



The Motion of the Soul: Thomas Aquinas and Albert the Great on the Passions

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Abstract

This paper examines Aquinas' and Albert's respective interpretations of the term "motion" in Damascene's definitions of the passion. Although they have a common understanding of the term within an Aristotelian context, they hold differing attitudes toward it: Albert denies that passion is motion, saying that it is quality left from motion, whereas Aquinas affirms the notion of passion as motion. In this paper I expound on the difficulties Albert has with the term and how Aquinas resolves them. I argue that Aquinas successfully addresses the Albert's difficulties, thus establishing a foundation for a more refined understanding of human psychology in relation to ethical behaviour.

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Aquinas' theory of the passions is a topic of significant interest, and recent research has shifted from a comprehensive examination of his theory to specific aspects related to the passions.¹ However, despite the publication of numerous treatises dealing with Aquinas' theory of passions, there is still little research into other thirteenth-century

¹ See for instance: Alexander Brungs, 'Die *passiones animae* (S. th. I-II, qq. 22-48)', in: Andreas Speer (ed.), *Thomas von Aquin. Die Summa theologiae* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2005), 198-222; Peter King, 'Late Scholastic Theories of the Passions: Controversies in the Thomist Tradition', in: H. Lagerlund and M. Yrjönsuuri (ed.), *Emotions and Choice from Boethius to Descartes* (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 2002), 229-258; Idem, 'Emotions in Medieval Thought', in: Peter Goldie, (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Emotion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 167-188; Nicholas E. Lombardo, *The Logic of Desire: Aquinas on Emotion* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2010); Letterio Mauro, «Umanità» della passione in S. Tommaso (Florence: Felice Le Monnier, 1974); Robert Miner, *Thomas Aquinas on the Passions: A Study of Summa Theologiae 1a2ae 22-48* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Dominik Perler, *Feelings Transformed. Philosophical Theories of the Emotions, 1270-1670*, translated by Tony Crawford (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 23-72; and Kevin White, 'The Passions of the Soul (Ia IIae, qq. 22-48)', in: Stephen J. Pope (ed.), *The Ethics of Aquinas* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2002), 103-115. In recent years, scholarly attention in the study of Aquinas' theory of the passions has shifted toward more specific issues. See Christopher Bobier, 'Aquinas on the Emotion of Hope: A Psychological or Theological Treatment?', *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 94 (2020): 379-404; Daniel Gordon, *The Passion of Love in the Summa Theologiae of Thomas Aquinas* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2023); Nathan Luis Cartagena, *The Theology of Fear in Thomas Aquinas's Summa Theologiae* (New York: Lexington Books, 2024).

authors who surround him.² In particular, when we examine Aquinas' theory of the passions historically, its immediate predecessor is Albert the Great, his Dominican master. According to Pierre Michaud-Quantin, the seven articles on the passions in Albert's *De bono* constitute a seminal moment in the systematic examination of emotional activity within the Latin tradition, preceding Aquinas' more widely discussed theories.³ The passages in the prologue to these articles, "The holy authorities, namely Gregory of Nyssa (i.e. Nemesius of Emesa) and John Damascene, define the passions," indicate that Albert is well aware of the absence of a systematic theory of the passions in the Medieval Latin West.⁴

Although Albert's passions theory is regarded as necessary for understanding Aquinas' theory of the passions, the lack of extensive scholarly research on Albert's theory of passions, especially in the *De bono*, is indeed notable. Aside from Michaud-Quantin's studies, there exist only a few analyses of the passions in the *De bono*, such as those by Stanley B. Cunningham and Simo Knuuttila, yet their number remains limited.⁵ Cunningham points out that because Albert is ranked as a pioneer in the area of affective psychology, his thought and the language he employs sometimes lack

² Insightful discussions on this theme can be found in Paul Gondreau, *The Passions of Christ's Soul in the Theology of St. Thomas Aquinas* (Scranton, London: University of Scranton Press, 2002); Simo Knuuttila, *Emotions in Ancient and Medieval Philosophy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2004); and Lydia Schumacher, *Human Nature in Early Franciscan Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2023), 228-248. The study of Albert's passions is frequently regarded as to be necessary for understanding Aquinas' theory of the passions. Mark D. Jordan and Paul Gondreau highlight the similarities in the treatment of passions between Albert's *De bono* and Aquinas' *De veritate*. Mark D. Jordan, 'Aquinas's Construction of a Moral Account of the Passions', *Freiburger Zeitschrift für philosophie und theologie* 33 (1986), 71-97; Paul Gondreau, *The Passions of Christ's Soul in the Theology of St. Thomas Aquinas*, 123-127; Mauro, «Umanità» della passione in S. Tommaso, 40-42.

³ Pierre Michaud-Quantin, *La psychologie de l'activité chez Albert le Grand* (Paris: J. Vrin, 1966), 113.

⁴ Albert the Great, *De bono*, q. 3 a. 5 prol. (ed. Cologne, vol. 28 [Münster: Aschendorff, 1951]: 195): Consequenter quaeritur de passionibus. Cum enim fortitudo tota consistat in passionibus illatis, temperantia autem suis partibus in passionibus innatis, videtur utile determinare de passionibus, praecipue quia sancti, scilicet Gregorius Nixenus et Iohannes Damascenus, determinant de illis. Unless otherwise indicated, in referring to Albert's works I shall use the Cologne edition, *S.D.E. Alberti Magni opera omnia* (Münster: Verlag Aschendorff, 1951-), citing volume and page number. Nemesius to which Albert refers here is Gregory of Nyssa. Nemesius' *De natura hominis* was attributed by the Medievals to Gregory of Nyssa, because of its resemblance to the title and anthropological content of Gregory's work *De opificio hominis*.

