

Somewhere Between the Beasts and the Angels: Thomistic Philosophical Anthropology as a Schema to Reorient Modern Psychology towards Human Experience in the Lifeworld

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Modern empirical psychology, as a reductionist, materialist, and positivist science, has to a great extent replaced philosophical psychology – or more precisely philosophical anthropology – in our contemporary world, and this has caused modern psychology to lose sight of what was most interesting in pre-modern psychology, namely the attempt to situate the human person in his experience of reality in the lifeworld (*lebenswelt*). This has resulted in the practice of psychology becoming detached from the realities of lived experience as its view of human nature becomes increasingly narrow, rigid and scientific. This is evidenced by the current “replication crisis” in modern psychology, which has severely impacted the credibility of modern psychology as a field of enquiry. This crisis arose with an increasing methodological standardisation that is being pursued at the expense of interrogating the scientific presuppositions that ground the study of modern psychology.

this methodological turn in the mid- to late-20th century loosened the grip of theoretical orthodoxy because psychologists could point to their methodological orthodoxy as a sign of the legitimacy of their work. Thus, various methodological and statistical practices became canonized as algorithms that could provide justification for research claims inasmuch as they presumably systematized the scientific logic that might impartially indicate the strength and likelihood of a finding. In this sense, many psychological researchers in this period were more concerned with whether their methods conformed with the generally accepted practices than they were with direct replication, presuming that these systems of logic would filter out bad theories (as they failed these tests) and elevate good theories (as they passed these tests).¹

As Wiggins & Chrisopherson further note, most attempts at reforming modern psychology have concentrated primarily on “methodological belt-tightening that focuses on greater rigor within the received paradigm, rather than searching for and addressing potential problems at a more fundamental level”,² although they also rightfully concede that these efforts are not wholly lacking in sympathy with concerns about more foundational criticisms of psychology and the other human sciences. In response to epistemological and ontological critiques of modern psychology, Wiggins & Chrisopherson advocate that more attention should be paid to radical “post-positivist” critiques in the psychological reform movement, but we contend that more attention should be directed towards pre-modern philosophical anthropology, particularly a broadly Thomist or neo-Scholastic philosophical anthropology, as this is a more promising method for correcting for the scientism that permeates modern psychology. We contend that it is the problem of scientism, as identified below by D.Q. McInerny, which is most responsible for the increasingly narrow methodological orthodoxy that characterises modern psychology, a science that no longer focuses on “the principal subject matter of psychology”, which is “human nature, or, more precisely, human nature as it manifests itself in the individual human being—the person.”

1 Bradford J. Wiggins & Cody D. Chrisopherson, “The Replication Crisis in Psychology: An Overview for Theoretical and Philosophical Psychology,” *Journal of Theoretical and Philosophical Psychology* 39, no. 4, (2019): 204.

2 Ibid. 209.

Not all the founders of modern psychology were tinged by scientism, but even many of those who were not tended to foster an overly restricted view of science. Ever since the great success enjoyed by the science of physics in the aftermath of the monumental work done by Sir Isaac Newton, physics became in the minds of many scientists in other fields the paradigm for any discipline that wanted to be considered an authentic science. This was true of many of the founders of modern psychology. As a result of this, they attempted to fashion a psychology which was patterned after physics, in that it was given to taking a somewhat mechanistic attitude toward human nature, putting much stock in quantification. The ability to quantify one's subject matter was held up as the ultimate test of a genuinely scientific inquiry.³

This leads McInerny to try and reorient philosophical psychology towards its pre-modern Anglo-European predecessor in philosophical anthropology, particularly the philosophical anthropology of St Thomas Aquinas and the Scholastics, who produced some of the finest works of psychology in the history of philosophy. In this paper our analysis will broadly follow that of McInerny in depending primarily on the categories used by Aquinas in his philosophical anthropology, although our own analysis will use compare these categories with the modern psycho-evolutionary account of primary emotions and a generalised account of another tradition which is critical of scientism in modern psychology, namely, pre-modern indigenous Indian psychology. The main benefit of relying on the categories of Aquinas for this analysis is that they provide us with a means to incorporate the narrow findings of modern psychology into a broad holistic account of human experience in the lifeworld. Whereas modern psychology produces data that is fragmented and primarily concerned with specific responses to particular phenomena, a psychological science worthy of the name must also be able to unify the specific knowledge of particulars into a more general, universal knowledge of the reality into which man is thrown at birth. As has been noted by Jean Piaget in *The Psychology of Intelligence*, the final end of the psychological science is to attain equilibrium in thought and this equilibrium is ultimately dependent on the ability of psychology to incorporate the results of experimentation into an axiomatic pattern that can explain the mechanism of intelligence. The type of logico-mathematical schematisation required by to attain this end must supply rules for “the logic of wholes”, rather than a fragmented logic of parts.⁴ It is precisely in this formation of a “logic of wholes” that the categories used in the philosophical anthropology of Aquinas are most effective.

Along with recognising that the particular schemata of psychology must be incorporated into a more general schematisation in order to be maximally effective, Piaget also rightly views psychology as developmental. He explicitly states that “we should perhaps look for the secret of intelligence in children under the age of seven or eight” instead of trying to formulate psychological laws after analyses of what are only “the final stages of intellectual development”.⁵ This is why we will incorporate the Aristotelian distinction between vegetative, sensitive and rational souls into our own analysis in order to account for distinctions in the forms of life produced by evolutionary mechanisms despite the fact that terms like “soul” can be expected to raise the hackles of a certain type of narrow-minded scientific dogmatist. Likewise, we will disregard the distinctly modern notion introduced by Descartes of a substantial distinction between mind and body, stipulating that “experience is biological, insofar as it involves an organism in an environment, and social, insofar as that environment is intersubjective”.⁶ In this sense, psychology, a term which is derived from the

3 D.Q. McInerny, *Philosophical Psychology* (Elmhurst Township, PA: The Priestly Fraternity of Saint Peter, 2016), 2-3.

4 Jean Piaget, *The Psychology Of Intelligence* (Milton Park, UK: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., 1950), Taylor & Francis e-library edition, 2005, 40.

