

РУДНЕВ ЮРИЙ ВЛАДИМИРОВИЧ

PhD-студент Центрально-Европейского университета (Будапешт, Венгрия)
2rudnev@gmail.com

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IURII RUDNEV

PhD-student, Central European University (Budapest, Hungary)
2rudnev@gmail.com

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The study of medieval affectivity has only recently departed from the works of its founding fathers Febvre and Elias, yet it has been progressing at a remarkable pace. Among the new names, one may notice Martha Nussbaum as well as Anthony Grafton together with many other well-known scholars, demonstrating their groundbreaking findings. If earlier, medieval emotions were deemed “hydraulic” (as Barbara Rosenwein puts it) — irrational, released like steam or otherwise exploding — today, the multiple emotional universes of fascinating complexity and diversity are being revealed.

This new landscape is confirmed once again in a remarkable study by Carla Casagrande and Silvana Vecchio devoted to the emotions of Christianity. I would like to draw attention to this book also because of the recent English translation of *Medieval Sensibilities: A History of Emotions in the Middle Ages* (2018) by Damien Bouquet and Piroska Nagy, which originally appeared in French in 2015. It makes a perfect companion to the as-yet untranslated *Passioni dell'anima*, or *Passions of the Soul*, as both studies point out the bloom of the “fertile land, albeit unexplored in many regions,” in the words of Casagrande and Vecchio (P. 3).

The authors' unique compendium of the patristic and scholastic views on the *Passions of the Soul*, thanks to the nature of the subject and contemporary intellectual culture, answers a variety of both mundane and unearthly questions. For instance, readers

might learn there what Adam and Eve experienced committing the first sin and which progenitor behaved worse; what pleasures humans share with animals and why; whether Christians can abstain from passions completely; what an intellectual should feel amidst the storm and how earthquakes strengthen his/her reason; why Jesus Christ on the cross is the “maestro in cathedra” for believers; why *delectatio morosa* (joy from sinful thoughts) is a deadly sin; how to meditate with “the song of the heart,” and so forth.

When answered, these questions would amuse anybody who loves intellectual puzzles regardless of their research interests, but I leave them unanswered to incite further reading. Instead, I am going to concentrate on the general structure of the *Passions of the Soul*, demonstrating the book’s contribution to the history of medieval emotions. Other than jumping over the language barrier, by this summary review, I am calling attention to the fact that the history of medieval emotions has today become if not a disciplinary sub-field, then at least a trendy subject of study. Therefore, it is crucial to learn the basic knowledge accumulated there so far.

The book of Casagrande and Vecchio consists of four thematic blocks: (I) **Origins of the Christian Discourse on Passions**, (II) **Theories of Passions**, (III) **Passions, Vices, Virtues**, and (IV) **The Good Use of Passions**. By number of pages, the last two constitute the “body” of the study, detailing how passions must have worked for/in believers. However, “the medieval reflection on affectivity” is the “heart” that is explored in depth to square the pragmatic component, specifically paying attention to how the passions were understood as “a powerful and necessary instrument of salvation” by the “Christian intellectuals” (P. 8). The unity of theoretical and pedagogical levels in the medieval discourse of passions also existed in the treatises and manifested an inevitable need for theologians to establish the good use of their systems.

The “Origins of the Christian Discourse on Passions” lie in the Augustinian theory of affectivity, as the church father was the first who connected passions to salvation, having reevaluated the Stoic

ideal of *apatheia* (a complete emotional withdrawal). Then, in the twelfth to thirteenth centuries, “Theories of Passions” underwent structural changes thanks to the rediscovery of Aristotle by Aquinas and his teacher Albert the Great, who admitted the innate nature of affectivity and hence liberated it from its moral connotations.

The last two sections explore how some religious practices transformed (or even “educated”) the emotions of Christians. The part “Passions, Vices, Virtues” analyses passions with regard to the (deadly) sins, and then proceeds to case-by-case studies of fear, pleasure, pain, and shame, exploring their composition and mutual entanglement. “The Good Use of Passions” is the sophisticated story of how passions were used for preaching and intense penitence, as well as for mystical devotion.

In the following, I will proceed through every chapter of all four thematic blocks of the book, reconstructing the history of medieval passions as Casagrande and Vecchio see it.