⁵ Michaud-Quantin, *La psychologie de l'activité chez Albert le Grand*, 91-114 (here Michaud-Quantin updates his previous study on the matter, 'Le traité des passions chez saint Albert le Grand', *Recherches de théologie ancienne et médiévale* 17 (1950), 90-120); Stanley B. Cunningham, *Reclaiming Moral Agency: The Moral Philosophy of Albert the Great* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2008), 199-204; Simo Knuuttila, *Emotions in Ancient and Medieval Philosophy*, 236-238. For other studies dealing with Albert's theory of passions, see: Arthur Schneider, *Die Psychologie Alberts Des Grossen. Beiträge zur Geschichte der Philosophie des Mittelalters*, vols. 4/5-6. (Münster: Aschendorff, 1903-06), 236-239; Guy Guldentops, 'Les amour d'Albert de Grant', *Mediævalia. Textos e estudos* 21 (2002), 37-55; and Silvana Vecchio, 'Il discorso sulle passioni nei commenti all'Etica Nicomachea: da Alberto Magno a Tommaso d'Aquino', *Documenti e studi sulle tradizione filosofica medievale* 17 (2006), 93-119.

clarity, and this is a factor that hinders the elucidation of his passion theory in the *De bono*.⁶

Further research into Albert's passion theory in the *De bono* could not only advance the elucidation of his framework but also provide deeper insights into Aquinas' theory. In the *De bono* and the *Summa theologiae*, both master and disciple present Damascene's definitions of passion as motion. However, they hold differing attitudes toward these definitions: Albert denies that passion is motion, asserting instead that it is a quality left from motion, whereas Aquinas affirms the notion of passion as motion. Therefore, a more profound comprehension of Aquinas' thought could be achieved by clarifying what difficulties Albert has with the term "motion" in Damascene's definitions and how Aquinas resolves them. In this paper, I argue that Aquinas succeeds in resolving the difficulties that Albert encountered, thus establishing a foundation for a more refined understanding of human psychology in relation to ethical behaviour.

1. Passions in Albert the Great's *De Bono*

Before examining Albert's accounts of the term "motion" within Damascene's definition, let us first confirm his understanding of *passio*. In his first question on the passions, "What is passion?" he provides four definitions of passion, including that of Damascene, and clarifies the passion that is the subject of his consideration here.

- [D1] Passion is a motion of the appetitive power in the expectation of good or evil
- [D2] Passion is a motion of the irrational soul due to the supposition of good or evil
- [D3] Passion is a motion from one thing to another
- [D4] Passion is an effect and a result of action

Of these definitions, Albert takes (D1) to (D3) from Damascene's *De fide orthodoxa*, and (D4) from the anonymous *Liber de sex principiis*.⁷ According to his *solutio*, the first two definitions signify *passio* as a quality (*qualitas*) generated in the sensory part of the soul,

⁶ Cunningham, *Reclaiming Moral Agency*, 200-201. The same suggestion can be found in Simo Knuuttila, *Emotions in Ancient and Medieval Philosophy*, 236-238. The scarcity of research on this work may, in part, be attributed to the fact that *De bono* has only been available as a single volume since the publication of the Cologne edition in 1951. *De bono* was omitted from the complete works in the Jammy (1651) and Borgnet (1890-1899) editions; it was first published in the Cologne edition (1951-) by the Albert the Great Institute in Bonn. For further details on the publication history of this text, see B. Geyer, 'Prolegomena', to Albert, *De bono*, ed. Cologne, vol. 28 (Münster: Aschendorff, 1951), xiii-xv.

⁷ *Liber de sex principiis* was used as a supplement to Aristotle's *Categories* in medieval scholastic education. This work was traditionally attributed to Gilbert de la Porrée. Albert shared a similar understanding in his commentary on the work, *De sex principiis*, but it is now accepted that the work was written by an anonymous author. Albert, *De sex principiis*, c. 1 (1.2.1).

whereas the latter two definitions designate *passio* as one of “the most general genus” (*genus generalissimum*), namely being acted upon (*pati*).⁸ These two meanings of the term *passio* are derived from Aristotle’s *Categories*, and it is evident that he is cognizant of Aristotle’s treatment.⁹ He then clarifies that “the latter two definitions are not at issue here because they are not proper matter (*materia*) of virtues and vices,” and thus focuses exclusively on the passions associated with the sensory part of the soul.¹⁰

Of course, when passions are described as the matter of virtue, as Aquinas rejects, they are not regarded as something from which virtue is formed.¹¹ Rather, just as courage and temperance are cultivated by mastering the fear and desire for pleasure, passions, when moderated, become part of one’s cultivated nature, contributing to one’s virtuous or vicious disposition. Consequently, passions are the matter of virtue in the sense that they are objects to be cultivated to attain virtue.¹² Incidentally, Albert does not address why passion, as one of Aristotle’s categories, is excluded from the domain of virtue. As will be discussed later, this omission indicates a significant difference from Aquinas’ theory. For Albert, passion as a quality is intrinsically woven into the moral and psychological fabric of a person, representing an intrinsic quality or state that contributes to one’s virtuous or vicious disposition. In contrast, categorical passion is merely a response to external agents and, therefore, lies outside the domain of virtue.¹³

Among these four definitions, the first three taken from Damascene are incomplete and necessitate modification or supplementation, while only (D4) derived from *Liber de sex principiis*, represents a complete definition.¹⁴ Therefore, prior to

⁸ Albert, *De bono*, tract. 3 q. 5 a. 1 sol. (28:196).

⁹ Aristotle, *Categoriae*, 1b27, 11b1sq., 9a28sq. Unless otherwise noted, all Aristotle’s texts are from *The Complete Works of Aristotle, Volume 1-2: The Revised Oxford Translation*, edited by J. Barnes (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1985).

¹⁰ Albert, *De bono*, tract. 3 q. 5 a. 1 sol. (28:196) : Dicendum, quod primae duae diffinitiones dantur tantum de passione, secundum quod est species qualitatis illata in sensibilem partem animae et non inferens. In parte enim sensibili animae tantum est motus alterationis, ut probavimus supra in quaestionibus De anima. Duae ultimae dantur de ipsa passione, secundum quod est genus generalissimum, sub quo est ordinatio praedicamentaliū.

