

Emotions and Flourishing: A Complex Relationship of Mutual Enrichment

Reflections Inspired by Giuseppe Abbà

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Abstract

Building on the work of the Italian moral philosopher Giuseppe Abbà, this paper argues that the relationship between emotions and flourishing is mutually enriching yet complex. It acknowledges that the author primarily employs classical, albeit correlated, concepts. Although passions and emotions both have significant epistemological value, their evaluation alone is insufficient for perceiving the true value of a good. A further evaluation by practical reason is required. The epistemological value of passions and emotions in moral perception corresponds to a pre-rational evaluation of cogitative power. While passions are components of subjective well-being, additional criteria are required to determine their role in human flourishing. Abbà employs the Thomistic concept of ‘ordo rationis’ to determine whether a good contributes to flourishing, and to categorise the virtues that enable a good life. Love, as the primary passion, explains all the other passions and is the driving force behind any action.

Keywords: Giuseppe Abbà, Emotions, Passions, Flourishing, Happiness, *Ordo rationis*.

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1 INTRODUCTION

In this paper, based on the work of the Italian moral philosopher Giuseppe Abbà,¹ we propose the thesis that the relationship between emotions and flourishing is mutually enriching yet complex. To prove this, we must conduct a conceptual and terminological analysis of both emotions and flourishing. We will therefore proceed as follows. First, we will briefly introduce our author. Then, we will present his concept of passion, which is closely related to the modern concept of emotion. After that, we will present his concept of happiness or the good life, which is equivalent to the contemporary concept of flourishing. Finally, we will study the relationship between the two concepts.

2 GIUSEPPE ABBÀ: PHILOSOPHER OF VIRTUE FOR A GOOD LIFE

Established as a Thomist scholar through his monograph *Lex et Virtus* ("Law and Virtue"),² his subsequent research focuses on responding to contemporary ethical challenges. He dedicates several monographs to this topic, beginning with the *Felicità, vita buona e virtù* ("Happiness, Good Life and Virtues"),³ followed by a trilogy of inquiries in moral philosophy.⁴ In his works, Abbà acknowledges the advancements in moral psychology⁵ that allow one to grasp how moral perception also encompasses emotional perception. This emotional perception is inherent to a moral subject and can be virtuously formed.⁶ The idea that a moral person can perceive good or evil on an emotional or passional level is consistent with the Aristotelian and Thomist accounts of virtues. Abbà emphasizes the epistemological originality of moral knowledge, which is most evident in the exercise of prudence. This understanding aligns with Aristotelian *phronesis*.⁷ With respect to moral philosophy, the practical knowledge exercised by the virtue of

¹M. PANERO, *Giuseppe Abbà (1943-2020): Maestro della filosofia morale*, «Salesianum», 83/4 (2021), pp. 661-838.

²G. ABBÀ, *Lex et virtus. Studi sull'evoluzione della dottrina morale di San Tommaso d'Aquino*, LAS, Roma 1983.

³G. ABBÀ, *Felicità, vita buona e virtù*, LAS, Roma 1995² (hereafter cited as *Felicità*).

⁴Cf. G. ABBÀ, *Quale impostazione per la filosofia morale. Ricerche di filosofia morale - 1*, LAS, Roma 1996 ["What Set-up for the Moral Philosophy"]; *Costituzione epistemica della filosofia morale. Ricerche di filosofia morale - 2*, LAS, Roma 2009 ["Epistemic Constitution of Moral Philosophy"]; *Le virtù per la felicità. Ricerche di filosofia morale - 3*, LAS, Roma 2018 ["Virtues for Happiness"] (hereafter cited as *Le virtù*).

⁵Cf. N. J. H. DENT, *The Moral Psychology of the Virtues*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1984; E. SIMPSON, *Good Lives and Moral Education*, Peter Lang, New York-Bern-Frankfurt am Main-Paris 1989.

⁶Cf. G. ABBÀ, *Una filosofia morale per l'educazione alla vita buona*, «Salesianum», 53/2 (1991), pp. 273-314.