(I) The chapter “**Augustine: Passions and Salvation,**” opening the first thematic block, describes the emotional state of the citizens in *The City of God* of **St. Augustine** (354–430). The early Christians are afraid of sins, desire virtues, and experience a great number of passions — greater than the number of hairs on their heads — because their passions are disordered by original sin. Accordingly, the humans’ will has become a desire (*concupiscence*) that bears the punishment of all humanity. Is it possible then to find the right path and rehabilitate desire? Only if the latter would be governed by the one true love, the love of God. Thus, the passions could become “feet” or “wings” for the soul. Christ comes to the world to teach people their proper use by his own example. “Fear, sadness, desire, joy become in Christ and in his followers the manifestations of the love of God” (P. 37). The entire Holy Scripture educates Christians and moves their souls towards God. Thus, at present, there is no place for Stoic *apatheia*: it is possible only in the future life without sin. Salvation must be accompanied by pain.

“John Cassian: From Apatheia to Patience.” John Cassian (ca. 360 — ca. 435) claims, in spite of Augustine, that the heart of believers must be isolated from the assault of passions like a citadel in the desert. His concept of “purity of heart” installs *apatheia* in the Eastern monastic tradition, becoming its prominent feature together with the general disdain for passions. Impassibility should germinate in the eremitic life as a “flower” of the moral and religious *praktiké* of fighting temptation, as **Evagrius Ponticus** (345–399) believes. However, in contrast to Stoics, the Eastern monks see *apatheia* as the necessary condition for virtues, prayer, union with God, and defeat of sin. Therefore, the classification of passions is possible only inside the system of cardinal sins, and not otherwise. The perfect monk is like Job — who, by patience, ultimately overcame all his passions.

“Gregory the Great: Pain That Saves.” Gregory the Great (ca. 540–604) is fascinated with Job’s endurance of pain that progressively spread from his body to his heart, soul, and mind. Thus, Job’s pains become “the sign of God’s glory and an instrument of sanctification” (P. 55). In this context, Gregory also refers to Christ, whose passions are the ultimate and, from then on, paradigmatic for the Christian discourse of emotions. From Christ’s body, passions spread to his “mystical body”: that is, the Church.

“The flesh is the body of sin” as it causes spiritual diseases (P. 58). Therefore, Gregory and Cassian regard bodily passions as vicious. The only cure is to substitute them with spiritual passions.

(II) “Adam’s Passions.” Being immortal, Adam experienced all good passions, states **Thomas Aquinas** (1225–1274). He felt love, joy, desire, hope, and exercised all the virtues; there was no pain, lust, or fear. Yet after the fall, the harmony had been destroyed, and Adam’s reason started to fail in managing his sensual appetite.

Having agreed in the latter with Augustine, Aquinas views passions as generated by the body (not by the soul/will), and hence pre-moral. If for Augustine, the first sin “invents” passions, for Aquinas it only increases their number. The special attention to how

the body generates passions in interaction with the soul fosters the later development of medieval affectivity. Thanks to the reintroduction of the Aristotelian teaching, reason enters the challenge by the impulses of the body. The will to pleasures (natural, connatural, or against nature) becomes the prime mover of life.

“William of Auvergne: Passions, Virtues, and Affects.”

The reconsidered relations between body and soul also engender the more sophisticated relations of passions to virtues and vices. For **William of Auvergne** (1180/90–1249) in *De virtutibus*, the term *passio* becomes an umbrella for particular *affectiones*: “the soul suffers passions and generates affects” (P. 99).

William builds on the Avicennian tripartite model of the soul (rational, concupiscible, and irascible faculties), where each hosts a group of affects activated by particular objects. Picking some affects and passions, a person acquires an individual habit, or *habitus*. A good *habitus* realizes virtues whereas the bad reproduces vices. The Aristotelian neutrality of human nature seems to be in question as “the body is the prison for the soul, or the soil where the devil plants as seeds the concupiscible and irascible potencies” (P. 104).

“Reflections on Passions in the Commentaries to the Nicomachean Ethics.” The Aristotelian paradigm of medieval affectivity culminates indeed with Albert the Great and Aquinas. For them, passions are the movements (inclusive of modifications) of sensitive appetite triggered by potential good or evil. The concupiscible passions, such as love/hatred, react — here and now — towards the intense good or evil whereas irascible ones, such as hope/despair, avoid the complex indirect evil or aspire to the complex good. Virtues operate by reason/will and thus ordain the passions (yet cannot extinguish them).