¹¹ *Summa Theologiae (STh)* I-II, q. 55 a. 4 co. (6:353-354). Unless otherwise indicated, in referring to Aquinas’ works I shall use the Leonina edition, *Sancti Thomae de Aquino opera omnia* (Rome: Commissio Leonina, 1882-), citing volume and page number.

¹² Albert, *De bono*, tract. 1 q. 6 a. 1 sol. (28:80): virtutes sunt perfectiones potentiarum motivarum animae. Quaedam autem potentia animae est ordinans et quaedam ordinata. Et cum ordo ordinantis sit in ordinatis, non habet illa potentia ordinans materiam extra materiam ordinatarum potentiarum. Ordinans autem potentia est ratio, ordinatae vero potentiae irascibilis et concupiscibilis, ut habitum est in quaestionibus De anima [...] Ordinatae autem vires sunt concupiscibilis et irascibilis in passionibus difficillimis. Et illae sunt innatae quae sunt concupiscibilis, et perfectio eius est temperantia, vel illatae, quae sunt irascibilis, et perfectio eius fortitudo; *De bono*, tract. 2 q. 1 a. 2 sol. (28:86): fortitudo est circa passiones illatas ab alio sive ab extrinseco. Quia vero omnis virtus, secundum quod est virtus, est ultimum potentiae in re, ideo omnis virtus est circa aliquod ultimum illius generis. Cum igitur passio illata in ultimo sit in periculo mortis illatae, erit fortitudo circa illam ut circa materiam principalem; *De bono*, tract. 3 q. 1 a. 2 sol. (28:124).

¹³ Albert, *Super Ethica: Commentum et Quaestiones*, II, lect. 5 (14.2:112).

¹⁴ Albert, *De bono*, tract. 3 q. 5 a. 1 sol. (28:196).

analysing Damascene's definitions, we will first elucidate Albert's understanding of (D4). Although a detailed account of this definition cannot be found in the *De bono*, but Albert elucidates it in his commentary on the *Liber de sex principiis* as follows.¹⁵

The principle of passion follows the principle of action, just as effect follows cause. Therefore, passion, as a predicament, is an effect and a result of action (*passio quae praedicamentum est est effectus illatioque actionis*). Since two things are present within it: one is the form of the agent that is received by the patient, and thus passion is the effect of action; the other is motion (*motus*) as the act of something imperfect and imperfect act in the patient. This motion flows continuously from the mover into the patient being moved, and hence passion is the continuous result of action.

Thus, passion refers to the motion and form effected on the patient as a result of the action of an agent. The crucial distinction when comparing (D4) with the others is that the motion induced within the patient is described as “the imperfect act” (*actus imperfectus*) and “the act of something imperfect” (*actus imperfecti*). That is to say, just as something completely in potentiality is not yet in motion, something completely in act has already completed its motion, motion itself is not present in these states. Motion exists within the process where something transitions from potentiality to actuality. Therefore, Albert's account of the term motion pertains to the ongoing process that has not yet concluded. Through this motion, there is a gradual realization within the patient, and the form achieved at the end of this process is the quality (*qualitas*) mentioned in (D1) and (D2).¹⁶

2. Albert's Revision of the Definitions of Damascene

Let us now turn to his treatment of Damascene's three definitions. In this question, the term motion is addressed in the objections to (D3). Although the subsequent objection is the first to be presented, he utilizes it to elucidate the meaning of definition (D3) as follows.¹⁷

The objection is directed at the third definition, which is stated generally (*generaliter*) for all passion. It is an action (*actio*) that is a motion from one thing

¹⁵ Albert, *De sex principiis*, tract. 3 c. 1 (1.2:29): Post principium quod est actio, ponitur principium quod est passio sicut effectus post causam. Dicimus igitur quod passio quae praedicamentum est est effectus illatioque actionis. Duo enim sunt in passione scilicet forma agentis a patiente suscepta et quoad hoc est passio effectus actionis; est etiam motus secundum quod est actus imperfecti et imperfectus in patiente; et hic motus continue fluit a movente in patiens quod movetur et quoad hoc est passio continua illatio actionis. Unless otherwise noted, translations in this article are my own.

¹⁶ Albert, *De sex principiis*, tract. 2 c. 5 (1.2:24-25).

¹⁷ Albert, *De bono*, tract. 3 q. 5 a. 1 obj. 7 (28:196): Obicitur etiam contra tertiam, quam dicit esse generaliter omnis passionis; est enim actio ‘motus ex alio in aliud’; ergo actio est passio, quod falsum est.

to another (*motus ex alio in aliud*). Therefore, it follows that action is passion, which is false.

(D3), which states that *passio* is “motion from one thing to another” (*motus ex alio in aliud*), allows for multiple interpretations. This definition is also found in other thirteenth-century authors, such as John of La Rochelle, Alexander of Hales, and Thomas Aquinas, who interpret it as referring to qualitative alteration from one state to another.¹⁸ However, if we interpret this definition as these authors do, the objector's stance becomes difficult to understand. Instead, it seems that the objector interprets the definition as “the motion of one thing affected by another,” which, if understood in this manner, defines action (*actio*) rather than passion (*passio*). Burgundio of Pisa renders this definition as “*Generalem, scilicet communem, passionem ita determinant*” in his Latin translation of *De fide orthodoxa*. The objector particularly emphasizes the term *generalis* and interprets (D3) as indicating *passio* as a *genus*.¹⁹

In his reply, Albert does not challenge the objector's fundamental understanding of (D3). Instead, Albert argues that the objector's error lies in interpreting the term motion from the side of the agent. Therefore, the issue the objector raises is resolved if the term motion in this definition is understood not from

¹⁸ John of La Rochelle, *Summa de anima*, c. 46 (ed. J.G. Bougerol [Paris: J. Vrin, 1995], 149-150); Alexander of Hales, *Summa Theologica (Summa Halensis)*, III, inq. uni. tr. 1 q. 4 d. 3 m. 1 (ed. Collegi S. Bonaventurae, vol. 4 [Quaracchi, Florence: Collegium S. Bonaventurae, 1948], 59); Aquinas, *Quaestiones disputatae de veritate (De Ver.)*, q. 26 a. 3 ad 16 (ed. R.M. Spiazzi, *Quaestiones disputatae*, vol. 1 [Marietti: Turin-Rome, 1964], 490).