5 Ibid. 25-26.

6 Shaun Gallagher, “Philosophical antecedents to situated cognition,” in *The Cambridge Handbook of Situated Cognition*, eds. Philip Robbins & Murat Aydede (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 37.

Greek terms *psyche* and *logos*, is a study of the soul – or as McInerney puts it, the “life principle”⁷– in action in the lifeworld.

Given this, we must begin our study by focusing on the experience of all of the animate organisms (which in a nod to Aquinas and Piaget are necessarily organic wholes, or beings, not merely aggregations of parts) encounter in the environment, and we will begin by utilising Aristotle’s distinction between the vegetative, sensitive and rational life principles. The self-evident nature of any organism in its environment is activity. In human terms this is self-evident, because by being born, an act that was in no way directed by one’s own will –if such a will or willing subject can even be said to exist– the human person finds oneself immersed in a world of experience and activity. In mere existence, one is voluntarily or involuntarily acting perpetually in a world of constant change. Even deciding upon and pursuing a course of inaction or suicide is to act in a very real sense, as the actor is caught up in a network of interrelated activities in which even refraining from activity is an act of accepting that external forces will continue to exert themselves without one’s own input.⁸

However, the necessity of acting is not confined merely to the self-conscious and rational human life principle, it is also present in the vegetative and sensitive souls of plants and animals in the absence of consciousness, or at the very least, at far lower levels of conscious awareness. The vegetative life principle which is best exemplified in the plant, actualises its elemental powers of nutrition, growth, and reproduction despite its apparent lack of cognitive function and conscious awareness. Likewise, the sensitive soul of the animal actualises the elemental powers of the vegetative soul along with its own elemental powers of sensation, appetition and locomotion. All of this is in accord with the principles of evolution and also serves to underscore Piaget’s focus on psychology as a developmental science. At the apex of this developmental schema, we encounter the human person whose own rational soul actualises the elemental powers of both the vegetative and sensitive souls as well as its own powers of intellect and will. It is precisely the presence of these uniquely human powers in the natural realm (leaving aside supernatural concerns for the time being, although it must be said that the powers of the rational soul are what opens up human persons to the experience of the spiritual and supernatural in the lifeworld) and our concern with the study of these powers that differentiates philosophical anthropology / psychology from the more general study of biology, with the latter science being more amenable to a purely mathematical and mechanistic treatment given the nature of its subject.

Having noted that man is born into the world condemned to action, he inevitably encounters the existential problem of determining whether this life makes sense and to what end his actions are directed, if any, in the lifeworld. This problem will inevitably be resolved where it is first encountered, in one’s own actions, and since all human activity is attributable to the powers of the human life principle –nutrition, growth, reproduction, sensation, appetition and locomotion as directed by intellect and will– any psychological science worthy of the name must consider the relationships between these powers and their development in the operative functions of the human person in the lifeworld. Here we return to the aforementioned principle that all human experience is biological, in that the mind and body are inseparable in the interaction of the human person and the environment. Immaterial, mental / spiritual acts, are nonetheless acts simultaneously involving the rational powers of intellect and will with the sensitive powers of movement, sensation and appetite, all of which are supported by the unconscious vegetative powers that sustain the human organism. This account of the human life principle demonstrates precisely why the scientific paradigm of modern psychology, which is determined to reduce the triadic relation of intentional mental activity to a dyadic physical mechanism is more suited to the study of plant and animal life than the life of

7 McInerney, *Philosophical Psychology*, 9-10.

8 Maurice Blondel, *Action (1893): Essay on a critique of life and a science of practice*, trans. Oliva Blanchette. (South Bend, IN: Notre Dame University Press, 1984), 4.

human beings in the lifeworld. Since any reasonable account of human activity in the lifeworld must include the immaterial rational powers of intellect and will, it is clear that psychological sciences cannot be confined within a narrow materialistic and scientific schema.

This distinction between the vegetative, sensitive and rational life principle is vital to philosophical anthropology because it demarcates the boundaries between higher and lower forms of life in terms of their possible functions in the world. Human beings (and divine beings of various types depending on the religious background of the reader) differ from other living beings in being able to discover abstract knowledge that is unavailable to other forms of life and in the fact that their mode of life necessarily incorporates a complex immaterial (or in the case of certain Indian philosophies, a more subtly material) spiritual dimension that is not amenable to examination within a purely materialistic paradigm. However, it also follows from this account that the possibility of knowledge and the human person's orientation towards the spiritual realm cannot be entirely separated from the vegetative and sensitive life principles. As Aquinas rightly states [*De veritate*, q. 2 a. 3 arg. 19], *nihil est in intellectu quod non sit prius in sensu*, from which it follows that all knowledge is necessarily bound up with sensation and all conception is built upon perception. When animals and plants undergo biological adaptation in response to the environment in which they live, these operative adaptations can be studied as if they are mechanistic in nature. However, this is not true in the case of human persons because the powers of the rational soul allow for the creation (not the mere production) of new cognitive structures into which one can assimilate the sensible experience of objects and events in the environment into the operations of the intellect. This is accomplished in such a way as to allow for what Piaget refers to as combinative, reversible, substitutive, symmetrical, multipliable, relational, repeatable mental acts of abstraction that can be variously manipulated or even annulled in an associative manner in response to new experiences of reality in the environment.⁹ In this way, the intellectual powers of the rational soul and the operative formation of knowledge are continually developed as new experiences are assimilated into the cognitive structures of the human person. Likewise, as one develops one's own cognitive schema to assimilate new knowledge, an intellectual habit (*habitus*) is generated that allows for the assimilation and development of a more and more refined and precise knowledge about oneself and the totality of the environment in which one operates.

In this way, the physical, intellectual and moral operations of human beings are necessarily intertwined and one cannot be separated from each other in lived reality. They can be separated in the intellect through abstraction in order to analyse particular aspects of experience as particular things to be examined while stands apart from other aspects of human psychology, but to be scientific in a proper psychological sense, any data obtained through this process of abstraction must be reincorporated into a larger schema of philosophical anthropology in order to obtain any type of true understanding and real knowledge of the lifeworld. A failure to follow any intellectual analysis of psychological phenomena with an intellectual synthesis of the results into a more general schema creates confusion and collections of data instead of real psychological knowledge.

