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Sabrina Ebbersmeyer (Ed.)

EMOTIONAL MINDS

Emotional Minds

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The passions and the limits of pure inquiry in early modern philosophy

Edited by
Sabrina Ebbersmeyer

DE GRUYTER



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Preface

Exploring the emotional mind philosophically does not seem self-evident if one considers the history of western philosophical thought; for it can hardly be denied that there is some truth in the wide spread prejudice that emotions were regarded by philosophers in general with suspicion and as obstructive to cognition. However, over the last few decades the relation between philosophy and the emotions seems to have changed altogether, as emotions have gained a new role in current philosophical research: innumerable books and conferences have been devoted to this new branch – the *philosophy of emotions*. This growing interest in the emotions is not a single case restricted to the realm of philosophy but can be traced in a wide range of scientific disciplines such as the cognitive, social and political sciences and the humanities. In some disciplines research work on the nature and role of emotions has increased in the last decades to an extent that there is already talk of an *affective turn* (see Clough 2007, Priddat 2007 and McCalman 2010).

Corresponding to this new development there also emerged a new interest and to some degree also a new approach to investigating the philosophical tradition: a great number of books and articles about the passions in Plato, Aristotle and the Stoic tradition as well as in Descartes or Spinoza – to name only a few – have been published. What thus gradually became discernible was one strand of the philosophical past, which although important and influential, had for a long time been overshadowed by a more intensive concentration on metaphysical and epistemological questions and, accordingly, by a neglect of the sensual and bodily aspects of cognition. This is true in particular for the study of the philosophy of the seventeenth century, and more precisely of the so-called rationalists. Step by step the philosophy of such eminent figures as Descartes, Spinoza, Leibniz and many others has also been re-considered. The effect of this change is perhaps most striking in the case of Descartes: starting with the pioneering works of Geneviève Rodis-Lewis (1956 and 1990) and Amélie Rorty (1986 and 1992) the interest and efforts in re-interpreting the concept of man in Descartes in the light of his treatise on *The passions of the soul* has been steadily growing. In an impressive study, Denis Kambouchner (1995) has shown convincingly that, according to Descartes, the human being is not simply to be understood as *res cogitans*, as suggested by the *Meditations*, but as *res cogitans corpori permixta*. Kambouchner thus outlined a more complex Cartesian anthropology, referred to as *l'homme des passions*. This line of thinking has been taken up by many interpreters. However, these efforts in re-considering the past are not limited to the study of Descartes. To give only two examples: with her already classical study *Passion and Action* Susan James

responded to the “fact that cartographies of early-modern philosophy have tended to leave out the passions of the soul” (James 1997, 16) and covered in her book a wide range of subjects concerning the emotions in seventeenth-century philosophy. Most recently, Dominik Perler (2011) has shown in his *Transformationen der Gefühle* how theories of the emotions from the Middle Ages to Spinoza may be inspiring for contemporary philosophical reflection on the emotions.

There is still, however, considerable work to be done in uncovering all the peculiarities and merits of the various attempts made in Early Modern philosophy to understand the passions and their impact on cognition. The intention of the present volume is to contribute to this endeavour from a special point of view, as the subtitle of the volume indicates: the aim being to reevaluate seventeenth-century thought about the emotional side of the mind by examining the relationship and the boundaries between the passions and reason and by focussing on the affective elements in cognition.

The papers collected in this volume approach these issues from different angles and with different objectives. They are arranged in four sections: as the debate about emotions in the seventeenth century, especially in the second half, was deeply influenced by the philosophy of Descartes and in particular by his treatise on *The passions of the soul* (1649), the *first section* of the volume is devoted to the investigation of the impact of Descartes’s theory of the passions. This implies two aspects, namely, examining the intrinsic meaning of this theory and exploring its effects on philosophers who took up the Cartesian assumptions. Four papers of the collection provide selected insights into these complex issues. Amélie Rorty elaborates the main features of the Cartesian conception of the passions, focussing on their internal logic; although Descartes resists teleological explanations, Rorty shows that he still is an *internal functionalist*, since he understands the union of body and mind as a complex and self-preserving system. Theo Verbeek directs the attention to the notion of ‘generosity’ which holds a special place in Descartes’s treatise, arguing that Descartes replaced the older term ‘magnanimity’ with ‘generosity’ as he became aware of the differences between his own concept of self-esteem and the traditional notion of magnanimity. Two essays indicate how Descartes’s conception of the passions was received and transformed. In her paper on Malebranche, who is generally known as a follower of Descartes, Delphine Kolesnik-Antoine explores how far the Oratorian was in line with Descartes’s thought on the passions and to what extent he might be following Henricus Regius. That the inspiration of Cartesian thought is still vivid in the twentieth century is demonstrated by Édouard Mehl, who reconstructs Michel Henry’s interpretation of Descartes’ *cogito* and its relation to the feeling of existence.