¹⁹ John Damascene, *De fide orthodoxa*, II, c. 36 n. 2 (ed. E.M. Buytaert [St. Bonaventure, New York: Franciscan Institute, 1955], 132-133): *Generalem autem, scilicet communem, passionem ita determinant: passio est motus ex alio in aliud*. Albert's interpretation of (D3) seems to be closer to its original meaning. According to G. Verbeke and J.R. Moncho, who edited Nemesius' *De natura hominis*, this definition is derived from Galen's *De placitis Hippocratis et Platonis*. G. Verbeke and J.R. Moncho (eds.), *Némésios d'Émèse, De natura hominis. Traduction de Burgundio de Pise* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1975), 93. Galen provides (D3) when explaining passion (*πάθος*) as the opposite concept to action (*ἐνέργεια*). For instance, when a knife cuts paper, it is *ἐνέργεια* from the knife's point of view and *πάθος* from the paper's point of view. Galen, *De placitis Hippocratis et Platonis*, VI, c. 1 (ed. and trans. P. de Lacy, *Corpus Medicorum Graecorum*, V, 4, 1, 2 [Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1984], 361): Ἡ μὲν οὖν ἐνέργεια κίνησις ἐστὶ δραστική, δραστικὴν δ' ὀνομάζω τὴν ἐξ ἑαυτοῦ, τὸ δὲ πάθος ἐν ἑτέρῳ κίνησις ἐστὶν ἐξ ἑτέρου. ὥστε ἀναγκαῖον μὲν πολλάκις εἶς ἐν ὑποκείμενον τῷ πάθει τὴν ἐνέργειαν συνέρχεσθαι καὶ κατὰ τοῦτο διαφέρειν μηδὲν, τῷ λόγῳ μὲντοι διαφέρειν. Albert's interpretation of (D3) seems to be closer to its original meaning. According to G. Verbeke and J.R. Moncho, who edited Nemesius' *De natura hominis*, this definition is derived from Galen's *De placitis Hippocratis et Platonis*. G. Verbeke and J.R. Moncho (eds.), *Némésios d'Émèse, De natura hominis. Traduction de Burgundio de Pise* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1975), 93. Galen provides (D3) when explaining passion (*πάθος*) as the opposite concept to action (*ἐνέργεια*). For instance, when a knife cuts paper, it is *ἐνέργεια* from the knife's point of view and *πάθος* from the paper's point of view. Galen, *De placitis Hippocratis et Platonis*, VI, c. 1 (ed. and trans. P. de Lacy, *Corpus Medicorum Graecorum*, V, 4, 1, 2 [Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1984], 361): Ἡ μὲν οὖν ἐνέργεια κίνησις ἐστὶ δραστική, δραστικὴν δ' ὀνομάζω τὴν ἐξ ἑαυτοῦ, τὸ δὲ πάθος ἐν ἑτέρῳ κίνησις ἐστὶν ἐξ ἑτέρου. ὥστε ἀναγκαῖον μὲν πολλάκις εἶς ἐν ὑποκείμενον τῷ πάθει τὴν ἐνέργειαν συνέρχεσθαι καὶ κατὰ τοῦτο διαφέρειν μηδὲν, τῷ λόγῳ μὲντοι διαφέρειν.

the side of the agent, but from the side of the patient upon whom the action is exerted.²⁰

After establishing the meaning of (D3) as above, Albert proceeds to further elucidate the meaning of the term motion used in this context. In a subsequent objection, the notion that *passio* itself is motion is refuted, drawing on the categorical distinction between the terms *passio* and *motion*. He agrees with this objection and provides an account of how Damascene employs the term motion.²¹

Therefore, since motion belongs to the genus of the act, it is enumerated among the post-predicaments as something that crosses multiple genera, whereas *passio* pertains to the reception of an agent's action within matter; because this reception occurs within a potentiality or something imperfect, a difference between the two terms becomes evident, provided *passio* and motion are understood in their proper sense. However, John Damascene does not employ 'motion' in its proper sense; instead, he refers to motion as that which is left from the motion effected by the agent within the moved and the patient (*id quod relictum est ex motu ab agente in moto et patiente*).

Thus, (D3) is not a complete definition of *passio* as one of Aristotelian categories. Rather, it can be interpreted as a causative definition, viewing *passio* as arising from motion as its cause. In other words, Albert argues that it is more accurate to understand (D3) as stating that "*passio* refers to that which is left from the motion from one thing to another."

At first glance, this correction certainly narrows the gap between (D3) and (D4). As confirmed in (D4), passion entails that both motion and form are induced in the patient by the action of the agent. Thus, Albert proposes to interpret *passio* in (D3) as "that which is left from the motion" (*id quod relictum est ex motu*), in an effort to reconcile it with the concept of *passio*. Nevertheless, even with this correction, (D3) remains inherently incomplete. If we understand (D3) as implying that "*passio* refers to that which is left from the motion from one thing to another," *passio* is positioned at the end of the motion brought about in the patient. Yet, if this were the case, given that *passio* denotes the patient's reception of the motion initiated by the agent, the same issue would arise at the end of the motion induced in the patient. Therefore, on a closer

²⁰ Albert, *De bono*, tract. 3 q. 5 a. 1 ad 7 (28:196-197): cum dicit Damascenus, quod passio est motus ex alio in aliud, intelligit per motum id quod relinquit actio in patiente; in patiente enim ut in subiecto est motus et non in activo.