⁷G. ABBÀ, *Costituzione epistemica*, cit., pp. 156-160, 249-251.

prudence is original. Moral philosophical knowledge is reflexive and, thus, secondary.⁸ Moreover, as Anscombe pointed out, moral philosophy depends on the moral character of the philosopher.⁹

3 EMOTIONS AND PASSIONS IN ABBÀ

3.1 *Conceptual and Terminological Analysis*

What is the proper place of emotions within the anthropological structure of the human person? Abbà adopts the Thomistic model of the human person,¹⁰ adding emphasis to its narrative¹¹ and communal nature.¹² As a member of the human species, the unique individual person possesses a ‘specific human nature’; however, thanks to the principle of individualization, this nature is participated as an ‘individual nature’ Since it is imperfect and partial, it must be perfected by a variety of virtuous *habitus* corresponding to the classical structure of operative powers, which are divided into sensitive versus intellective and cognitive versus appetitive.¹³

This classical Thomistic concept is complemented by the narrative aspect of the human person, through which Abbà joins a line of thought that has developed over the last fifty years.¹⁴ The narrative nature of the human person helps to understand how a particular action contributes to the person’s overall flourishing, which is better identified in her personal account of life.¹⁵

Although Abbà only makes a few references to emotion in his work, his reflections on the classical concept of passions offer valuable insights into the role

⁸Cf. *ibidem*, pp. 156-161; G. ABBÀ, *Esame epistemologico della teologia morale di san Tommaso d’Aquino*, in *Quale filosofia in teologia morale? Problemi, prospettive e proposte*, a cura di P. Carlotti, LAS, Roma 2003, pp. 111-112; *Felicità*, p. 157.

⁹Cf. G. E. M. ANSCOMBE, *Modern Moral Philosophy*, in *Ethics, Religion, and Politics: Collected Philosophical Papers*, vol. III, ed. by G. E. M. Anscombe, Wiley-Blackwell, Oxford 1981; G. ABBÀ, *Esame epistemologico*, cit., p. 111.

¹⁰Cf. *Le virtù*, pp. 70-76.

¹¹Cf. *Le virtù*, pp. 121-134, 593-604.

¹²Cf. *Le virtù*, pp. 135-145.

¹³Cf. *Le virtù*, pp. 28-39; S. Th., I, qq. 77-83; M. S. VACCAREZZA, *Le ragioni del contingente. La saggezza pratica tra Aristotele e Tommaso d’Aquino*, Orthotes, Napoli 2012, pp. 17-31.

¹⁴Among the authors that have inspired this concept, Abbà quotes, among others: A. MacIntyre, Ch. Taylor, A. Rudd, F. Cattaneo, J. Martínez Lucena, P. Kemp, P. Ricœur, I. Murdoch, M. Nussbaum, etc. Cf. *Le virtù*, pp. 123-124, notes 23-27; F. CATTANEO, *Azione e narrazione. Percorsi del narrativismo contemporaneo*, Vita e Pensiero, Milano 2008; *Etica e narrazione. Il contributo del narrativismo contemporaneo*, Vita e Pensiero, Milano 2011.

¹⁵Cf. *Le virtù*, pp. 132-135.

of emotions in moral life.¹⁶ As for his account of passions, his list is mostly identical with that of Thomas Aquinas.¹⁷

However, Abbà specifically addresses emotions in two contexts. Firstly, in the context of moral education and inspired by E. Simpson,¹⁸ he uses the term ‘practical emotive perception’ (*percezione emotiva pratica*), to describe how a human person perceives situations in order to act,¹⁹ recognising in the particulars of the situation the rational objectives that correspond to the needs or basic interests present in any human being.²⁰ Secondly, he considers them in the context of moral education, viewing them as a component of moral perception and one of the main vehicles of virtue education.²¹

As for the passions, they are acts of the sensitive appetitive powers: the concupiscible (desiring) and the irascible.²² As a caveat, Abbà recognises in the will affections analogous to the passions. These differ in that they consider the good under the universal aspect.²³ For example, it is different to have an ideal of a future wife and to meet a real girl one falls in love with. However, a young man who falls in love compares the young lady he admires with his ideal. The most notable affection of this type is ‘dilectio’, affective love for a person, sometimes referred to as ‘elective love’, which means this love is an act of the will.²⁴ Abbà’s distinction between affective acts of the will and of the passions helps clarify how the criteria of rationality are introduced into the core of affective movements. Moreover, Abbà considers the love for the persons not only as an affection, but also as a virtue which consists in “willing for the persons the true good which one wills for himself”.²⁵ This definition encompasses two types of love: that of friendship, which is absolute, and that of concupiscence, which is relative and directed towards the good willed to the person.²⁶ Both categories are present in the classical Thomist account of love.

¹⁶For the distinctions of the concepts of passions and emotions, cf. T. DIXON, *From Passions to Emotions. The Creation of a Secular Psychological Category*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2003.

