for the worse. And such passion cannot apply to the soul except *per accidens*, whereas it applies *per se* to the composite, which is corruptible.

Question 22, Article 2

Whether passion is more in the apprehensive part of the soul than in the appetitive part.

One proceeds in this way to the second query. IT SEEMS that passion is more in the apprehensive part of the soul than in the appetitive part.

[1] What is first in any genus seems to be the greatest of the things that are in the genus, and the cause of all the others, as said in *Metaphysics* 2.¹² But passion is found in the apprehensive part before it is found in the appetitive part – for the appetitive part is not acted upon except by a preceding passion in the apprehensive part. Therefore passion is more in the apprehensive part than in the appetitive part.

[2] Furthermore, whatever is more active seems to be less passive, for action is opposed to passion. But the appetitive part is more active than the apprehensive part. Therefore it seems that passion is more in the apprehensive part.

[3] Furthermore, just as the sensitive appetite is a power in a bodily organ, so too is the sensitive apprehensive power. But passion of the soul arises, properly speaking, according to a bodily change. Therefore passion is not more in the sensitive appetitive part than it is in the sensitive apprehensive part.

¹⁰ Aristotle, *On the Soul*/bk.3 chap.4 (429b27). The context is dialectical. If Anaxagoras were correct to hold that the soul is altogether impassive, then (Aristotle asks) how could it think at all, “if thinking is a form of being acted upon”?

¹¹ Aristotle, *On the Soul*/bk.1 chap.3 (406b5). ¹² Aristotle, *Metaphysics* bk.2 chap.1 (993b24).

BUT TO THE CONTRARY there is what Augustine says in *City of God* 9, that “the motions of the soul, which the Greeks call *pathé*, and certain of our writers, e.g. Cicero, call ‘disturbances’ (*perturbationes*), and certain others call ‘affections or affects’ (*affectiones vel affectus*), but certain others, as is the case in Greek, call them more distinctly ‘passions’ (*passiones*).”¹³ From this it is clear that passions of the soul are the same as affections. But affections clearly belong to the appetitive part, and not to the apprehensive. Therefore passions too are more in the appetitive part than the apprehensive.

I ANSWER THAT IT SHOULD BE SAID that, as has been said already,¹⁴ it is denoted in the name “passion” that a thing being acted upon (*patiens*) is drawn toward what belongs to an agent (*agens*). But the soul is drawn to a thing more by an appetitive power than by an apprehensive power. For by the appetitive power the soul has an ordering toward things themselves, as they are in themselves. So the Philosopher says in *Metaphysics* 6 that “good and evil,” which are objects of the appetitive power, “are in things themselves.”¹⁵ Now the apprehensive power is not drawn to a thing as it is in itself, but apprehends it according to an intention of the thing, which it has in itself or receives according to its own manner. So in the same place it is said that “the true and the false,” which belong to apprehension, “are not in things but in the mind.”¹⁶ So it is clear that the essence (*ratio*) of passion is found more in the appetitive part than in the apprehensive part.

[1] TO THE FIRST ARGUMENT, THEREFORE, IT SHOULD BE SAID that between things belonging to completion and things belonging to deficiency, there is a contrary relation. For in things belonging to completion, intensity is observed by approach to a single first principle. The closer that something is to such a principle, the greater its intensity – just as the intensity of something bright is observed by its approach to something superlatively bright, so that as it moves closer to it, the brighter it is. But in things that belong to deficiency, intensity is observed not by approaching a highest point, but by withdrawing from what is complete, since this is what the nature of privation and deficiency consists in. And so when a deficient thing withdraws to a lesser degree from a first principle, it will be less intensely deficient. Because of this, a small deficiency is always found in the beginning, which is multiplied thereafter by proceeding [away from the beginning]. Now passion belongs to deficiency, since deficiency

¹³ Augustine, *City of God* bk.9 chap.4 (PL 41:258; CCSL 47:251.1–4). ¹⁴ In the previous Article.

¹⁵ Aristotle, *Metaphysics* bk.6 chap.4 (1027b25). ¹⁶ Aristotle, *Metaphysics* bk.6 chap.4 (1027b25).

belongs to something according as it is in potency. So in things that draw nearer to what is complete first of all – namely, God – the aspect of potency and passion is found little, but in other things, consequently more. And so also in the prior power of the soul, namely the apprehensive, the aspect of passion is found less.