²¹ Albert, *De bono*, tract. 3 q. 5 a. 1 ad 9 (28:197): Unde cum motus sit in genere actus et sit de numero postpraedicamentorum tamquam in pluribus generibus collocatum, passio autem non dicat nisi receptionem materiae ab agente, et haec receptio sit in potentia et imperfecto, patet differentia inter passionem et motum, secundum quod utrumque proprie accipitur. Sed non adeo proprie sumit Iohannes Damascenus, sed vocat motum id quod relictum est ex motu ab agente in moto et patiente.

look, (D3) has been revised but remains an essentially incomplete definition that lacks precision.²²

Does Albert's correction of the term motion in (D3) extend to (D1) and (D2) as well? In contrast to the careful analysis of (D3), the term motion in the first two definitions remains unaddressed in the objections and replies. As Stanley B. Cunningham points out, a key issue in interpreting the passion theory in the *De bono* is the ambiguity in Albert's descriptions.²³ Given that (D1) and (D2) are understood to signify qualities in the sensory part of the soul, it seems problematic to leave these definitions uncorrected. Qualities, as previously established, are gradually manifested within the patient due to the action of the agent, but the form of these qualities is brought about not through the process of motion but at its ens. Therefore, the term motion in (D1) and (D2) should be corrected in the same manner as in (D3). It is therefore fitting to adopt a revised version that the passion arising within the soul is not the motion itself but rather that which is left from the motion. In his *De incarnatione*, composed around the same time as *De bono*, Albert cites a definition of Damascene that closely coincides with that of (D1). He clearly states that the term "motion" in Damascene's definition means "that which is left in the affective part by the object" (*id quod ibi relinquitur in affectu ex obiecto*).²⁴

Now, what is the original meaning of the term motion in (D1) and (D2)? Damascene (or Nemesius), who provides these definitions, does not clarify the term.²⁵ Those definitions are said to go back even further to the Greek commentators, anonymous author and Aspasius, yet they also do not explain the term. However,

²² Albert, *De bono*, tract. 3 q. 5 a. 1 ad 9 (28:197).

²³ Cunningham, *Reclaiming Moral Agency*, 201. See the following references, which, like Cunningham, consider this point problematic. Simo Knuuttila, *Emotions in Ancient and Medieval Philosophy*, 238-239; Lombardo, *The Logic of Desire*, 38. For the understanding of the term "motion" in (D1) and (D2), Knuuttila states that Albert vacillates between interpreting passions as motions and as qualities. According to Knuuttila, behind Albert's ambiguous position lies a problem with Aristotle's description in his *Categories*. Aristotle describes *passio* as the third kind of quality, yet suggests that *passio*, which diminishes over time, should not be classified as a quality. See Aristotle, *Categoriae*, c. 8, 9a28sq. However, *pace* Knuuttila, in *De bono*, although Albert is aware of the two kinds of *passio* (suffering or affection) in *Categories*, it is difficult to see the influence of the ontological debates of passions. In fact, objections and its replies about the ontological status of passions do not appear in *De bono*. Rather, he consistently understands passions as qualities. See Albert, *De praedicamentis*, tract. 7 c. 7 (1.1B:114-116).

²⁴ Albert, *De incarnatione*, tract. 6 q. 1 a. 1 (26:219): Dicit Damascenus, quod passio est 'motus sensibilis virtutis ex alio', idest ex obiecto. Et supponit ibi 'motus' pro eo quod ibi relinquitur in affectu ex obiecto. 'Sensibilis' autem dicitur, quia necesse est, ut habeat quantitatem notabilem ad hoc quod talis immutatio 'motus' dicatur. *De incarnatione* and *De bono* are Albert's public disputations as master in the University of Paris, written around 1243/44-48. For the dating of Albert's work, see James A. Weisheipl, 'The Life and Works of St. Albert the Great', in: Idem (ed.), *Albertus Magnus and the Sciences: Commemorative Essays* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1980), 21-28; B. Geyer, 'Prolegomena', to Albert, *De bono*, ed. Cologne, vol. 28 (Münster: Aschendorff, 1951), ix.

²⁵ Damascene's description of the passions in his *De fide orthodoxa* was copied from Nemesius' *De natura hominis*. According to G. Verbeke and J.R. Moncho, (D1) and (D2) are derived from an anonymous author and Aspasius, respectively. G. Verbeke and J.R. Moncho (eds.), *Némésius d'Émèse, De natura hominis. Traduction de Burgundio de Pise* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1975), 93.

(D1) appears in a commentary on a passage in the *Nicomachean Ethics* that deals with the difference between virtue and passion, and the anonymous author's use of "motion" reflects Aristotle's account. Aristotle, after stating that passions arise without conscious choice (*ἀπροαιρέτως*), employs the term "moved" (*κινεῖσθαι*) to describe how passions differ from virtue, which is cultivated through repeated actions.²⁶ Consequently, the term motion (*κίνησις*) seems to emphasize that passions emerge through the influence of an external agent, independent of one's own choice, highlighting their involuntary and passive nature. However, by defining passions not as motion but as static states that arise when motion ceases, Albert shifts away from the original meaning. This reinterpretation obscures the notion that passions are fundamentally about being moved by external agents, as described by Aristotle and Greek commentators.