¹⁷Cf. *Le virtù*, pp. 37-38; *S. Th.*, I-II, q. 23; L. ZUCCARO, *Cos’è un’emozione? Se le neuroscienze chiedono aiuto a San Tommaso*, Cantagalli, Siena 2019. The passions of the concupiscible are love, hatred, desire, flight, joy, and sadness. The passions of the irascible are hope, despair, courage, fear, and anger.

¹⁸Cf. E. SIMPSON, *Good Lives and Moral Education*, cit.

¹⁹Cf. *Felicità*, p. 303; *Le virtù*, p. 523.

²⁰Cf. *Felicità*, p. 306.

²¹Cf. *Le virtù*, pp. 576-577.

²²Cf. *Le virtù*, p. 30.

²³Cf. *Le virtù*, pp. 30-32, 396; *S. Th.*, I-II, q. 22, a. 3, ad 3; N. E. LOMBARDO, *The Logic of Desire. Aquinas on Emotion*, The Catholic University of America Press, Washington, D.C. 2011.

²⁴Cf. *Le virtù*, pp. 32-39, 409, 419-432.

²⁵*Le virtù*, p. 318; cf. *Le virtù*, pp. 409-432.

²⁶Cf. *Le virtù*, p. 35.

As for the moral role of passions, we need to consider their relationship with reason. A key concept for understanding the rationality of emotions or passions and their cognitive function is the ‘cogitative power’, also known as particular reason, which provides the cognitive content of passions.²⁷ When a person perceives an object, the cogitative power evaluates the object’s goodness or harmfulness before reason is applied, and informs the body. However, passions are limited to the particular, and are therefore insufficient for providing a ‘strong evaluation’ against a person’s true good.²⁸ Nevertheless, passions can be virtuously formed and governed by reason through the command of the will.²⁹ As we will show later, their cognitive content can also be formed.

Abbà describes the closeness in particular as the characteristic that he gives to emotions when defining the state of a preschool child in the so-called pre-rational moral stage. A child’s moral evaluation is confined to particular goods, and therefore they act with ‘imperfect voluntariness’.³⁰ Emotions are a child’s main means of perceiving good and evil. Since the child perceives good and evil through them, they are decisive for his perception of himself, others and the world as good.³¹ Therefore, it is important that the child receives love and care. However, it is also important that his imagination, which informs the cogitative power and thus the emotions directly, is formed through stories.³² This can be better understood by considering the concept of ‘cogitative power’. Abbà adopts this classical Thomist concept but applies modern psychological insights to it. For example, early childhood experiences inform the evaluative schemes of the cogitative power in such a way that a person who was not loved properly as a child tends to perceive a distorted reality.³³ The reason for this lies in the fact that the human being, as “a psychosomatic individual, does not have access to intelligence or to the will unless it is based on sensible experience and passional appetite”.³⁴ This is not completely transparent to the individual, but it is “configured according to perceptive forms and habitual evaluative schemes that are not immediately conscious”.³⁵ In this process, emotional memory plays an important role as the foundation of the preconscious and unconscious.³⁶ Consequently, the emotional experience of

²⁷Cf. *Le virtù*, pp. 30, 37, 115-116.

²⁸G. ABBÀ, *Costituzione epistemica*, cit., pp. 91-92; *Le virtù*, pp. 79, 112-118.

²⁹Cf. *Le virtù*, pp. 39, 79, 116-118, 280, 395-396, 451-452, 492.

³⁰Cf. *Le virtù*, pp. 568-569; S. Th., I-II, q. 6, a. 2; G. ABBÀ, *Una filosofia morale*, cit., pp. 308-309; *Felicità*, pp. 318-319; E. SULLIVAN, *Habits and Holiness. Ethics, Theology and Biopsychology*, The Catholic University of America Press, Washington, D.C. 2021, pp. 114-131.

³¹Cf. *Le virtù*, pp. 576-577.

³²Cf. *Le virtù*, pp. 576, 578, 593-604.

³³Cf. G. ABBÀ, *Costituzione epistemica*, cit., pp. 93-94.

³⁴*Le virtù*, p. 116.

³⁵*Le virtù*, p. 116.