The *second section* of the volume is devoted entirely to the philosophy of Spinoza, and in particular to his theory of the affects. Taking up some fundamental Cartesian assumptions, while simultaneously criticising Descartes' theory of the passions, Spinoza developed his own complex and to some extent strikingly modern theory of the affects, which still requires elucidation today. Starting from the distinction between harmful and harmless affects in Spinoza, Susan James examines the role of individual and collective affects in learning to think philosophically. Lisa Shapiro elucidates the complex and fundamental relation of imagination and the affects in Spinoza's thought. Denis Kambouchner focusses on the affect 'abjection' and analyses its meaning, which has so far received only sparse scholarly attention, demonstrating its problematic relation to the *conatus* and indicating its political and metaphysical implications. Taking up the idea of philosophy as a kind of therapy Ursula Renz investigates this idea and its cognitive prerequisites in the writings of both Spinoza and Shaftesbury.

The *third section* deals with the dissidents of mechanistic philosophy. In the course of time the shortcomings and problems of the Cartesian view of living beings in general and of the passions in particular became apparent. Thus, at the end of the twentieth century Antonio Damasio (1994) was not the first to point out *Descartes's error*. More than three hundred years earlier, many philosophers, among others, Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, Anne Conway, and Henry More, expressed their serious doubts about the Cartesian account of the human mind and its relation to the passions. It is therefore not by chance that three papers are devoted to Leibniz's deliberations on the passions. Sabrina Ebbersmeyer outlines Leibniz's conception of the passions against the background of his criticism on Descartes. Markku Roinila's contribution concentrates on the passion of hope, which – regarding Leibniz's proclaimed optimism – held a special place in the philosopher's thought on the passions. Christia Mercer looks closely at the role of suffering in the philosophy of Leibniz and Anne Conway against the background of the passion of Christ, "as the point at which passions, reason, and cognition collide". Henry More, known for his criticism of Descartes's conception of animals, was, as Cecilia Muratori points out, more deeply concerned about the animal that inhabits the human soul: the passions.

The *fourth and last section* of this volume considers the prospect of parallel and alternative approaches and extends the historical perspective throughout the eighteenth century. Descartes was not only criticised by authors who promoted non-mechanistic principles but also by those who supported a radical materialistic approach, such as Hobbes. In reconstructing the main stages of Hobbes's reflection on reason and the passions Gianni Paganini shows how

Hobbes reached a position in which reason and the passions are no longer opposed to each other: passionate thought. The question concerning the impact of Stoic philosophy on theories of the passions, which is plainly evident in the first half of the seventeenth century and – despite the proclaimed rejection – perceivable also in Descartes, Spinoza and Leibniz, is taken up by Fosca Mariani Zini, who analyses the problems of the conception of ‘pure love’ in Fénelon. Focussing on moralist writings from the late seventeenth century onwards, Catherine Newmark addresses the question of how the passions feel and taste, a question that aims primarily not at epistemic or moral but rather at sensual aspects of the passions. The last paper of this collection expands the perspective historically to the late eighteenth century. By reconstructing the semantic development of the German word *Gefühl*, which is now often used as an equivalent for the English word *emotion*, Verena Mayer demonstrates that *Gefühl* had a different origin, signifying initially the sense of touch, an aspect that was still of some importance in phenomenology at the beginning of the twentieth century.

The papers presented in this volume are the result of a colloquium which took place at the *Center for Advanced Studies* of the Ludwig-Maximilians-University at Munich in October 2010. This conference was part of the research project *The Irrational side of reason. Dialectics of emotionality and rationality in 17th century philosophy* sponsored by the *Fritz Thyssen Foundation* and carried out at the department of philosophy at the Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität. The foundation most generously made it possible for sixteen scholars from nine countries to come together for three days to discuss the topic of the conference. The variety of the papers – in style, content and intention – gives an impression of the different approaches and philosophical traditions in various European countries as well as in the US and Canada. At the same time, this collection of essays is a vivid example of the fruitfulness and diversity of scholarship on the history of philosophy in early modern Europe.

I would not like to close this preface without having expressed my gratitude to all those who contributed to the success of the conference, although the list would be too long to enumerate here. Concerning the edition of the present volume, my special thanks is, however, due to the *Fritz Thyssen Foundation* for their generous financial support and to the members of the publishing house *De Gruyter* for their kind and unreserved assistance.