3. Aquinas on Passions in the *Summa Theologiae*

How then does Aquinas interpret Damascene's definitions? In contrast to his master, who hesitates to designate passions as motion, motion frequently appears in the *Treatise on the Passions* (*Summa theologiae* I-II, qq. 22-48) as one of the cornerstones of his accounts of the passions. In the *sed contra* of the question entitled "Whether passion is in the sensitive appetite rather than in the intellectual appetite, which is called the will?", Aquinas cites (D1) and (D2), and then states the following.²⁷

As stated above, passion is properly to be found where there is corporeal transmutation. This corporeal transmutation is found in the act of the sensitive

²⁶ Aristotle, *Ethica Nicomachea*, II, c. 5, 1106a2-7 (ed. H. Rackham, Loeb Classical Library [Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1934], 88): ἔτι ὀργιζόμεθα μὲν καὶ φοβούμεθα ἀπροαιρέτως, αἱ δ' ἀρεταὶ προαιρέσεις τινὲς ἢ οὐκ ἄνευ προαιρέσεως. πρὸς δὲ τούτοις κατὰ μὲν τὰ πάθη κινεῖσθαι λεγόμεθα, κατὰ δὲ τὰς ἀρετὰς καὶ τὰς κακίας οὐ κινεῖσθαι ἀλλὰ διακεῖσθαι πῶς; Anonymous, *In Ethica Nicomachea*, (ed. G. Heylbut, *Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca*, vol. 20 [Berlin: Reimer, 1892], 130: τὸ μὲν οὖν πάθος ἐστὶ κίνησις τῆς ὀρεκτικῆς δυνάμεως αἰσθητῇ ἐπὶ φαντασία ἀγαθοῦ ἢ κακοῦ. Conversely, it is questionable whether (D2) originates from Aspasius. Although this definition indeed appears in his commentary, he rejects Andronicus' definition as too Stoic because of the presence "supposition (*ὑπολήψις*)", and goes on to give another of his own. For Aspasius, the supposition is not necessarily required for the generation of passions, as in the case of a witty speech that one enjoys even if one does not believe that it will bring about any good. Aspasius' new definition is as follows. Aspasius, *Ethica Nicomachea Quae Supersunt Commentaria Aspasius*, *Ethica Nicomachea Quae Supersunt Commentaria*, (ed. G. Heylbut, *Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca*, vol. 19 [Berlin: Reimer, 1889], 45: μήποτε οὖν ἢ τὸ πάθος κίνησις τοῦ ἀλόγου τῆς ψυχῆς ὑφ' ἡδέος ἢ λυπηροῦ. For an analysis of Aspasius' teaching on the passions, see Richard Sorabji, 'Aspasius on Emotion', in: A. Alberti and R.W. Sharples (eds.), *Aspasius: The Earliest Extant Commentary on Aristotle's Ethics* (New York: W. de Gruyter, 1999), 96-107.

²⁷ *STh* I-II, q. 22 a. 3 co. (6:171): sicut iam dictum est, passio proprie invenitur ubi est transmutatio corporalis. Quae quidem invenitur in actibus appetitus sensitivi [...] Unde patet quod ratio passionis magis proprie invenitur in actu appetitus sensitivi quam intellectivi; ut etiam patet per definitiones Damasceni inductas. In this paper, all passages from the *Summa theologiae* are quoted from the translation of Fathers of the English Dominican Province, 5 vols. (New York: Benzinger Bros., 1947).

appetite [...] Whence, it is evident that passion is more properly in the act of the sensitive appetite than in that of the intellectual appetite; this is again evident from the definitions of Damascene quoted above.

Aquinas' accounts, which locate the characteristics of *passio* within the sensitive appetite rather than the intellectual appetite, does not fully address our concern regarding his interpretation of the term motion within Damascene's definitions. Nonetheless, it is significant that Aquinas consistently replaces the term motion in sensitive appetites with "act" (*actus*), which reveals his understanding of the term. In other words, since the appetitive power, including the sensitive appetite, is a passive power, it transitions from potentiality to actuality when the object, apprehended through cognitive power, acts upon the appetite. Furthermore, the sensitive appetite is defined as the inclination (*inclinatio*) that accompanies sensitive cognition²⁸. The act (*actus*) of the sensitive appetite represents the actualization of the potential tendency of the appetitive power. Consequently, if the object perceived through cognition is recognized as suitable or agreeable, the appetite inclines toward it. Conversely, if the object is perceived as harmful or disagreeable, the appetite seeks to move away from it.²⁹ These responses or reaction, arising within the appetite acted upon by the appetible objects, are what he identified as the passions.

How, then, does this understanding of Aquinas answer the problem that puzzled his old teacher? The terms "alteration" or "quality" are notably absent from the *Treatise on the Passions*.³⁰ Emphasizing the link between passions and qualities may overlook the distinctive aspect of his theory of passion. Nonetheless, it is clear that Aquinas, like his old teacher, also considers passions to be qualities. In fact, the appetitive power is defined not as the essence of the soul but rather as something accidental, especially as a kind of quality.³¹ Since the act and its corresponding potency belong to the same genus, passion as an act (*actus*) of the appetitive power should also be a quality, or at least qualitative.³²

However, when motion is understood as the act of the appetitive power, it is not clear which state it represents, from the starting point to the end point of the motion. The following text is Aquinas' response to an objection that asks in what sense

²⁸ *STh* I, q. 81 a. 2 co. (5:289): Quia igitur appetitus sensitivus est inclinatio consequens apprehensionem sensitivam, sicut appetitus naturalis est inclinatio consequens formam naturalem; I-II, q. 15 a. 1 co. (6:110).

²⁹ *STh* I-II, q. 23 a. 4 co. (6:176-177).

³⁰ Cf. *De Ver.*, q. 26 a. 3 s.c. (ed. R.M. Spiazzi, *Quaestiones disputatae*, vol. 1 [Marietti: Turin-Rome, 1964], 487): passio proprie loquendo, est secundum motus alterationis.

³¹ *STh* I, q. 77 a. 1 co. et ad 5 (5:236-237); *Quaestiones disputatae De anima*, q. 1 a. 12 co. (ed. P.P.M. Calcaterra, *Quaestiones disputatae*, vol. 2 [Marietti: Turin-Rome, 1949], 326); Miner, *Thomas Aquinas on the Passions*, 38-46.

³² As mentioned earlier, Knuuttila notes that there were difficulties in the Middle Ages regarding the interpretation of Aristotle's *Categories*, particularly concerning whether passion was classified as a quality. See Knuuttila, *Emotions in Ancient and Medieval Philosophy*, 237-238. Since Aquinas does not leave a commentary on the *Categories*, his thought is not clear.

love is considered motion based on Damascene's definition. This passage is crucial for grasping his understanding of the term motion.³³

Although love does not denote the motion of the appetite in tending toward the appetible object, it denotes the motion of the appetite whereby the appetite is changed by means of the appetible thing, so that the appetible thing might be pleasing (*complacere*) to the appetite.