As we have noted, all knowledge is first found in the senses, and it is therefore necessary to analyse the experience of sensation in the human person. Because sensation is a power that is also found in the sensitive soul of animals –indeed when it comes to sensation, the sense faculties of animals are often more acute than those of man– we can infer from the behaviour of all sensitive creatures that there is a certain “spontaneity and flexibility to the responses of a sensitive creature to its environment which bespeak, on the part of the creature, an awareness, of one kind or another, of that environment”. We can predict that accidentally stepping on a house cat's tail will cause the cat to cry out and flee, but there is a definite flexibility of response in regard to whether or not the cat will cry, what kind of cry it will be, in which direction it will flee, etc. This flexibility and spontaneity indicates that all sensitive creatures, including man, “have the capacity to assimilate

9 Piaget, *The Psychology Of Intelligence*, 41ff.

their environment in an immaterial way... and bring the objective within the ambit of the subjective"¹⁰ by way of the internal senses of common sense, imagination, memory, and the estimative sense. In man, the estimative sense which allows an animal to perceive the beneficial or harmful character of a concrete object in its environment takes on a cogitative power that lends itself to discursive thought in the intellect. Therefore, the main difference between man and animal is not to be found in the reactive nature of the external and internal senses, but in acuity of the internal cogitative sense to bridge the divide between the sensitive and rational soul in the human person.

Along with sensation, the human being also shares in the appetitive powers of the sensitive soul that incline one towards that which is perceived to be beneficial and produces an aversion towards that which is perceived to be harmful. These appetitive powers work in tandem with the internal senses in such a way that we can examine the case of one who accidentally touches a hot stove. Hopefully, one will naturally avoid touching the hot stove because the estimative sense will perceive the danger inherent in doing so, but if one should accidentally be brought into contact with the hot stove, the entirety of that experience of will be unified in the common sense, will be saved as a series of images by the imagination, and these images can then be recalled in the memory. At this point, the appetitive power of the soul may cause one to develop an aversion to hot stoves as a way of avoiding future accidents. In much the same way, the sensation of eating a particular delicacy may be processed by the external and internal senses in such a way as to incline one towards the enjoyment of that particular delicacy. It is the appetitive faculty in its concupiscible (inclined to pursue what is suitable and avoid that which is harmful) and irascible (inclined to overcome obstacles in pursuit of arduous goods and in the avoidance of arduous evils) powers¹¹ that serves as a foundation for the eleven basic passions of the human life principle.

Here we are able to point to an interesting contrast between the broadly Thomistic philosophical anthropology we have sketched out so far and a similar account of the “primary emotions” from modern psychology. Whereas Aquinas was able to form cognitive structures that account for the differences between the lower and higher order functions of all types of life and formulate an account of the passions as primary emotions stemming from the appetitive faculty of the soul, the modern psychologist Robert Plutchik’s account of primary emotions depends on what is referred to as a psycho-evolutionary account that attempts to reduce the primary emotions to their utility in the quest for survival.¹²

On one hand, the theories of Plutchik and Aquinas are broadly similar in that both put forward taxonomies of primary emotions that apply to all animals, the expression of which differ among different species according to their qualitative differences. Likewise, both men agree that primary emotions can be conceptualised as pairs of opposites (although for Aquinas anger does not have a polar opposite). Furthermore, Plutchik and Aquinas, broadly speaking, include many of the same emotions as primary, as can be seen below:

Aquinas	Plutchik
desire–avoidance	acceptance–disgust
joy–sadness	joy–sadness
courage–fear	anger–fear
hope–despair	anticipation–surprise
love–hate	

10 McNerny, *Philosophical Psychology*, 72.

11 Christopher A. Bobier, “Thomas Aquinas on the Basis of the Irascible-Concupiscible Division,” *Res Philosophica* 97, no. 1, (2020): 31-52.

12 Robert Plutchik, “A general psychoevolutionary theory of emotion,” in *Emotion: Theory, research and experience, Theories of emotion Vol. 1*, eds. R. Plutchik & H. Kellerman (New York: Academic Press, 1980), 3-33.

anger

Although the terms are not identical, desire–avoidance is analogous to acceptance–disgust in that the latter would serve as motivating factors for the former. However, it could be said that Aquinas is closer to the truth in his more general description, especially at the level of animals. Interestingly, Plutchik himself notes that most people will attest to the fact that pet dogs and cats “show emotions as vividly as do humans”,¹³ which is something I would agree with. However, while I have regularly seen instances of desire–avoidance in my pets, I can’t say the same for disgust and acceptance seems to be so broadly defined that it would include mere toleration / resignation in the form of learned helplessness.

Of course, in a strict sense, it is difficult to state categorically that animals have “emotions” *per se*, given their lack of intellectual and linguistic abilities. This is especially true if we accept Plutchik’s own definition of emotion as something more than subjective experience (which animals undoubtedly do have), namely, “a construct or inference based on various classes of experience” (which is also something that animals possess, but in a much more limited sense). While an animal can be trained, thereby demonstrating an ability to create some kind of cognitive structure associating particular commands with rewards or punishments, in its natural environment the animal does not appear to depend primarily on such mental constructions based on its experiences, especially in its youth. Instead, its “emotional responses” appear to be primarily reactive and instinctual. Thus we can see that Plutchik is implicitly presupposing a distinctly human framework, which of course makes perfect sense for a psychologist, but because Plutchik has already wed himself to a psycho-evolutionary account of emotion, he must include animal responses in his theory. Unfortunately, as we have seen, this undermines his own account and lends support to the more general taxonomy of Aquinas classifying emotions as “passions”, a reactive response to external stimuli that are only later conceptualised, described and understood by the rational powers of the soul.¹⁴