Munich January, 2012

Sabrina Ebbersmeyer

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I. The impact of Descartes's theory of the passions

Amélie Rorty

The Functional Logic of Cartesian Passions

Abstract: Cartesian passion-ideas are able to promote “the good of this life” because they bear law-like dynamic relations to one another. Descartes is a foundationalist: all passions “originate” from six basic passions: wonder, desire, love and hate, joy and sadness. As passion-ideas, compound passions are in part individuated by their generic intentional contents. As passion-ideas, compound passions prompt bodily changes that benefit or harm psycho-physical individuals. Although Descartes resists teleological explanations, he is an internal functionalist: the body is organized as a self-preserving mechanical system, capable of integrating motions prompted by the activity of the mind. Similarly, the mind forms a coherent system, capable of integrating ideas prompted by the body. Finally, Descartes is also an intellectualist. Besides passions, there are also *émotions intérieures*, dispositional ideas that, like self-esteem and *generosité*, are caused in the mind by the mind. Prompted by proper self-esteem, the will can choose the course that will serve the intellectually-weighted psycho-physical individual, the scientist rather than the hypochondriac.

“It is on these,” Descartes says of the passions, “that the good and ill of this life depend.” (AT XI, 488; PA 212).¹ Indeed the reassurances of divine benevolence introduced in the Sixth Meditation assert that all the passions are, in their own nature, good, and are as such agreeable to us. (“Elles sont toutes bonnes de leur nature” (PA 211)). Whatever harm their excess or deficiencies might bring can in principle be controlled or deflected by wisdom and the power of the will. Astutely used and controlled, we can derive benefit and even joy from them all (PA 148).

In what, then does *cette vie* consist and how do the passions affect it for good or ill? The *Meditations* and the *Passions of the Soul* introduce three play-

¹ I have used Alquie’s edition of *Descartes: Oeuvres philosophiques, Tome III*. Many of the translations are mine, but I have also used those of Voss 1989 and those of Cottingham/Stoothoff/Murdoch 1985. After the first citation to the and Adam Tannery edition, I shall refer to quotations from *Les Passions de l’Âme* by their article numbers. Although *The Passions of the Soul* is Descartes’ attempt to systematize and elaborate his correspondence with Princess Elisabeth of Bohemia, it is by no means as tightly argued as the *Principles* or the *Treatise on Man*. Despite the apparent formality of the organization, the work is almost as casual and evasively underdetermined as his letters.

ers: an individual compounded of body and soul, that individual's body and its soul or mind.² Although Descartes claims that the joys that the soul shares with the body – “ceux qui lui sont communs avec le corps” – depend entirely on the passions, the soul considered in itself, may have its own joys. (“[L]’Âme peut avoir ses plaisirs a part” (PA 212)).³ Just how do the passions help the individual compounded of mind and body? What are the distinctive joys of the soul and what role do they play in contributing to the well-being of the compound individual?

Notoriously, Descartes characterizes generic passions as a species of *ideas*, modes of thought caused by changes in the body which are ‘referred’ that is, attributed or predicated of an individual mind rather than either to its body or to the external objects that may have indirectly prompted them. Unlike perception-passions that ‘refer’ to the properties of the objects that cause them and sensation-passions that refer to a condition of the body, emotion-passions do not directly represent their causes. With the exception of wonder – as an indication of surprise (PA 53), the passions are confused or misleading indicators of our evaluations of their causes, that is, of the objects or events that produced the bodily changes which in turn prompt their psychological occurrence (PA 52).⁴ Although they are confused, they are, as he says in the Sixth Meditation, “given by nature [...] to inform the mind of what is beneficial or harmful to the composite of which the mind is a part.” (*Meditations* VI, AT VII 83, CMS 1.57).⁵ Despite Descartes’ initial pronouncement that passion-emotions are not strictly representational ideas, they are intentionally identified and distinguished from one another by a quasi-representational function about how their causes-objects affect us and the motions or actions that they tend to prompt. While Descartes’ description of individual passions is focused on their specific functional utility, his characterization of each passion indicates just the intentional content which – under normal circumstances – can be correlated with the required action. Such evaluative *passion-ideas* prompt a rationally informed will to elicit just those ideas and passions whose occurrence would – in a healthy body – in turn produce bodily changes that conduce to the best

2 “I do not consider the mind as part of the soul, but as the thinking soul in its entirety” AT, IX 356; CSM II. 246.

3 Some English translations render *joie* as pleasure; others give *joie* as joy. German translations use *Freude*. Descartes himself sometimes speaks of the mind’s own *plaisirs* (PA 212). Voss holds that when Descartes thinks of the bodily sens of *joie*, he is thinking of *plaisir*, and when he is thinking of the mind’s own *joie*, he is thinking of a *sentiment*. See Voss 1989, xix, note 14.