Pleasure and pain are central to the Aristotelian emotive discourse, either in regard to moral education or to human psychology. Being virtuous is an outstanding pleasure; however, it hinders the bodily ones.

“Thomas Aquinas and the System of Passions.” Aquinas’ system of passions is particularly interesting when it analyzes the interactions of body and soul as well as of reason and will. It can be generally characterized as a “pre-moral psychological discourse” where passions have “purely physical dynamics” (P. 151). Aquinas divides eleven passions into concupiscible (love/hatred, desire/aversion, joy/sorrow) and irascible (hope/despair, fear/daring, anger), and describes their interrelations in Ia IIae of *Summa Theologiae*. The negative passions are “more passionate,” as they alter the unity of body and soul against their nature.

(III) “Passions and Seven Capital Vices.” The reflection on passions “seems much more marginal, nearly absent from the medieval texts” in respect to the theme of sins (P. 165). Starting with Augustine and Cassian, passions exist exclusively in the moral perspective of salvation. Finally, Gregory the Great introduces a simple and effective classification of the capital vices (vainglory, envy, sloth, wrath, avarice, gluttony, lust), which is oriented towards the spiritual practice.

The twelfth-century renewal of the medieval affectivity causes the reconsideration of sins. If earlier body and soul were antagonistic, with the acceptance of their unity and introduction of the various faculties of the soul, it becomes easier to develop a complex spiritual ethics. In this vein, Pierre Abelard distinguishes vice — a natural disposition towards sins, or a vicious desire — from sin, which offends God deliberately. Some passions, like wrath or envy, are not sinful per se and might be corrected. Later, the “theological-moral problem” of passions was resolved by separating affective faculties from superior ones that determine guilt. Thus, temperance and fortitude become active virtues regulating concupiscible and irascible passions respectively. Vices, on the other hand, come from the absence of these virtues.

“Motions of the Heart and Sins.” Domenico Cavalca (ca. 1270–1342) writes *Specchio de’ peccati*, a manual in vernacular, which was good for both confession and “autoanalysis,” that lists numerous sins.

All of them are seen as originating in the motions of the heart, and, overall, “disoriented love.” These “motions” or “affects/passions” substitute the system of deadly sins, integrating its elements. Furthermore, the connection between affects and sins is challenged: affects might mutate in good or evil, while some evil ones (like fear of death) do not become sins if tempered properly.

“Fear: Philosopher amidst the Storm.” The *exemplum* about the philosopher amidst the storm narrated by the Stoic **Aulus Gellius** (ca. 125 — after 180) clarifies the concept of *apatheia* that was criticized by the Christian intellectuals. The sage, who fears the storm in the soul, still practices *apatheia* because he intentionally bans fear-some images from infiltrating his experience. “In short, the sage feels the motions [in his soul] that, however, are not passions” (P. 204).

For Augustine, though, the story illustrates that, in trying to be impassionate “like a god or stone,” the Stoics fail. A true sage should have allowed himself to be afraid in order to express *miserericordia* towards the others on the ship. Later, **John of Salisbury** (ca. 1120–1180) vindicates the sage, who, he argues, felt the “reasonable fear” basic for humility, and expected God to intervene in saving him. For Albert the Great, the sage’s passion differs from these of passengers, as he suffers more greatly in fear of losing his virtuous life.

“Pleasure from Abelard to Aquinas.” If pleasures accord with nature, **Pierre Abelard** (1079–1142) deems them a necessary part of our “psychophysical structure” and does not ascribe them any malignity at all. Therefore, he disrupts the connection between sex and sin established by Augustine and alarms the monastic culture that has relentlessly been abstaining from bodily pleasures. **Peter Lombard** (ca. 1096–1160) reinstates the Augustinian idea of the sinfulness of pleasure. Yet later Albert the Great and Aquinas, taking an Aristotelian view, separate the good pleasure resulting from virtuous behavior from that which accompanies passions.

“Virtuous Pain: Patience.” For Christians, patience is one of the virtues related to strength; it works most visibly as it controls passions. Its principal goal, according to Aquinas, is to preserve

reason from sadness. For Christians, patience should feel pleasant and light, and grant love and joy because it prepares them for the future. Theological and preaching discourses explain that this was how Christ endured pain, and his example must be followed.