Plutchik also distrusts, for good reason given the problems of self-reporting in experimental settings, verbal reports about emotional states. This leads him to attempt to remove the subjective element as much as possible in his methodological considerations. However, this takes us back to the problems we encountered in the beginning of this paper, because a narrow, reductionist concern with abstract methodological orthodoxy comes at the expense of holistic theoretical knowledge of real human experience in the lifeworld. Plutchik makes the common mistake of approaching psychology as a logician rather than as a philosopher whose science begins with a universal genus of first principles to provide a foundation for true knowledge.¹⁵ Whereas psychologists like Aquinas and Piaget are concerned with the formulation of a logic of wholes, Plutchik and most other modern psychologists are limited by their arbitrary methodological concerns to the study of parts, which

13 Ibid. 4.

14 This consideration also appears to lend support to the two-factor theory of emotion put forth by Schachter & Singer in: Stanley Schachter & Jerome E. Singer, "Cognitive, Social, and Physiological Determinants of Emotional State," *Psychological Review* 69, no. 5, (1962): 379–399. Schachter & Singer contend that that an emotional state is a “function of physiological arousal and of a cognition appropriate to this state of arousal. The cognition, in a sense, exerts a steering function.” This view is very much in keeping with the philosophical anthropology of Aquinas in which the passions are motivating factors for action that can be identified, classified and judged in the rational faculties of the soul.

15 Here I am indebted to my teacher Prof. Peter Redpath who makes an important distinction between the generic subject of philosophy and pre-modern science –which is the universal problem of understanding unity from diversity– and the genus of the logician who studies abstract particulars that are completely divorced from their real functions as operative wholes, generating principles and proximate causes. In Redpath’s view science is primarily a psychological habit that consists of ordering the many acts of fearing, hoping, willing, imagining, conceiving, judging, and reasoning to arrive at some sure, evident, concluding judgment as a single and holistic understanding. Thus, a scientific conclusion is arrived at through a scientific demonstration through which the human intellect can with certainty analogously express the unity of the genus as a whole and how its component parts distribute its causal activity so as to effect its generic aim.

ultimately results in the generation of reams of data about particular phenomena and comparatively little universal knowledge about the realities of human experience in the lifeworld.

This is likely why Plutchik also prefers the category anticipation–surprise to the Thomistic category of hope–despair, because it is easier to account for the immediate physiological responses of a startled cat or the anticipation of a cat who anticipates the appearance of its toy mouse than it is to conceive of the same cat as hoping or despairing. However, in a very real sense, the cat can be said to “hopefully” anticipate the appearance of the toy mouse and if it should fail to appear, it is easy to think of the cat as slinking off in despair. But what accounts for surprise? As with the relation between hope and anticipation, Plutchik’s notion of surprise can be said to be analogous to hope and despair, in that despair resembles hope thwarted. This is simply because, for Plutchik, surprise is usually produced by the sudden introduction of a novel object that produces a desire (which is why surprise is more properly a secondary emotion consisting of a desire to understand the object coupled with a fear of the object as unknown) to know and understand the object. While this may be more properly classified as a secondary or even tertiary emotion in a Thomistic psychology, for Plutchik, reducing hope–despair to anticipation–surprise is a methodological way of securing his theoretical contention that the main evolved function of cognitions in service to emotions is to “predict the future”.¹⁶

Once again, we are seeing methodological orthodoxy affecting theoretical formulation. At this point, one is reminded of a scene from the 1968 film *Planet of the Apes* in which the protagonist Taylor, an American astronaut, is taken to a cave that was the location of an archaeological excavation by the chimpanzee Cornelius (who has formulated a theory that a civilisation of human beings thrived on the ape’s world during their pre-historic period). Taylor is in the cave with Cornelius, his benefactor Zira (another chimpanzee and animal psychologist), Nova (a mute primitive human) and the orangutan Dr Zaius. In the cave Cornelius presents his evidence of a pre-historic human civilisation that existed prior to the current ape society, but he fails to convince Dr Zaius (who is the Minister of Science and Defender of the Faith in the apes’ society) who quotes the sacred scrolls of the ape’s religion to counter each of Cornelius’s claims. While this is happening, Taylor “reconstructs the life” of a creature who if he was not a man, “was a close relative” because he wore spectacles, had false teeth and a pacemaker, but who apparently did indeed exist on the planet before the rise of ape civilisation. Taylor’s account seems to be a conclusive demonstration that man existed on the planet prior to the rise of the apes’ civilisation, but once again, Dr Zaius dismisses it out of hand, claiming that he could “give an alternate description for everyone of those objects that’s equally as inventive as yours. But it would be conjecture, not proof”.

Anyone who has seen the film will know that Dr Zaius is absolutely correct and that his formidable simian intellect would indeed be capable of giving alternate explanations that will place the artefacts in the cave within his own theoretical framework, a framework in which ape society has always been superior to that of the primitive, mute human beings who inhabit the planet. However, it comes to pass that in the conclusion of the film we learn that Dr Zaius has actually always known that Taylor’s reconstruction of the past was accurate. In the film Dr Zaius, in his wisdom, hides this knowledge from others in order to protect the apes’ civilisation. However, we can, for the sake of argument, imagine a situation in which Dr Zaius was actually unaware of the existence of a pre-historic human civilisation and still rejects the reconstruction of the past offered by Cornelius and Taylor. In this hypothetical situation, it would be clear to the viewer of the film that the admittedly formidable simian intellect of the wise Dr Zaius was not hindered by a desire to conceal the existence of a pre-historic human civilisation, instead, in this case, the viewer would see Dr Zaius reject the more comprehensive (and true) framework of Taylor and Cornelius precisely because he is already committed to a narrower (and false) methodological and theoretical

16 Plutchik, “A general psychoevolutionary theory of emotion,” 13.

framework that is informed by a desire to decontest his own presuppositions, which are also the dominant presuppositions in the apes' civilisation at that moment in time.