4 See Shapiro 2008; Simmons 1999, 347–69; Alanen 2003; and Brown 2006.

5 See Hoffman 2009b and 2009c and Greenberg 2007, 714–734.

functioning of the psychophysical individual, changes for which the body, considered in itself, has prepared on its own account (PA 40, 52).⁶ In short, an individual's physical and psychological health depends on the collaboration between her constitution and the astuteness of her passion-emotions.

In characterizing the utility of the passions, Descartes follows his usual practice of triple entry book-keeping: he describes their utility for the individual body's healthful survival, for the body's effective and efficient mutually collaborative compound union with the mind, and for the thinking mind as such. "The function of all the passions is to dispose the soul to will those things which nature tells us are useful and to persist in this volition, just as the same (*la même*) agitation of the spirits that usually causes them disposes the body to movements conducive to the execution of those things [...]." They serve to move us to "what we deem good and to separate us from those that we deem bad" (PA 52–3, 53, 55–57, 74, 79).⁷ Descartes has good reasons to be evasive about the terms of this utility. Who is this 'we'? How are to choose the course of action that serves 'us' best when there is a choice between acting to promote the health of the body and acting to promote our capacities as a scientists? Should Descartes accept Queen Christina's invitation to spend a Swedish winter as her tutor or continue his researches safely at home near his own warm stove? Although Descartes' emphasis on the use of the passions typically focuses on their utility to the mind-body union, he is also committed to the view that the will has the power to choose the ends to which an individual is primarily committed. In principle an individual can attempt to modify his intellectual and physical habits. As his analysis develops, it emerges that there are also *émotions intérieures* – *l'estime, générosité* and their species – that are "excited in the soul by the soul itself," and that play a crucial role in the ways that the passions can serve to maintain bodily health and the best functioning of the psycho-physical individual.⁸ As his Letters to Princess Elisabeth in the Summer and Autumn of 1645 reiterate, the will can, when prompted

6 I shall sometimes refer to Descartes' class of passions and *émotions* as *passion-ideas* to indicate that they are a species of ideas and to distinguish them from sensation-ideas that refer to their causes.

7 For our purposes, it is not necessary to address the difficult question of how to construe the same ("*la même*") agitation of the spirits. Is Descartes saying that the passion is strictly identical with the agitation of the spirits? Or is he making a more modest claim, that every passion-type is correlated with a specific spirit-motion type? Or is it to say that the agitation of the spirits causes both a specific passion and a motion of the body? The first alternative would seem to threaten his dualism; the second issues an empirical promissory note; the third seems to lose the force of "the same agitation." See Brown/de Sousa 2003 and Alanen 2003.

8 See Schmitter 2007, 426–44.

by proper self-esteem, choose to develop habits that will serve the intellectually-weighted psycho-physical individual, the scientist, rather than the hypochondriac (PA 161).⁹ To be sure, even Descartes would agree that a healthy mind requires a healthy body, but nevertheless choices sometimes arise between taking a bracing walk and staying in one's study. Beyond gesturing to the healthful survival of an individual mind-body aptly organized to serve the mind's truth-oriented inquiries, Descartes is, qua philosophically minded scientist, himself vague about the exact terms of this utility. In the final analysis the determination of the useful regimen of an individual's mind-body constitution must be left to the individual will. At best, the philosopher can, qua *physicien*, analyze the structure and the process of the role of the passions in preserving the functional integrity of the individual, as an embodied mind. When a passion appears to generate a conflict – as for instance when a husband both mourns and rejoices in his wife's death or when “what excites fear also [...] moves the legs to flee and our volition to [...] stop them” (PA 47, 147), self-esteem and *generosité* can prompt the will to follow its “firm and decisive judgments concerning the knowledge of good and evil (le bien et le mal) [...] of the actions of this life.” (PA 48).¹⁰ It turns out that *émotions intérieures* help make that choice clear. As he puts it, “[N]otre bien et notre mal depend principalement des *émotions intérieures* qui ne sont excités en l'âme que par l'âme même.” (PA 147). (We'll return to these *émotions* later).

In PA I and II, Descartes is writing primarily *en physicien*, as a philosophically-minded scientist; in PA III, he shifts to writing *en philosophe moral*, as a psychologically informed philosophical advisor, charting strategies for the wise use of the will. It is, after all, up to each individual will rather than to the philosopher to choose specific, contextualized action-guiding priorities. (Descartes undertakes the proto-Kantian task of analyzing the structure of the mind that makes the activity of the will in such choices possible. Unlike Kant, however, he is prepared to use empirical generalizations as well as a priori arguments in his transcendental project).

All of this is very well in general terms. But exactly how do the passions serve the body, the compound individual and the soul? To answer this question we need to backtrack. Notoriously, Descartes is a foundationalist about the

⁹ See Rorty 1992 and Rorty 1984.