³⁶Cf. *Le virtù*, p. 116.

good in early childhood is decisive for the relationship with the good later on. Therefore, Abbà lists emotional interventions as the first educational intervention in the pre-rational stage since they “are the first perception a child has of the environment and persons since intrauterine development”.³⁷

According to Abbà, the passions have two moral functions, or two main aspects by which they determine conduct. First, as spontaneous motives, they arise before any reflection, but they require the person’s consent.³⁸ If they conform to the order of reason, they contribute to the good life by allowing the person to be impacted by reality. Consequently, things and people can be recognized as good. When well-formed, affections and passions can become “the just emotive response to real goods and evils, constituting good conduct and a good life”.³⁹ Their absence could prevent disorders in the soul but could also deprive a person of pursuing good.⁴⁰ If well formed, they allow the virtuous person to act with their whole soul.⁴¹ However, if the passions are contrary to reason, they can become components of an evil life, introducing inner conflict and frustrating natural inclinations.⁴²

The second moral function of the passions is that they serve as criteria for practical judgment of convenience. This involves judging an end or an action as convenient because it appears to be congruent with one’s passions or affections.⁴³ At the moment of a choice, the passions can suppress or increase voluntariness. In the former case, they can suppress the use of reason; in the latter, they provide an initial emotional perception that guides the acting person toward the perceived good.⁴⁴ According to Abbà, it is an inherent part of human action that an actor judges the object of the choice based on the passions he feels at that moment.⁴⁵ If the passions are virtuously formed, the actor chooses the good moral object because he recognizes and loves it and because he consents to the virtuous passions that lead him to the object.⁴⁶ Therefore, virtuously formed passions put the actor in an advantageous position in his search for a good choice since they enable him to recognize and pursue the true good and to act “uniformiter secundum totam animam”.⁴⁷

³⁷ *Le virtù*, p. 576.

³⁸ Cf. *Le virtù*, p. 112.

³⁹ Cf. *Le virtù*, p. 113.

⁴⁰ Cf. *Le virtù*, p. 113.

⁴¹ Cf. *Le virtù*, p. 118; *S. Th.*, I-II, q. 10, a. 3, ad 2.

⁴² Cf. *Le virtù*, p. 113.

⁴³ Cf. *Le virtù*, p. 112.

⁴⁴ Cf. *Le virtù*, p. 115.

⁴⁵ Cf. *Le virtù*, pp. 117, 492.

⁴⁶ Cf. *Le virtù*, pp. 117-118.

⁴⁷ Cf. *Le virtù*, p. 118; *S. Th.*, I-II, q. 10, a. 3, ad 2.

3.2 *Love as a Primary Passion and Affection*

Abbà adopts Aquinas's view that love is the primary passion or affection. Not only it explains all the other passions, love is the driving force behind any action.⁴⁸ Abbà quotes Aquinas: "Every agent, whatever it be, does every action from love of some kind".⁴⁹ A person acts because she has been affected by a good, whether it be a person, a thing or an ideal of life. However, as we have seen, love can be either a passion or an affection—that is to say, an act of the will, also known as 'dilectio'.⁵⁰ In Abbà's interpretation, love as a passion is based on sensitive knowledge, whereas love as an affection is based on intellective knowledge of the beloved as a good.⁵¹

As a passion, love can be true or false, depending not so much on the object of love itself, but on how the object of love contributes to the fulfilment of the person according to their ultimate end, as defined by the order of reason.⁵² A person, as an object of love, is always good in *herself*, but the relationship between the lover and the beloved may not be. This could be the case in the relationship between a married man and a woman who is not his wife, for example. Such a love cannot contribute to the flourishing of either of them.

We understand the importance of this question when we compare it with the Hume-inspired position that reason is a servant of the passions or with any position that understands 'authenticity' as congruence with one's emotions rather than as something that needs to be questioned against the person's overall flourishing. This requires taking into account the person's commitments, promises, and relationships, all of which correspond to her narrative structure. Considering love as a primary passion acknowledges its power to influence a person's actions. However, love can be ambiguous. For example, consider the married man who falls in love with a woman who is not his wife. The truth of love is not found in the emotion or its intensity.⁵³ As we will see, Abbà's conception of flourishing can help us find it.

⁴⁸Cf. *Le virtù*, pp. 32, 409, 420.

⁴⁹*S. Th.*, I-II, q. 28, a. 6 c.; cf. *Le virtù*, p. 32.

⁵⁰Cf. *Le virtù*, pp. 32-39, 409. For the distinction between love as passion and love as an act of the will, see: J. NORIEGA, *El destino del eros. Perspectivas de moral sexual*, Palabra, Madrid 2007, pp. 97-113.