“Shame: Between Passion and Virtue.” Shame is a subspecies of fear. Although an effect of sin, this passion is not vicious per se and when properly set up by deep repentance, it might grow into virtue. Hence, penance engages the various degrees and kinds of shame.

(IV) “*Sermo affectuosus*: Passions and Christian Eloquence.” The medieval *sermo affectuosus* (passionate sermon) aims at moving the people’s affects by a powerful theological and moral instrument: an “affective rhetoric.” Augustine and Gregory the Great agree that a good missionary should “break the rocklike hearts” and inflame them with his own, proper passions (*flectere*). Further, Gregory the Great believes that a preacher should learn the dominating passions of the people and deliver his speech to amend them. Scriptural and hagiographic exempla are helpful when recited as they per se can inflict the proper passions. William of Auvergne envisions the *ars predicandi*: the voice describing dirty things should be low, for scary things trembling, and so forth; while preaching about pain, the gestures must look as if somebody cried. However, the excess of art must be avoided, as **Roger Bacon** (ca. 1219 – ca. 1292) warns. The foremost goal of preaching is to “kidnap the souls,” moving them from evil desires towards the love for good.

“Emotions and the Sacrament of Penance.” In the twelfth to thirteenth centuries, the sacrament of penance evolves due to the general intellectual context, where the instruments for the analysis of affectivity multiply. The individuation, introspection, and remission of guilt introduced to penance institutionalize a system of “sentimental education” for Christians. In the core of the Western medieval emotional paradigm, there is a continuous and voluntary pain of particular intensity, *contritio*, which is capable of crushing sins into dust. Having undergone it, a person confesses and then feels relief.

“William of Auvergne and the Good Use of Passions for Penance.” William of Auvergne introduces a preliminary stage of *contritio*, which is *attritio*. This peculiar psychological state unfolds in the soul with a number of affects, such as fear, anger, or pain. Then, the destruction of sins begins and, in *contritio*, becomes a full-scale, open work of virtue. The most important element, however, is the intervention of divine grace. With the catalyzing help of a priest, it illuminates the soul, and a person then leaves behind shame and *erubescencia* (redness, bodily manifestation of shame) becoming calm and patient.

“Passions, Mysticism, Prayer: The Case of Jean Gerson.” The individual mysticism of **Jean Gerson** (1363–1429) also fits within the emotional paradigm of the period. His system is based on the sophisticated view of the human soul and body, and their affects, which derives from both platonic and peripatetic traditions. Gerson’s mystical theology operates by divine grace, affects, and *synderesis*, a soul’s special faculty having the foremost affective potencies and an intuitive knowledge of the moral.

Through his system, Gerson combines the intellectual and affective faculties of the soul: cogitation relates to desire; meditation corresponds to the love of the first truth; contemplation fits to the ecstatic love. The practice of contemplation has six stages that progressively detach the soul from reason and, by exercising virtues, culminate in the mystical union with the intuitive ecstatic love. Gerson respectively describes twelve exercises implementing self-knowledge and sensual education to the mystical framework. In addition, the peculiar prayer of the heart, *canticordum*, can facilitate the devotion. It must directly penetrate the heart and its affects. For Gerson, the realization and perfect heroine of *canticordum* might be Mary, who embodies the model of the good use of affects.

“Specchio di croce: Domenico Cavalca and the Order of Affects.” The suffering Christ is another prominent model for sentimental education and imitation. As Domenico Cavalca demonstrates, this is the foremost realization of the Augustinian plan to

connect passions with salvation. For Cavalca, the image of crucifixion is the theological compendium capable of educating Christians both in the basics of their belief and in the true way of life. Crucifixion is also the supreme example of how passions must be reorganized. Having overcome them all, Christ established the proper hierarchy of their objects: “God, our soul, souls of others, our body, bodies of others, our belongings” (P. 394).

Cavalca’s emotive esotericism confirms once more the abundance of the “fertile land” of medieval affectivity, researched by the *Passions of the Soul* of Casagrande and Vecchio. Under the umbrella of the Christian history of passions, there are themes from the history of philosophy, theology, and mysticism as well as the social and cultural histories. The only other history I would like to find here is the history of medicine, which could expound the bodily manifestations of passions. Obviously, the ubiquitous humoral theory contributed to the discourse on affectivity, and this deserves further study. However, my exigent desire can be abso-

lutely tamed by the other intellectual pleasures that
this beautiful book provides for
a scholarly reader.