¹⁰ Unfortunately, Descartes says little about intellectual passions prompted by fiction or the imagination, as distinct from dispositional *émotions intérieures*. He remarks that the sadness or joy that we sometimes experience in reading a book or seeing a play are typically accompanied by “a pleasure which is a [purely] intellectual joy, (ce plaisir est une joie intellectuelle) that can [even] originate from sorrow.” (PA 147). See also his discussion of the purely intellectual love of God in the letter to Chanut, February 1, 1647 (CSMK III, 308–311).

passions. He identifies six primitive but generic passions: wonder (*l'admiration*), love (*l'amour*), hatred (*le haine*), desire (*le désir*), joy (*la joie*) and sadness (*la tristesse*). All other varieties of passions are “composed of them or originate from them [on] consideration of [what seems] good or harmful [...] from our point of view, as suitable to us.” (PA 56, see also 53, 55–57, 69, 74, 79). Beyond marking their duration and intensity, the multitude of passions are generated from, and are roughly classified and organized by several principles. They are further individuated and differentiated by 1) whether – like love and hate – their causes and objects are conceived to be useful or harmful; 2) whether – like regret and hope – their objects are conceived to be present, past or future; 3) whether their objects are conceived to be possible, actual or necessary (like fear of an on-coming storm or fear of human mortality); 4) whether – like awe and self-respect – their proximate causes are external or internal to the mind; and 5) whether – like intellectual courage or paralysis – their benefits and harms depend in part on ourselves.¹¹

Compositionalist as he is, Descartes charts the taxonomic structure of compound passions. As *ideas*, passions are identified by their intentional objects as well as by their typical physical causes and effects. Their cognitive contents can therefore stand in logical or dependency relations of implication and pre-supposition to one another.¹² For instance, Descartes distinguishes “two species of Love [...] as those which one has for good things and that which one has for beautiful ones, to the latter of which we give the name *agrément* so as not to confuse it with the former.” (PA 85). As *passion-ideas*, they are related by law-like associations and prompt distinctive actions. Descartes employs three levels of this principle of law-like associations: 1) that which ensures law-like associations of dependency among *passion-ideas* (e.g. delight presupposes and embeds love, boldness requires hope: PA 85 and 173); 2) that which ensures law-like associations among specific body-states and brain-states (e.g. the movements of the blood and spirits that are the causes of the passions: PA 96); and 3) that which ensures law-like associations between thoughts and bodily states or motions (e.g. fearful thoughts and the beginning of motions of flight: PA 46).

In charting the relations among *passion-ideas*, Descartes seems to be committed to a relatively naïve realism in the philosophy of language, taking the

¹¹ For a more detailed list, see Brown/Normore 2003.

¹² Descartes notoriously evades the question of whether the intentional content of a *passion-idea* is intrinsically internal to the passion or stands in a law-like association with it. We can by-pass this problem: a law-like association among passions is good enough to ensure their utility in preserving embodied individuals.

standard denomination of passion-type names – *amour*, *haine*, for example – for granted. He is characteristically evasive about whether the intentional content of a passion-idea is conceptually contained within or contingently but strongly correlated with it. For our purposes, the answer doesn't matter, as long as passion-ideas are in part intentionally identified and individuated in ways that stand in law-like interactions with specific conditions of the brain, which are themselves correlated with specific states of the body.¹³ The semantics and syntax of the intentional content of passion-ideas form a taxonomic structure that conforms to many of the combinatorial conditions of semantic inferences. Their cognitive/intentional contents can form an indefinite number of compositional patterns; they typically presuppose and imply one another; they can function as contraries (PA 58); and they can be marked by temporal and modal indicators (PA 143–145). Like other ideas that form a coherent taxonomic structure, passion-ideas can be subject to second level evaluations: first level passions can be judged unreasonable, excessive, or ill-formed. Descartes might find himself desiring not to desire, find pain in love, be surprised by joy or grief. While passions cannot be directly voluntarily extinguished, they are corrigible by astute experience-based reasoning:

“In order to [...] displace fear [...] [one must] apply oneself to attend to reasons, objects or precedents that convince one that the danger is not great, that there is always more security in defense than flight, [...] etc.” (PA 45).

Descartes' project of showing that the passions can serve to integrate intellectual and physical functions depends on his confidence that the compositional dependencies of the intentional content of passion-ideas also indicates law-like associations between ideas and bodily states. As clues of the body's condition in relation to the objects that affect its homeostatic functioning, they enable the mind to initiate an inquiry that can indicate appropriate action. The association among passion-ideas gives direction to the will in prompting the motions that normally serve that functioning.¹⁴

¹³ See Shapiro 2003, 42 ff. for a careful account of what she calls the ‘Principle of Nature and Habituation,’ the principle that she argues characterizes the determinate association of thoughts and motions.