The critical point is that the state in which the appetite feels pleasing in the appetible object constitutes the end state of the motion and is distinct from the motion itself. Aquinas employs the term motion to describe the dynamic actualization of the appetite as it is influenced by an external object.³⁴ This state, being oriented toward its end, can be understood as an imperfect act (*actus imperfectus*), as Albert previously mentioned. Consequently, both master and disciple concur in interpreting motion as representing the transformative process occurring within the sense appetite, and in distinguishing this motion from its final end.

But why doesn't Aquinas correct Damascene's definition? If Aquinas recognizes motion as a process of change, he could point out the error in Damascene's definition, as his old master does, and revise it to state that passions are qualities that remain from motion. However, as mentioned above, the term "alteration" or "quality" do not appear consistently in the *Treatise on the Passions*. Rather, it seems that behind Aquinas' understanding of passions as motion is his attempt to understand passions from a perspective distinct from that of his master.

4. The Passions of the Soul: Motion Toward a *Telos*

The following text, titled "Is love passion?", offers valuable insights for clarifying Aquinas' perspective on the passions. Though somewhat lengthy, we will quote it here.³⁵

³³ *STh* I-II, q. 26 a. 2 ad 3 (6:189): amor, etsi non nominet motum appetitus tendentem in appetibile, nominat tamen motum appetitus quo immutatur ab appetibili, ut ei appetibile complacere.

³⁴ I owe this observation to Brungs, 'Die *passiones animae*', 198-222 and Perler, *Feelings Transformed*, 23-72.

³⁵ *STh* I-II, q. 26 a. 2 co. (6:189): passio est effectus agentis in patiente. Agens autem naturale duplicem effectum inducit in patiens, nam primo quidem dat formam, secundo autem dat motum consequentem formam; sicut generans dat corpori gravitatem, et motum consequentem ipsam. Et ipsa gravitas, quae est principium motus ad locum connaturalem propter gravitatem, potest quodammodo dici amor naturalis. Sic etiam ipsum appetibile dat appetitui, primo quidem, quandam coaptationem ad ipsum, quae est complacentia appetibilis; ex qua sequitur motus ad appetibile. Nam appetitivus motus circulo agitur, ut dicitur in III de anima, appetibile enim movet appetitum, faciens se quodammodo in eius intentione; et appetitus tendit in appetibile realiter consequendum, ut sit ibi finis motus, ubi fuit principium. Prima ergo immutatio appetitus ab appetibili vocatur amor, qui nihil est aliud quam complacentia appetibilis; et ex hac complacentia sequitur motus in appetibile, qui est desiderium; et ultimo quies, quae est gaudium. Sic ergo, cum amor consistat in quadam immutatione appetitus ab appetibili, manifestum est quod amor et passio.

Passion is the effect of the agent on the patient. Now a natural agent produces a twofold effect on the patient: first, it gives it the form. Second, it gives it the movement that results from the form. Thus, the generator gives the generated body both weight and the movement resulting from weight. So that weight, from being the principle of movement to the place, which is connatural to that body by reason of its weight, can, in a way, be called natural love. In the same way, the appetible object gives the appetite, first, a certain adaptation to itself, which consists in complacency in that object. From this, it follows a movement toward the appetible object. Furthermore, 'the appetitive movement is circular,' as stated in *De Anima* III, 10. Because the appetible object moves the appetite, introducing itself, as it were, into its intention (*intentio*), while the appetite tends toward the realization of the appetible object, the movement ends where it began. Accordingly, the first change wrought in the appetite by the appetible object is called love and is nothing else than complacency in that object. From this complacency results a movement toward that same object, and this movement is desire; lastly, there is rest which is joy. Since, therefore, love consists in a change wrought in the appetite by the appetible object, it is evident that love is a passion.

Evidently, Aquinas attempts to understand the passions from the perspective of *passio* (*pati*), which his master excludes from his consideration of the passions. As noted, when passions are closely tied to virtue, it is difficult to place *passio*, one of the Aristotelian categories, as the subject of the theory of passions. Indeed, *passio* in this sense signifies the passive reception of an external agent's influence, thereby excluding the involvement of rational power. Conversely, Aquinas focuses on the influence exerted upon the soul by the agent, employing the dynamic relationship between action and passion as a foundation for analysis. Although he may share his master's reservations regarding Damascene's definition, he identifies the essential characteristic of passions in the very process of being moved or influenced by the external agents. This perspective is evident in his treatment of love as the "first change" (*prima immutatio*) within the appetite. Aquinas regards this change as a fundamental part of the passion, where the appetite is directed towards an object due to the object's influence. This approach allows him to interpret Damascene's definition as capturing the essential characteristic of passions—motion. For Aquinas, the empirical experience of the appetite being moved by external influences captures the core characteristic of passions, emphasizing the dynamic nature of how the soul is affected by its objects.³⁶

How, then, is Aquinas' position understandable to his master? In his commentary on the theory of friendship in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Albert provides

³⁶ *Sententia libri Ethicorum*, II, lect. 5 n. 302 (ed. R.M. Spiazzi [Marietti: Turin-Rome, 1964], 85): *Passiones enim sunt motus quidam secundum quos nos moveri dicimur.*

some interesting insights. Responding to Aspasius' definition of passions, which asserts that passions are not only temporary motions of the soul and body but also disposition inclined toward motion,³⁷ he argues as follows.³⁸

The commentator's definition is given from the standpoint of the cause, for passion is not essentially motion unless it is understood as a category (*passio enim non est essentialiter motus, nisi secundum quod passio est praedicamentum*). It is not discussed in this way here; rather, it is the cause of motion which is described as temporary.