We contend that Plutchik's psycho-evolutionary account of the primary emotions is analogous to the hypothetical position in which Dr Zaius is blinded by his own presuppositions and commitment to methodological orthodoxy, while the Thomistic account of the primary emotions as eleven passions is analogous to Taylor's theoretical reconstruction of the past. Of course, as this is not a film, we are not in a position to plausibly claim that the Thomistic account is undoubtedly "true" in every respect and that Plutchik's account is undoubtedly "false". However, we can argue that the Thomistic account has (1) more explanatory power and (2) is closer to the truth of lived human experience in the lifeworld. While there is much truth in Plutchik's psycho-evolutionary theory of emotions, it is too reductionist and narrow to account for phenomena like the human desire to "know" and "understand" the lifeworld and the function of the appetitive powers to motivate human beings to desire the "good" and "beneficial" in a generic sense. Instead, Plutchik's commitment to methodological orthodoxy requires him to reduce that which is good and beneficial to that which ensures survival.¹⁷ And while it goes without saying that survival of the individual and the species is a precondition for the pursuit of other good and beneficial things, there is no good reason to assume that ensuring survival is the primary, let alone only, factor influencing the development of particular cognitive faculties. Likewise, reducing what Aristotle referred to as the "desire to know" to Plutchik's "desire to predict"¹⁸ seems to be reading modern methodological concerns back into pre-modern philosophical anthropology. Interestingly, Plutchik's view of cognitive activities as a form of map making correctly leads him to follow Aristotle and Aquinas in creating a taxonomy of emotions in order to categorise and understand them in a theoretical way, which is precisely why Aquinas' and Plutchik's accounts of the primary emotions are remarkably similar. However, while Plutchik undoubtedly constructed his theory in order to test its predictive power in the context of modern experimental psychology, there is no evidence that Aristotle or Aquinas constructed their philosophical anthropologies to predict anything about the actions of man in the world. Instead, especially if we take Aristotle at his word, the primary aim of pre-modern philosophical psychology was simply to know man and his place in the world.

Plutchik's psycho-evolutionary presuppositions are further evidenced by his omission of the Thomistic passions of love-hate and courage from his taxonomy of the primary emotions. Once again, in the case of love-hate it is not difficult to see why when we consider Plutchik's own account of with the love relationship between mates. For Plutchik, at the level of primary emotion the desire¹⁹ to mate is produced by the cognition "possess" in service to the primary emotion "joy".²⁰ While Aquinas and Plutchik both correctly attribute this drive to mate to the appetitive powers of the sensitive soul, a major problem in Plutchik's theory arises in the removal of the end toward whom the drive to mate is oriented, namely the particular other with whom one is driven to

17 Ibid.

18 Ibid.

19 Interestingly, unlike Aquinas, Plutchik does not categorise desire as a primary emotion, yet it is hard to see how the biological drive to mate can be accounted for without desire as that which motivates one to "possess" another at a superficially level, or without love as that which motivates one to unite with a particular other (the beloved) at a deeper level. At any level, desire more easily accounts for both the general urges to mate or to unite with the beloved, but it is more difficult to ascribe these desires to the primary emotion of joy that accompanies attaining the ends of love or desire. Likewise, the appetitive dimensions of love seem to be unaccounted for in Plutchik's idea of love as a secondary emotion consisting of joy + acceptance.

20 Plutchik, "A general psychoevolutionary theory of emotion," 16. Plutchik postulates (pg. 10) that emotions presuppose (often unconscious) cognitions precisely because he must account for the "predictive" utility of cognitions in ensuring survival. However, while there is undoubtedly a connection between emotion and cognition, it is difficult to see how cognitions could have evolved in service to the emotions if emotions presuppose cognitions unless they emerge simultaneously. If that is the case, even if said cognitions are entirely unconscious and can only be inferred by their products, the simple fact that consciousness requires consciousness of something in much the same way as to love necessitates the presence of a beloved indicates that Plutchik's presupposition in unintelligible as consciousness itself is passive and reactive.

unite. The notion of the beloved other as an end is essential to understanding love, as love is a mode of tending towards that particular other. It is not simply an aimless drive. Indeed, even in the animal kingdom, as any professional breeder will attest, it is obvious that a particular creature oftentimes does not simply want to mate with *any* other member of the opposite sex in the same species. Instead, there is a certain mode of tending that orients one towards the end of attaining a particular other, and this mode of tending towards the end of union with that particular other in the mating relation is love.²¹ Furthermore, although love is a reactive passion, and therefore distinct from emotion in certain accounts inspired by Plutchik,²² this fails to account for the quality of the affective act, which can be both immanent and transitive²³ (or immanent and transcendent)²⁴. In response to the criticism that the passions that are, by definition, passive, and cannot be emotions, which are only evidenced in action, it is important to draw attention to the fact there is an important distinction to be made between immanent affective activity, which originates and terminates within an organism, and transitive affective activity, which is an action that either originates in the organism and terminates in a modification to an external object or originates in the external object and terminates in a modification to the organism. It is important to note, in accord with Plutchik's theory that emotions are reducible to biological and social acts that can be observed by third-party observers,²⁵ that although the passions are passive in the Thomistic account, the affective acts they motivate can be active, passive or both active and passive.²⁶ According to Zaborowski, love is an example of an affective act that is both active and passive. It is passive in that it motivates the immanent activity of loving, but it is also active in that it motivates the transitive activity of loving the beloved, whether or not this affective activity is mirrored by the beloved. In this case, love is a transitive affective act even if it is not reciprocated because it is nevertheless intended to pass over into the beloved.²⁷ Although the primary emotion of loving is reactive because of its emergence in the presence of the beloved and the affective act of loving is active in being directed towards the beloved, the experience of the passion and the affective act of loving are only possible in the external presence of the beloved.

Plutchik's methodological considerations also force him to contrast anger with fear on the basis that these emotions manifest themselves physically in fight or flight respectively.²⁸ However, this dependence on inferring the presence of emotion from the external act it motivates means that he overlooks the primary emotion of courage in Thomistic analysis, precisely because courage could manifest inwardly in the external act of remaining still and steadfast – an act which may not be readily apparent to a third-party observer– but is nonetheless a very real emotional response for the courageous organism. Courage is dismissed not because it is not a primary emotion, but because it cannot be observed “objectively” to be a primary emotion in Plutchik's methodological schema. In this way, we can see that although Plutchik's psycho-evolutionary theory is presented with admirable methodological rigour and in accordance with the norms of modern psychology by including numerous tables and incorporating quantitative analysis to produce a theory is both useful and informative, it still has less explanatory power than the pre-modern Thomistic model even at the level of the sensitive soul. From this it follows that a theory lacking explanatory power at the level of sensitive life will likely be even less effective at the level of rational human life, which is the subject of study for any psychological science worthy of the name.