⁵¹Cf. *Le virtù*, pp. 32-33, 409. Moreover, the two types of love differ in the similitude that originates them. In the case of love as a passion, the lover recognises in the beloved what he himself lacks. In the case of love as an affection, however, the lover recognises in the beloved also a perfection that he himself already possesses.

⁵²Cf. *Le virtù*, pp. 115, 284.

⁵³Cf. J. NORIEGA, *El destino del eros*, cit.

4 FLOURISHING IN ABBÀ

As we have already mentioned, Abbà does not use the term ‘flourishing’. However, if we consider the contemporary neo-Aristotelian-Thomistic concept of flourishing to be equivalent to a good life and the fulfilment of a particular human being, then flourishing represents one of the key pillars of Abbà’s ethical theory.

Abbà uses the term ‘happiness’ (*felicità*) in two main ways. Firstly, it is a subjective awareness or a subjective achievement of a good life⁵⁴. Secondly, more generally, happiness is a synonym for a good life.⁵⁵ In this sense, it acts as the final end of any human action within the intentional structure of human acts. Let us develop this second meaning. Formally, everyone acts for happiness; however, materially, happiness is different for each person.⁵⁶ For this precise reason, since it shapes the person through all their actions, it is of extreme importance that the person deliberately chooses true happiness.⁵⁷ Although it is often implicit, there are moments when a person consciously deliberates about their ultimate goal, such as during adolescence or moments of conversion.⁵⁸

Abbà is particularly interested in searching for a criterion that would enable us to determine whether a person is truly flourishing. Based on this, one can evaluate different lifestyles according to different values. He distinguishes between styles based on love for persons (God and humans), internal goods (such as authenticity and subjective well-being) and external goods (such as glory, power, money and pleasure)⁵⁹. The terms ‘good life’ and ‘truly good life’ are closely related to the term ‘perfect human good’, and are similar to the Aristotelian concept of ‘eudaimonia’ and the Thomist concept of ‘imperfect beatitude’, which include the virtues and their corresponding vices, as well as the fulfilment or frustration of natural inclinations.⁶⁰ Regarding the topic of this article, styles of life based on ‘internal goods’ are particularly relevant. Abbà includes sensual pleasures, subjective well-being, authenticity, autonomy, self-realization, and states of consciousness among them. These fulfill the person only apparently since they close the person in herself.⁶¹

⁵⁴Cf. *Le virtù*, p. 150; *Felicità*, pp. 33-40.

⁵⁵Cf. *Le virtù*, p. 150; *Felicità*, pp. 57-63.

⁵⁶Cf. *Le virtù*, pp. 65-67; *Felicità*, pp. 31-32, 43-45.

⁵⁷Cf. *Le virtù*, pp. 177-181, 194-198; *Felicità*, pp. 45-78.

⁵⁸Cf. *Le virtù*, pp. 84-95, 579-580.

⁵⁹Cf. *Le virtù*, pp. 150-151, 165-195.

⁶⁰Cf. G. ABBÀ, *Quale impostazione*, cit., pp. 266-275; *Le virtù*, p. 65.

⁶¹Cf. *Le virtù*, pp. 171-174.

5 EMOTIONS AND FLOURISHING: A COMPLEX RELATION OF ENRICHMENT

From this article's perspective, another distinction seems relevant. Abbà distinguishes two great figures of moral enquiry: first-person ethics, represented by Aristotle and Aquinas, which define what is moral in terms of whether it contributes to true human flourishing; and third-person ethics, which embrace the majority of modern moral philosophy and miss the criterion of a good life, and therefore the concept of the good life as a moral category.⁶² Even though this category is not homogeneous and encompasses widespread differences, Abbà argues that the lack of criteria for human flourishing is one of its key distinctions. At this point, one could argue that the moral category of "third-person ethics" could encompass the different cognitive roles of emotions. The question is not only whether emotions provide a cognitive element but also what their specific moral role is. Taking the category of moral rationalism-moral sentimentalism as an example,⁶³ the question is not only whether emotions reflect or create moral value, but also whether they can provide sufficient criteria for a good life and human flourishing. For Abbà, moral inquiry requires *strong evaluation*, which cannot be provided at the level of passions and emotions but at the level of practical reason. Practical reason includes both prudence, which provides specific rules for particular actions, and moral philosophy, which inquires about the good in the universal sense. Emotions and passions can be components of virtuous perception and provide value evaluations; however, this is only because they have received this moral criterion in previous education and formation. Evaluating good and evil requires an additional comparison with the criteria of the objective and subjective orders of reason (lat. *ordo rationis*). The objective order of reason compares the relative importance of goods and ends for a good life from a universal perspective. The subjective order of reason, on the other hand, compares particular goods and ends within the overall good life pursued by a person. In this sense, virtuously informed emotions can contribute to moral perception but cannot be the ultimate criterion of moral inquiry themselves.