¹⁴ Descartes' apparent insouciance in introducing causal interaction between mind and body has, of course, concerned commentators and critics, who find such a casual relation threatening to the radical independence of the two substances. See Rozemond 1998 for a careful analysis of these problems and Cartesian attempts to by-pass them. Even if Descartes fails to evade this radical criticism, the details of his attempt to assign the passions an integrative role in securing mental and physical health is worth close attention. For an argument that Descartes improvises on a scholastic distinction between formal and efficient causation to bypass the obvious criticism, see Rorty 1984 and Rorty 1992.

Descartes' carefully structured taxonomy of the passions provides the background knowledge for the project of correcting them. It provides guide posts for tracking their sources and evaluating the benefits and harms of their objects, by indicating their temporality and modality as well as by gauging the degree of our power over them. Noticing itself moved by a disturbing passion, the will – prompted by self-esteem – “abstain from making any immediate judgment about them, and distract oneself by other thoughts.” (PA 46, 211). Having located the passion in a taxonomy that maps its associated ideas, “the will must [...] take into consideration and to follow those reasons opposed to those the passion represents.” (PA 211). Having done so, the mind is in a position to elicit a set of images and ideas which – if all goes well – can in turn motivate a modified and more usefully benign pattern of behavior, even though neither a countervailing passion nor the will alone would have been sufficient to effect a corrective change (PA 48). For instance: since pride is a compound passion composed of wonder, joy and love, someone who is inappropriately proud of his friendship with Queen Christina rejoices in that friendship and – others things being equal – acts to attempt to preserve it as best he can (PA 157–8, 160, 107–11). (“Il me semble [que l’orgueil] [...] est excitée par un mouvement composé de ceux de l’admiration, de la joie et de l’amour [...]”). Unfortunately simply realizing that such a pride may be excessive or irrational, perhaps even ridiculous, is insufficient to cure such a misplaced passion. Although the will, considered in itself, cannot elicit a countervailing passion, it can “employ artifice and apply itself to attend successively to different things.” (PA 47). If self-respect prompts a person to trace the logic and dynamics of his misplaced pride in friendship with a powerful Queen, he could modulate his behavior by reflecting on ways to diminish his wonder and joy in it, for instance by turning his attention to the fact that the Queen accords the same favors and regard to her cook and dancing master as she does to her philosophy tutor.

Besides mapping the compositional dependencies among compound passion-ideas, Descartes in his persona as *philosophe physicien* traces the patterns of their dynamic unfolding from passion-ideas-to-memory-ideas and to the action of the will in retrieving the specific memory-laden-passion-ideas that characteristically give rise to corrective behavior and actions. Indeed he says that the passions are differentiated (*dénombrer*) by their actions in benefitting or harming us. “[A]fin de les dénombrer, il faut seulement examiner par ordre en combien de divers façons qui nous important nos sense peuvent être mus par leurs objects.” (PA 52). In this context, he introduces a second criterion for identifying passions retrospectively, by reference to the actions they have occasioned or produced. He notes, for instance, that “the difference between

affection, friendship and devotion becomes apparent through their effects in our behavior,” for although all forms of love involve treating oneself as joined or united with its object, we behave differently as we feel affection for home, loving devotion to a Sovereign and *generosité* to a friend (PA 83, 154, 156). As *ideas*, passions stand in logical relations to one another; as *passions*, they form a functional associative dynamic narrative, one that – if well ordered by a well-informed will – can revise or redirect malfunctioning passions.

Descartes maps and tracks the systematic narrative of passion-ideas in two registers: acting as *philosophe-physicien*, he analyzes their functional relations to form empirical psycho-physical generalizations.¹⁵ Acting as an informed supervisor guiding the self-correcting psychological therapist, he offers a map, a reassuring guide for re-orienting disordered passions. On the level of philosophic analysis, he charts the combinatorial properties of compound passion-ideas, marking their objects as judged beneficial or harmful, probable or fortuitous. For instance, he says that we are moved by apprehension, jealousy, assurance as we judge that the objects of hope are important or negligible, probable or improbable (PA 58). As we further judge that the outcome depends on us, we are inclined to irresolution, courage, or to varieties emulation (PA 59). Although the will cannot, by itself, correct malfunctioning passions, an astute mind can, in principle, use Descartes’ map and taxonomy of passion-ideas as a guide to the will in its attempt to elicit the specific countervailing passions that might succeed in re-directing or correcting inappropriate passions. So enlightened, the will can direct attention to passion-ideas that could, in principle, either check irrational flight from a fly or re-enforce the body’s tendency to flee an on-coming lion. Similarly, the will can indirectly check or modulate devotion to a friendly but irrational Sovereign by relocating and re-evaluating inappropriate passion-ideas within an appropriate taxonomy, one that would highlight and assess the potential harm and danger of her demands by weighing them with the benefits of her benevolence.