21 Diana Fritz Cates, “Love: A Thomistic Analysis,” *Journal of Moral Theology* 1, no. 2, (2012): 7. 1-30

22 Warren D. TenHouten, *Emotion and Reason: Mind, Brain, and the Social Domains of Work and Love* (Milton Park, UK: Routledge, 2013), 11.

23 McNerny, *Philosophical Psychology*, 49.

24 Robert Zaborowski, “Is Affectivity Passive or Active?,” *Philosophia* 46, (2018): 545–546.

25 Plutchik, “A general psychoevolutionary theory of emotion,” 8-9.

26 Fear & Anger are always passive; Joy, Sadness, Courage, Hope, & Despair are always active; Love, Hatred, Desire, Aversion can be both active and passive

27 Zaborowski, “Is Affectivity Passive or Active”, 549.

28 Plutchik, “A general psychoevolutionary theory of emotion,” 16.

It is becoming increasingly clear how confusing the abstract model of reality (the problem of methodological orthodoxy) for reality itself often leads modern psychology into abstract theorising that is out of touch with lived experience in the lifeworld. Yet, this is not to devalue the human capacity for abstraction. Indeed, in Thomistic philosophical anthropology, it is precisely this capacity for abstraction that allows the human mind to bring the form of an object into the realm of the intellect in order for the object to be known and understood. This is clear when we think of a person placing one stone next to another stone, which results in two stones being physically present to the senses. This is obvious sense knowledge that can be assimilated into our most basic cognitive structures, but to come to the intellectual knowledge that $1 + 1 = 2$ obviously requires an abstract act of the intellect, which takes place within the spiritual confines of the mind. The human capacity for abstraction is that which allows for the categorisation of particular data gathered by the senses into a universal schema of scientific genera in order to produce theoretical knowledge in the intellectual habit that properly defines philosophy and science.

Philosophy and science are intellectual habits because the act of knowing through the process of abstraction effects “a truly wondrous union”²⁹ between the knowing subject and the known object. This union can be best described phenomenologically as the revealing of the essences of things in the world to the knowing subject. This is the process in which mere “existants” (in hylomorphic terms, bare groupings of matter) are presented to the knowing subject and become “things” (in hylomorphic terms, objects composed of matter and form), thereby actualising the potentiality possessed by bare matter in the absence of the knowing subject. Likewise, it is the presentation of “existants” to the intellect of a rational subject that allows the human person to move beyond the level of sensation towards a “knowing” of “things” that properly discerns the objective essences present in existants that bring into Being beings / things. A “boulder” can likely exist in some sense as a mere material existant even in the absence of a knowing subject, but the potentiality in this aggregate of bare matter is only actualised as a “boulder” in its fullest sense of being when the rational subject comes to know the boulder as a boulder that is possessed of an essential nature and is the bearer of properties that can be known and categorised in a genus incorporated into broad schema of universal knowledge. This is a form of phenomenological realism which acknowledges that although existants could persist physically in the absence of the knowing subject, these existants can only exist in their fullest sense when they come into Being as objective beings in the mind of the rational subject to whom they reveal themselves. Likewise, the rational life principle can only actualise its potential as a knowing subject in the presence of external objects that can be known as beings in the intellectual process of abstraction. This unification of the subject and object is reciprocal in nature, being effected by the presencing of the potentially infinite aspects of an object to an intellect that comes to know this object as a being and thereby discern its nature and formal properties.

This wonderful gift of an intellectual capacity is the most important way in which human life can be differentiated from other forms of life. Unfortunately, this same capacity for abstraction is often used to abstract man himself from his nature as a biological organism immersed in an environment. As we have noted, this happens quite often in modern psychology whenever the abstract model of reality is taken to be more real than the Real. This is why the rational power of will is categorised as an (intellectual) appetite in Thomistic philosophical anthropology. In the same way that other appetites are essentially passive and reactive, the intellectual appetite is only activated in the presence of beings, but in the case of the will, the beings that activate the will are often not merely material beings which are presented to the powers of sensation, instead they are often abstract, immaterial or spiritual beings which are presented to the intellect. In this sense, the will works in tandem with the intellect in processing the experience of Being in both its material presentation to the senses and in its abstract formal presentation to the intellect. The will is a bridge between the sensitive and rational life principles in the human being as an intellectual appetite that

29 McInerney, *Philosophical Psychology*, 100.

motivates the person to seek out what is good and beneficial to oneself as a rational organism who seeks to thrive, and not merely to survive, in the environment in which it is situated. This is why Aristotle claims in *Metaphysics* that “all men desire to know”, rather than merely claiming that all men desire to create cognitive structures that can predict the future and ensure their material survival. This insight about the human inclination to know and understand, an inclination that presupposes the possession of rational faculties capable of knowing and understanding, is lost when modern psychologists attempt to reduce psychological phenomena to purely mechanistic interactions that must be able to be observed and quantified by third-party observation in artificially controlled conditions. Instead, in a Thomistic philosophical anthropology, the rational powers of intellect and will account for both sense cognition and the type of intellectual cognition that is uniquely human.³⁰

Thus far, we have analysed the pre-modern Thomistic philosophical anthropology as a fruitful schema to correct problems in modern psychology that are caused by a narrow reductionist tendency that stems from the dogmatic adherence to scientific methodological orthodoxies that reduce the triadic relations of intentionality and affectivity to dyadic relations of biological and material forces in the name of “scientific” objectivity. However, Thomistic philosophical anthropology can also correct for a countervailing tendency in certain “indigenous psychologies”³¹ to operate primarily in the realm of the hyper-abstract and spiritual. Like Thomistic philosophical anthropology, these indigenous psychologies are usually pre-modern in origin and derived from philosophical principles within religious traditions such as Buddhism, Hinduism, Taoism, etc. For this reason, indigenous psychologies also avoid the problems caused by a rigidly scientific methodological orthodoxy. However, especially in the case of the indigenous psychologies of the Indian subcontinent, there is a tendency to deal with psychological phenomena in such a refined and abstract manner as to engage in a type of theorising that idealises the detachment of the human personality from its embodiment in the material world.