[2] To the second it should be said that the appetitive power is said to be more active because it is more a principle of outward action. And it has this increased activity from the very thing according to which it is more passive – namely, from that which has an ordering to a thing as it is in itself, since by outward action we arrive at the things that we pursue.

[3] To the third it should be said that, as was said in the *Prima Pars*,¹⁷ an organ of the soul can be changed in two ways. In one way, by a spiritual change, according as it receives the intention of the thing. And this is found *per se* in the act of the sensitive apprehensive power – just as the eye is changed by a visible thing, not so that it becomes colored, but so that it receives an intention of color. But there is another natural change for an organ, so that the organ is changed regarding its natural disposition – as for example it becomes hot or cold, or else is changed in another like manner. Change of this sort is related to the sensitive apprehensive power's act *per accidens* – as when the eye is fatigued by looking at something intently, or is undone by the strength of what is seen. But a change of this sort is ordered to the act of sensitive appetite *per se*, so that some natural change of the organ is materially included in the definition of the motions belonging to the appetitive part – as it is said that “anger is the boiling of the blood around the heart.”¹⁸ So it is clear that the aspect of passion is found more in the act of the sensitive appetitive power than in the act of the sensitive apprehensive power, though both are acts of a bodily organ.

Question 22, Article 3

Whether passion is more in the sensitive appetite than in the intellectual appetite.

One proceeds in this way to the third query. IT SEEMS that passion is not more in the sensitive appetite than in the intellectual appetite.

[1] Dionysius says, in *Divine Names* chapter 2, that Hierotheus “was taught from a more divine inspiration, not only learning but also suffering

¹⁷ *Summa* 1 q.78 a.3.

¹⁸ Aristotle, *On the Soul* bk.1 chap.1 (403a31). John Damascene, *On the Orthodox Faith* bk.2 chap.16 (PG 94:932c; Buytaert chap.30 sect.1, 122.3).

divine things.”¹⁹ But a passion for divine things cannot belong to the sensitive appetite, whose object is sensible good. Therefore passion is in the intellectual appetite, as it is in the sensitive.

[2] Furthermore, the more powerful the activator (*activum*), the stronger the passion. But the object of intellectual appetite, which is universal good, is a more powerful activator than the object of the sensitive appetite, which is a particular good. Therefore the aspect of passion is found more in the intellectual appetite than in the sensitive appetite.

[3] Furthermore, joy and love are said to be passions of a sort. These are found in the intellectual appetite, and not only in the sensitive – otherwise they would not be attributed in Scripture to God and angels. Therefore passions are not in the sensitive appetite more than they are in the intellectual appetite.

BUT TO THE CONTRARY there is what John Damascene says in Book 2, describing animal passions: “Passion is a motion of the sensitive appetitive power in the imagination of good or evil. And differently: Passion is a motion of the irrational soul [that occurs] from a suspicion of good or evil.”²⁰

I ANSWER THAT IT SHOULD BE SAID that, as has already been said,²¹ passion is properly found where there is a bodily change. Which change is indeed found in acts of the sensitive appetite – and not only a spiritual change, as in the sensitive apprehension, but also a natural one. Now in an act of the intellectual appetite, a bodily change is not required, since an appetite of this sort is not the power of some organ. So it is clear that the character of passion is found more properly in the act of the sensitive appetite than in the intellectual appetite, as is clear from the definitions of John Damascene that were cited.²²

[1] TO THE FIRST ARGUMENT, THEREFORE, IT SHOULD BE SAID that in that passage, a passion for divine things is called an affection (*affectio*) for divine things, and a connection to the divine by love. Nonetheless, this occurs without a bodily change.

[2] To the second it should be said that the intensity (*magnitudo*) of a passion depends not only on the power of what is active (*agens*), but also on the susceptibility (*passibilitas*) of what is acted upon (*patiens*), since things that are very susceptible (*bene passibilia*) are greatly acted upon even by small activators. Therefore, although the object of the intellectual

¹⁹ Ps-Dionysius, *Divine Names* chap.2 sect.9 (PG 3:648b; Chevallier 1:104).

²⁰ John Damascene, *On the Orthodox Faith* bk.2 chap.22 (PG 94:941c; Buytaert chap.36 sect.2, 132.11–14). See also Nemesius, *De natura hominis* chap.16 (PG 40:673).

²¹ In Article 1 of this Question. ²² Above in the argument *sed contra*.

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appetite is more active than the object of the sensitive appetite, the sensitive appetite is nonetheless more passive.