In the mode of providing background psycho-physical generalizations for the use of individual self-therapy, Descartes is confident that he can generalize patterns of the dynamics of associated passion-ideas.¹⁶ To begin with, their reliability and stability is assured by the divine rational benevolence introduced in the Sixth Meditation. Less grandly, but more informatively, these law-like generalizations are supported by empirical evidence. The constitutions of human bodies are roughly alike. Our nerves and spirits are constituted and

¹⁵ See Voss 1989, n. 39, 78

¹⁶ See Letter to Mersenne March 18, 1630 (AT I, 128) and Letter to Chanut June 6, 1647 (AT V, 50).

disposed to act and react in uniformly structured regularities; there is a standard dynamic story about the ways intellectual habits are formed (PA 39–43).¹⁷ To be sure, the passions of an individual are affected by his circumstances, history and bodily constitution (PA 39, 48). But despite these variations, the associative pattern of an individual's passions is sufficiently stable to enable him to be astute in evoking just those “firm and decisive judgments” that can modulate, constrain and even extinguish irrational or unwise passions (PA 48, 41–45). The possibility of such expert direction and control of the process of habituation depends on there being a law-like stability and predictability among associated passion-ideas. Of course the associations among the passions are contingent rather than necessary, but they are nevertheless law-like, as reliable as strongly entrenched experience and astute reflection warrants. (Besides being intimations of Spinoza's narrative dramas of the unfolding of the standard effects of the passions, such contingent but reliable generalizations about passion-ideas bear a surprising similarity to Hume's law-like association of ideas, placed in a Cartesian voluntaristic setting).

To be sure, in mapping the connections among the passions, in describing their implications and the strategies for their correction and most profitable use, Descartes is not engaged in strict science. He may be writing *en physicien* in PA I, but PA is not – for all the mechanical explanations of the functional effects of the passions on the body – a work in Cartesian physics.¹⁸ Neither the logic nor the standard narratives of the dynamic relations among the passions give us doubt-free generalizations, let alone rigorous demonstrations. The philosophic study of the passions provides maps of their logical and narrative structures that are sufficiently reliable to justify their role as guides towards preserving the body and directing inquiry. In this, Descartes' *Passions of the Soul* resembles the physics-based philosophy that ratifies and justifies the biology that provides an informative guide for the practice of medicine.¹⁹

Descartes again has good reason to be evasive about the details of this utility. Despite his consistent use of functional explanations and his trust in a benevolent Deity to underwrite the general reliability of perceptions as apt

¹⁷ See Hatfield 1992, esp. 349–50

¹⁸ When he is in full tilt of scientific work, Descartes attempts to demonstrate – and not merely to expound – his propositions. Commenting on his method in the *Optics* and the *Meteorology*, he says “I take my reasonings to be so closely connected that just as the last are proved by the first, which are their causes, so the first are proved by the last, which are their effects [...] It is [in truth] the causes which are proved by the effects.” (*Discourse on Method* AT VI, 76).

¹⁹ See Descartes, Letters to Chanut June 15, 1646 (AT IV, 441) and February 26, 1649 (AT V, 290) and Rodis-Lewis 1990.

starting points for truth-oriented scientific inquiry, he is not committed to teleological explanations of any particular psycho-physical process or of physical and psychological health in general. The teleology implicit in the Fourth and Sixth Meditations is entirely general: it does not apply within each particular functional psycho-physical explanation. The passions and *émotions intérieures* function primarily to serve the good and ill of *cette vie* – the life of an individual union of mind and body – even though neither the actions of his body nor those of his mind is directed to any external or transcendent end. Descartes' functionalism is intra-systematic: as he repeatedly says in PA: the passions function to preserve the health of the embodied individual. But neither the existence nor the increased 'perfection' of that individual as an active mind serves any larger or grander metaphysical function. Descartes' divinely ordained naturalistic internalist functionalism avoids externalist teleology.²⁰

So much, outrageously briefly, for the utility of the passions as they serve the compound individual. What of those that – like self-esteem and *generosité* – are caused in the soul by the soul? Although *émotions intérieures* are frequently associated with such passions as love and desire, they are technically not themselves passions because they are not caused by any particular movement of animal spirits.²¹ Like intellectual passions, *émotions* are caused by the soul rather than by the body. But unlike such passions as the intellectual love of God, they are presumptively directly motivational by virtue of being dispositionally associated and integrated with other passions. (Such *émotions* seem to be distant descendants of Stoic *eupatheiai*, intellectually based dispositions that can, in conjunction with passions, nevertheless directly affect action. Of course they are unlike such Stoic *eupatheiai* as cheerfulness (*euthymia*), friendliness (*eumenia*), goodwill (*eunoia*) in that their influence on thought and action is mediated by the will acting to elicit the relevant passion-ideas).