Of course, no indigenous Indian psychology denies that the human person finds oneself immersed in a sort of “substantive”, but not necessarily material, phenomenality. However, since the soteriological aim of Indic religious thought is to attain salvation from rebirth in the phenomenal world by attaining knowledge of the absolute reality underlying phenomenal existence, indigenous Indian psychologies tend to place far more value on the absolute spiritual reality than they place on the phenomenal lifeworld, which is ultimately unsatisfactory in comparison to the absolute. This is a reasonable position given the fact that we have already established that the rational nature of the human person and the possession of intellectual faculties necessarily orients the person towards the spiritual. Perhaps it is for this reason that Buddhist psychology restricts the attainment of Buddhahood to those who are born into human existence on the grounds that one who is born into a hell realm or as an animal is not equipped to attain enlightenment due to the deficiency of his spiritual or subtle material faculties, while one who is born into a heavenly realm is unable to attain enlightenment due to the hyper-acuity of those very same spiritual faculties. For this reason, Indian Buddhist psychology places an exceedingly high value on human life as the middle ground in which one can make great spiritual progress, while at the same time viewing the function of the appetitive powers of the human life principle as hindrances that can bind the human person to the cycle of rebirth. In this sense, it is important to note that orientalist generalisations about the ostensible “otherworldliness” of indigenous Indian psychologies are overly simplistic precisely because this type of Buddhist psychology is quite firmly grounded in human experience in

30 Ibid. 215.

31 Pradeep Chakkarath, “What can Western Psychology Learn From Indigenous Psychologies? Lessons From Hindu Psychology,” in *Culture and human development: The importance of cross-cultural research for the social sciences*, eds. Wolfgang Friedlmeier, Pradeep Chakkarath, Beate Schwarz (Milton Park, UK: Routledge, 2005): 33. “The term ‘indigenous psychology’ is generally used to mark psychologically relevant concepts that were developed in the culture of investigation and that need not necessarily be congruent with psychological concepts that were developed by western mainstream psychology.”

the lifeworld to the point of privileging human life as the best ground for actualising moral and spiritual perfection. However, it is equally important to acknowledge the presence of “a general pessimism concerning the value of life”³² and a certain level of mistrust in the truth or goodness of the material world, at least in any ultimate sense, within indigenous Indian psychologies.

In this sense, indigenous Indian psychologies resemble Neoplatonism in its suspicion of gross materiality and in the idealisation of the abstract and formal. This observation is not made in an attempt to present indigenous Indian psychology as just another sub-species of some kind of universalised philosophical anthropology, but to demonstrate that despite its differences, indigenous Indian psychology cannot be viewed as an entirely “alien” viewpoint by modern or Thomistic psychologists. Instead it is simply another approach to the study of human experience that aims at properly orienting human experience in the lifeworld towards psychological equilibrium while defining and attempting to perfect man’s relation to the spiritual realm. And while there is a certain pessimism about the value of worldly life in indigenous Indian psychology, it differs little from the philosophical anthropology of Aquinas in regard to its ultimate end in the transcendent. Just as Aquinas contends that the only worthy final end for the human person is to be found in the presence of God in the world to come, the Indian focus on the ultimately unsatisfactory nature of human experience in the lifeworld cannot be taken to entail that there is nothing good or beneficial to be enjoyed in phenomenal experience, only that it is cannot be the ultimate aim of the human person to remain mired in this conventional existence while the possibility of salvation and direct experience of the ultimate is available to the person. When viewed from this religious perspective, any misconceptions about “the wholly alien” nature of indigenous psychology should be dispelled. It is by no means impossible to fruitfully analyse and compare indigenous and Thomistic psychologies in both their religious and philosophical-scientific dimensions.

As in Thomistic philosophical anthropology, indigenous Indian psychology does not entail any type of substance dualism and arbitrary distinction between body and mind, despite clearly differentiating the qualitative differences between mental and material phenomena. Instead, most indigenous Indian psychology contends that the totality of the lifeworld emerges from a type of “prime matter” that is known in Sanskrit as *prakṛti*. In this view, everything that exists ultimately emerges from *prakṛti*. This means that when Thomistic psychologists refer to the spiritual in the sense of the immaterial, for the indigenous Indian psychologist the spiritual is more precisely defined in terms of a very subtle or refined materiality due to the presence of *prakṛti* as a primal material principle. In keeping with the Thomistic analysis, indigenous Indian psychology accepts the natural tendency of the sensitive and rational life principles to categorise objects in the lifeworld and to react to them affectively, yet the ultimate goal of attaining knowledge of this psychophysiological process in indigenous Indian psychology is not ultimately to pursue what is good and beneficial in the lifeworld, but to work towards an ultimate detachment from phenomenal experience in order to attain a higher knowledge of absolute reality, which is constituted of *prakṛti* and a formal universal principle of consciousness known as *puruṣa*. In most indigenous Indian psychologies the operations of the mind are recognised as intentional, but they differ from the Thomistic analysis in that it is presupposed that there is an all-pervading “pure consciousness” that pervades the world and grounds the particular mental operations of individuals. The changing particular experiences of individuals are said to take place in the mind, the operations of which are differentiated from the substratum of pure consciousness, but they are also said to be participating in this eternal, immutable principle of pure consciousness that exists independently of the mind and is theoretically available to any person who works towards direct experience of ultimate reality over many lifetimes through rigorous moral and spiritual practice. The unenlightened human person is bound to the cycle of rebirth due to his ignorance of the fact that pure consciousness is available to human experience because the absolute is in some sense hidden within the experience of phenomenal reality by the affective reactivity of the mind. Therefore, it is only when the human

32 Ibid. 36.

person completely detaches himself from phenomenal experience and the hindrances caused by the reactive mind that he can directly experience pure consciousness and be freed from the cycle of rebirth.