He reinterprets Aspasius' definition by suggesting that passion is a cause of motion rather than equating it with motion itself. While there is a subtle difference in his understanding of the relationship between motion and passion, Albert—consistent with his work *De bono*—rejects that passion is motion.³⁹ Despite this, when he examines passion from the standpoint of *pati* (being affected), his account aligns closely with Aquinas'. Both authors agree that passion involves a dynamic process where the patient is affected by an external agent. However, depending on whether or not one adopts this perspective of *pati*, the characteristics of their theories of passions differ greatly.

Now, Aquinas' understanding of the term motion seems to be closer to the original intent of these definitions. As previously noted, Greek commentators who employs these definitions seek to express the characteristics of passions—such as passivity and involuntariness—through the concept of motion. However, Aquinas' interpretation of passions as motion introduces a new dimension not present in the Greek commentators. That said, Aristotle's framework provides the theoretical foundation for understanding how passions can become active. For Aristotle, a patient is in a state of potentiality and becomes actualized through influence from an extrinsic agent. Aquinas builds on this by incorporating the idea that the appetitive power has

³⁷ The definition of Aspasius introduced by Albert is as follows. Albert, *Super Ethica*, VIII, lect. 5 obj. 2 (14.2:611): *passio non tantum est motus temporalis animae et corporis, sed etiam dispositio ad motum*. Aspasius' definition appears in the passage where he explains the difference between *φιλία* and *φίλησις*. Aspasius, *Ethica Nicomachea Quae Supersunt Commentaria*, in: G. Heylbut (ed.), *Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca*, vol. 19 (Berlin: Reimer, 1889), 172.

³⁸ Albert, *Super Ethica*, VIII, lect. 5 ad 2 (14.2:612): *illa diffinitio est data per causam; passio enim non est essentialiter motus, nisi secundum quod passio est praedicamentum, et sic non loquitur de passione; sed est causa motus, qui quidem dicitur temporalis*.

³⁹ In his *De bono*, tract. 3 q. 5 a. 1 ad 9 (28:197), the motion is described as the origin of passions. In contrast, when it is said that passions are the cause of the movements of the parts of the soul and the body, the focus shifts to the idea that the emotional state influences or determines how the soul and body act. In the *Super Ethica*, II, lect. 5, Albert accounts that the sensitive appetite is associated with two distinct motions. The first is a passive motion, wherein the sensitive appetite is acted upon by the appetible object, rendering the appetite a patient. The second is an active motion, wherein the sensitive appetite instigates action upon the body with the purpose of obtaining the appetible object, thus functioning as an agent in this context. See Albert, *Super Ethica*, II, lect. 5 (14.1:113-114).

an inclination toward its object.⁴⁰ This implies that the passions, or motions of the soul related to desire and aversion, are not merely passive states but are actively oriented towards their objects. In this manner, Aquinas aligns with Aristotle's notion of motion but emphasizes the active role of the passions in this process. Consequently, the passions are understood not merely as passive reactions but as active components in the dynamics of human behaviour and emotional life.⁴¹

5. Conclusion

Let us now return to the challenges that Albert encounters concerning the term "motion" in Damascene's definitions: can the passions be accurately termed motions, given that motion in the Aristotelian sense signifies *actus imperfectus*, which refers to the process of transitioning from one state to another? Aquinas' reply should be clear: the term "motion" captures the essential characteristic of passions. Damascene's definitions, which trace back to the early Greek commentators (or Aristotle), endeavour to illuminate the core aspect of human passion as the dynamism elicited in our appetite by the influence of external objects. Ironically, by attempting to interpret the term motion within an Aristotelian framework, Albert overlooks the original intent of the Greek commentators (or Aristotle).

Does Aquinas succeed in resolving the difficulties confronting Albert? In a way, he does. Aquinas clarifies in what sense passions can indeed be regarded as motions, thereby sidestepping the dilemmas raised by Albert. However, would Albert be satisfied with this reply? I doubt he would be. He recognizes that if we consider passions from the perspective of *pati*, their essential characteristics are motion. Yet, in the *De bono*, he frames his consideration of passions within virtue theory, conceptualizing them as qualities or mental states woven into the moral and psychological fabric of an individual. This approach, in contrast, renders Aquinas' reply less persuasive. Moderated passions, according to Albert, become integral to one's cultivated nature, contributing to one's virtuous or vicious disposition. Thus, by treating passions as inner qualities of an individual, he closely aligns them with the dynamics of virtue and vice. However, Aquinas' approach does not disregard the link to ethical behaviour. Rather, by recognizing passions having their own dynamism, Aquinas provides a perspective to clearly explain their interplay with ethical

⁴⁰ Cf. Albert, *Summae de creaturis secunda pars, quae est de homine*, q. 68 a. 1 sol. (ed. A. Borgnet, vol. 35 [Paris: Vivès, 1896], 559-560): *Appetitus dicitur duobus modis, scilicet generaliter secundum quod dicit quamlibet inclinationem in id quod est conveniens; et specialiter secundum quod dicit inclinationem in bonum apprehensum ut nunc vel simpliciter*. Albert also sees the capacity for appetite as an inclination. However, this understanding is not linked to passion. Auerbach's essay discusses the historical process by which passion, which originates from the term *passio* (*pati*), came to have an active meaning in modern times, and it still provides many suggestions. Erich Auerbach, 'Passio als Leidenschaft', in: Idem, *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur romanischen Philologie* (München: Francke Verlag, 1967), 161-175.

⁴¹ *In de divinis nominibus*, c. 4 lect. 11 n. 449 (ed. C. Pera [Marietti: Turin-Rome, 1950], 148): *nam timor est sicut motus violentus ab extrinseco proveniens, amor autem est sicut motus naturalis simul ab intimo procedens*.

behaviour. Consequently, Aquinas' response can be seen as both an advancement and a departure from Albert's ideas, paving the way for a more nuanced understanding of human psychology in its ethical dimensions.⁴²

⁴² I am grateful to the reviewers of the *European Journal for the Study of Thomas Aquinas* for their valuable comments and corrections.