[3] To the third it should be said that love and joy and other things of this sort, when they are attributed to God and angels – or else to human beings according to the intellectual appetite – signify a simple act of the will with the likeness of an effect apart from passion. So Augustine says, *City of God* 9: “The holy angels punish without anger, and give aid [to those in need] without the compassion that belongs to wretchedness. Nonetheless, the name of ‘passions’ is given to them on account of a certain likeness of works, rather than on account of any weakness belonging to their affections.”²³

²³ Augustine, *City of God* bk.9 chap.5 (PL 41:261; CCSL 47:35–41), truncated.

QUESTION 23

Difference of the Passions From One Another

One should next consider the difference of the passions from one another. About this point, four queries are raised. (1) Whether the passions that are in the DESIRING POWER (*in concupiscibili*) are different from those that are in the ENERGIZING POWER (*in irascibili*). (2) Whether the contrariety belonging to the passions of the ENERGIZING POWER is according to the contrariety of good and evil. (3) Whether there is some passion that does not have a contrary. (4) Whether there are some passions that, differing in species and in the same power, are not contraries of one another.

Question 23, Article 1**Whether the same passions are in the ENERGIZING POWER and the DESIRING POWER.**

One proceeds in this way to the first query. IT SEEMS that the same passions are in the ENERGIZING POWER and the DESIRING POWER (*vis concupiscibilis*).

[1] The Philosopher in *Ethics* 2 says that the passions of the soul are “followed by joy and sorrow.”¹ But joy and sorrow are in the DESIRING POWER. Therefore all passions are in the DESIRING POWER. It is not, therefore, that some are in the ENERGIZING POWER and others in the DESIRING POWER.

[2] On Matthew 13, “The kingdom of heaven is like leaven,” Jerome’s gloss says: “In the reason, we have prudence; in the ENERGIZING POWER, hatred of the vices; in the DESIRING POWER, desire for the virtues.”² But hatred is in the DESIRING POWER, as is love, to which it is opposed, as said

¹ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* bk.2 chap.5 (1105b23).

² *Glossa ordinaria* on Matthew 13.33. (V,46A); Jerome, *In Matheum* bk.2, on Matthew 13.33 (PL 26:94; CCSL 77:109.907–09).

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in *Topics* 2.³ Therefore the same passion is in the DESIRING POWER and the ENERGIZING POWER.

[3] Passions and acts differ in species, according to their objects. But the objects of the passions that belong to the ENERGIZING POWER and the DESIRING POWER are the same – namely, good and evil. Therefore the passions of the ENERGIZING POWER and the DESIRING POWER are the same.

BUT TO THE CONTRARY, the acts of different powers are of different species, like seeing and hearing. But the ENERGIZING POWER and DESIRING POWER are two powers that divide the sensitive appetite, as was said in the *Prima Pars*.⁴ Therefore, since passions are motions of the sensitive appetite, as was said above,⁵ the passions that are in the ENERGIZING POWER would, according to their species, be distinct from those that are in the DESIRING POWER.

I ANSWER THAT IT SHOULD BE SAID that passions in the ENERGIZING POWER and the DESIRING POWER differ in species. Since different powers have different objects, as was said in the *Prima Pars*,⁶ it is necessary that passions of different powers should be referred to different objects. So all the more do passions of different powers differ in species. For a greater difference of the object is required for differentiating the species of powers than is required for differentiating the species of passions or actions. For just as in natural things, a difference of genus follows upon the difference of material powers, whereas a difference of species is a difference of form in the same matter, so too in acts of the soul, the acts that belong to different powers differ not only by species, but also by genus. Now acts and passions that receive different special objects, comprehended under the single common object of one power, differ as the species of that genus.

For the sake of apprehending which passions are in the ENERGIZING POWER, and which are in the DESIRING POWER, it is necessary to take up the object of each power. Now it was said in the *Prima Pars*⁷ that the object of the DESIRING POWER is sensible good or evil taken *simpliciter*, which is the pleasurable or the painful. But since it is sometimes necessary for the soul to undergo difficulty or a fight in attaining some such good or fleeing from some such evil – insofar as this is in a way set beyond an animal's ready power – then this very good or evil, according as it has the aspect of the arduous or the difficult, is the object of the ENERGIZING

³ Aristotle, *Topics* bk.2 chap.7 (113b1). ⁴ *Summa* 1 q.81 a.2. ⁵ Question 22, Article 3.

⁶ *Summa* 1 q.78 a.3. ⁷ *Summa* 1 q.81 a.2.