Note that the complete detachment from phenomenal experience does not mean that the sensory and intellectual faculties of the enlightened person stop functioning or that the person attains some sort of unconscious state after attaining enlightenment. Instead, it is presented as one having gone beyond affective reactivity in response to stimuli. The spiritual adept continues to see, smell, hear, taste, feel and think in accordance with his sensitive and intellectual faculties, but he now does so clearly and actively without regard for affective reactivity of the appetitive powers of the sensitive soul or the intellectual appetite of will, meaning that he acts without attachment to action or the fruits of action. In this sense, salvation is presented as a form of *gnosis* which leads to a type of deification in which the spiritual adept ascends to a type of perfect intelligence as the cluttered reactivity of the unenlightened mind is transcended by the direct experience of pure consciousness. This is why the great religious figures of the Indian tradition are reported to have obtained divine knowledge of the cosmos, a direct knowledge of the workings of karma, a remembrance of all their previous existences and even omniscience.

This account of indigenous Indian psychology is necessarily generalised and simplified due to space limitations. As such, it leaves out and glosses over countless important distinctions which have been made in the doctrines of Buddhists, Jains and the many other philosophies, heterodox and orthodox, which are properly categorised in the genus of Indian or Hindu philosophy. Nevertheless, we can see in this simplified and generalised account that while indigenous Indian psychology is grounded in human experience in the lifeworld and includes a great number of teachings that address practical concerns in human life, it is also the case that the ultimate aim of transcending phenomenal experience while immersed in human existence tends to colour the analysis and often leads towards an overemphasis on the refinement of the intellect and a consequent devaluation of embodied life in its philosophical anthropology. In contrast with the crude reductionism and materialism of modern psychology, indigenous Indian psychology tends to move in the opposite direction towards a refined and subtle paradigm of highly abstract idealism. This movement can be attributed to the fact that indigenous Indian psychology does not draw the sharp distinction between the divine intellect and the human intellect that is found in the Thomist analysis, because in indigenous Indian psychology, any person can theoretically access the divine directly, although historically this divine access has been practically available to only a few spiritual virtuosos. In contrast, in the Thomist philosophical anthropology direct access to the divine presence is not available in the created world due to the distinction between creator and creature.

It is the highly refined and theoretical final end in indigenous Indian psychology that limits its practical use as a general schema for a post-positivist psychological science. As with modern psychology, it is not difficult to find much that is true and valuable in indigenous Indian psychology, but it is also easy to see its limitations as a psychological “logic of wholes”. On one hand, modern psychology seeks to completely ignore the spiritual dimension of human existence, while on the other, indigenous Indian psychology –especially in the hands of Buddhist and Hindu revivalists who subscribe to a rationalistic form of modernism– tries to expand the spiritual dimension beyond common sense perception to include phenomena like extrasensory perception and “superconscious” meditative states into its psychological schema.

Whereas modern psychology depends on presuppositions that amputate the soul from the science of human experience, indigenous Indian psychology –on its own account– depends on presuppositions that can only be known by the greatest of souls after innumerable lifetimes of rigorous religious practice. Ergo, neither is particularly promising for the creation of a schema to remedy contemporary problems in the psychological sciences. In some sense, this would continue

to be the case even if modern psychology or indigenous Indian psychology could be conclusively demonstrated to be objectively true and the world really did consist of nothing more than brute dyadic interactions between predetermined material forces or the totality of experience was actually contained within the Divine Monad, because the resultant effort to either discard the soul and elevate the body, or to elevate the soul and discard the body, would simply not be in keeping with how actual human persons experience the lifeworld. As we have seen in the Buddhist account of why only humans can attain Buddhahood, at a basic phenomenological level across all cultures, regardless of abstract theoretical concerns, the human person most commonly experiences his place in the universe “in the dichotomous experience of being unfree, restricted, imperfect and unredeemed, and, at the same time, being potentially powerful, great, and exalted, uniquely endowed, capable of rising far above his environment in response to the divine moral challenge”.³³ Given this, we are reminded of John Searle’s anecdote about the absurdity of a convinced determinist saying to the waiter in a restaurant, “Look, I am a determinist—que sēra sēra, I’ll just wait and see what I order”.³⁴ As with Searle’s committed determinist, even if the positions put forth by modern psychology or indigenous Indian psychology were justified true beliefs, it must be noted that these positions would in no way reflect human experience of the lifeworld, and since the generic subject of study for psychology is the human person, any psychological schema that decentralises human experience will result in a distorted and deficient psychology.

In this sense, the Thomistic philosophical anthropology seems to be the most appropriate place from which to develop a useful schema that can be used to ground a broader and more holistic conception of the psychological sciences, a conception that accommodates the totality of human experience in the lifeworld better than any other modern or pre-modern philosophical psychology. Although there is undoubtedly much to be learned from the traditional paradigms found in modern psychology, as well as in the paradigms of pre-modern indigenous Indian psychologies, it nonetheless seems that Thomistic philosophical anthropology is the most adequate tool available to address contemporary problems in the psychological sciences. This is true even if the Thomistic analysis is presented in a broadly “secularised” manner that acknowledges mankind’s orientation towards the transcendent while bracketing out more properly theological considerations about the nature of God. Thomistic philosophical anthropology is able effectively blend the powers of emotion, intellect and will without placing undue emphasis on one particular power over the others because it is rooted in a true understanding that the reality of human experience in the lifeworld demonstrates that the mental cannot be properly understood in isolation from the physical. All experience involves sensation, and from this it follows that the human affective and intellectual response is physiological before it is rational and this means that the biological and cognitive faculties are inextricably bound to each other in the human person. The brilliance of Thomistic philosophical anthropology lies in Aquinas’ recognition that all of the powers of the human soul are interdependent and function in an operative way in relation to the human person’s situatedness as a creature who, in the famous words of Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, exists in the lifeworld “somewhere between the beasts and the angels”.

33 Joseph B. Soloveitchik, “Confrontation,” *Tradition: A Journal of Orthodox Jewish Thought* 6, no. 2 (1964): 10.

34 John R. Searle, “Free Will as a Problem in Neurobiology,” *Philosophy* 76, no. 298, (2001): 494.

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