The problem with the passions is that they are enclosed within the particular.⁶⁴ While they may indicate a good, they can also absolutize it. A person's choices cannot be based solely on emotion. There are other criteria, which Abbà refers to as criteria of the order of reason. The problem of the absolutization of emotion, characteristic of moral emotivism—concept criticized by Alasdair MacIntyre—arises when an emotion becomes the criterion of a moral choice.⁶⁵

⁶²Cf. G. ABBÀ, *Quale impostazione*, cit., pp. 26-203.

⁶³Cf. K. KRISTJÁNSSON, *Virtuous Emotions*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2018, pp. 33-50.

⁶⁴Cf. *ibidem*, pp. 115-118.

⁶⁵Cf. A. MACINTYRE, *After Virtue*, University of Notre Dame Press, Notre Dame 1981; *Felicità*, pp. 95-98; G. ABBÀ, *Costituzione epistemica*, cit., pp. 170-171.

Let us make a little example, which may sound a little controversial nowadays. Consider a married man, father of children, who falls in love with another woman. Neither physical attraction nor mutual emotional closeness is a sufficient basis for making a choice. The objective aspect of the order of reason is related to the truly human way of experiencing sexuality. Its norms are not merely the product of the will of the legislator, whether God or parliament. It has an internal logic that corresponds to the goodness of marriage for individuals, society and children.

However, there is also a subjective dimension to the order of reason.⁶⁶ When the man in love considers the morality of his intense feelings for the woman, he is not only considering the universal norm. He is also asking about the ideal of good life he is pursuing. Would this act be compatible with it? What kind of person am I? To which commitments have I given my life? I promised my love to my wife, and my freedom consists in continuing to build the life we promised each other, even though we go through challenges. How could I destroy the story of us, to which our children are anchored?

Therefore, as the criterion of the goodness of life is reason ('order of reason'), emotions need to be integrated into the good life.⁶⁷ This integration is by no means suppression. Firstly, it is about knowing their proper role; secondly, it is about their formation; and thirdly, it is about their governance. The 'order of reason' is also the criterion by which Abbà classifies the virtues.⁶⁸ The virtues are remedies for deficiencies in the different faculties of the human person, each one possessing its own particular mode of regulation.⁶⁹

As a caveat, this ordering function of reason does not diminish the faculty despotically, but rather perfects it in relation to its own object.⁷⁰ This gives rise to virtuous passions and intentions in the will. This would be an appropriate time to discuss the virtues. However, we will only make a brief note on the cognitive form of virtue, which Abbà calls a 'virtuous maxim' and which expresses an end—a form of intention.⁷¹ This is clear in the case of justice: I want to act in a way to give everybody their due. In the case of temperance, it could be formulated as follows: I will pursue a particular good in a way that will not mislead me from pursuing the good life; or in the case of fortitude: I will not let an obstacle prevent me from pursuing a true good.⁷²

⁶⁶Cf. *ibidem*, p. 495.

⁶⁷Cf. *Le virtù*, pp. 112–118.

⁶⁸Cf. *Le virtù*, pp. 388–470.

⁶⁹Cf. *Le virtù*, pp. 392–402.

⁷⁰Cf. G. ABBÀ, *Lex et virtus*, cit., pp. 178–224; *S. Th.*, I-II, q. 49, a. 3, c.

⁷¹Cf. *Felicità*, p. 219; *Le virtù*, pp. 316–317.

⁷²Cf. *Le virtù*, pp. 317–318.

6 CONCLUSION

Thus, emotion itself is not a sufficient criterion and can even hinder flourishing, a fact that needs to be recognised. This does not mean that emotions do not play an important role in flourishing. When well formed, emotions and passions can indicate the good path to take, acting as a means of moral perception and con-natural judgement. For the virtuous person applies the idea that “according as a man is, such does the end seem to him”.⁷³ The virtuous medium is not apathy, nor incontinence or continence. Virtuous passions enable one to perceive and experience the good. Moreover, virtuous people experience peace and joy, which are signs of a good life and components of subjective well-being.

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⁷³S. *Th.*, I-II, q. 10, a. 3, ad 2; *Le virtù*, p. 524.