20 See Tad Schmaltz, "Nature itself teaches us that our sensory system exhibits a kind of internal finality that is reflected in the fact that for the most part it produces sensations beneficial to the mind-body composite. But what remains hidden from us is the external finality the system has in virtue of its relation to God's intentions." "Descartes' Critique of Scholastic Teleology," draft manuscript, pp. 19–20. See also Simmons 2001, 66 on the distinction between a) the ends that moved God to create and b) the ends of things that he created. See also Laporte's contrast between immanent/internal finality and transcendent or external finality, that is between the ends implicit in the way God structured Extension and the Mind and those that are manifest in the workings of individual the modes of Thought and Body (Laporte 1928, 388).

21 See the Letter to Chanut, February 1, 1647 (AT IV, 601 ff.) and the Letter to Elisabeth October 6, 1645 (AT IV, 313). For a full discussion of *émotions intérieures*, see Beyssade 1983, 278–287 and Kambouchner 1988, 457–84.

Although Descartes' analysis of the *émotions intérieures* suffers from vagueness and lacunae, he consistently insists that their influence on the will can in principle ensure the proper and successful use of the passions.²² As the first of the passions, *l'admiration* is aroused by the motions of the spirits that occur in the brain when we experience an object as rare or surprising. Unlike other passions, however, it is not accompanied by changes in the heart and blood; it does not in itself involve an evaluation of its cause and object (PA 53, 71). Because wonder is not itself an evaluation, it has no negative counterpart. It can nevertheless be excessive or deficient: astonishment (*l'étonnement*) prompts vacillation or pathological fixation of attention and memory (PA 76, 78). As Descartes describes *l'admiration*, it seems closer to our notion of salient attention – to *Achtung!* – than to a diffuse and unfocused 'wonder.' When wonder is strong and sudden, its associated spirits effect a change in that part of the brain where the idea of its cause and object is registered, thereby strengthening and preserving "thoughts in the soul which is good to preserve and which might easily be erased from it." (PA 72–73). "*L'admiration*" he adds, "is useful in making us learn and retain in memory the things of which we have been ignorant." (PA 75). So construed as conducive to dispositional memory, *l'admiration* lays the foundation for, and guides the will's activity in tracking relevantly associated passion-ideas. By fixing a dispositional pattern of salient attention and memory, it contributes to the acquisition knowledge rather than directly or forthwith to *le bien et le mal* of the embodied individual (PA 53, 71). Its presence conduces to energetic inquiry; its absence conduces to ignorance and intellectual lethargy (PA 77–78). In short, it makes the constructed growth of knowledge possible by forcefully imprinting ideas as centers of salient attention that are apt for retrieval either by habits of association or by the activity of the will. While it is only the dull and stupid who do not have the constitutional inclination to wonder, a sound capacity for wonder – neither too much nor too little – is nevertheless not sufficient for well-formed inquiry (PA 76–8). Recognizing novelty – being surprised by it – does not, in itself, give energy or direction for further investigation: it must be accompanied by desire and by other ideas.

Although wonder does not itself motivate bodily action, it nevertheless has a crucial influence on the development of knowledge and the correction of inappropriate passions. "[...] Wonder is found in, and augments almost all other [...] passions" ("en sorte que lorsqu'elle se rencontre en d'autres, – comme elle a coutume de se rencontrer presque en toutes et de les augmenter, – c'est que l'admiration est jointe avec elles." (PA 72)). When its associ-

²² See Schmitter 2005 and Schmitter 2002.

ated ideas have become dispositional – strongly lodged in a specific part of the brain – and when it is accompanied by love or an evaluative desire, wonder can promote scientific inquiry as well as the effective correction of malformed or harmful passions.

Cartesian *admiration* stands in a complex relation to Aristotelian wonder.²³ Far from being an exogenous *pathos*, Aristotle's *to thaumazein* is the beginning of philosophical inquiry, the expression of an essential human potentiality that is independent of any action-guiding aim (*Metaphysics* 982b12ff.). Descartes joins Aristotle in thinking that passions are both physically and intentionally individuated, subject to investigation by both the physicist and the psychologically minded philosopher (*De anima* 403a25–403b5). But although he agrees with Aristotle that it is evaluatively and motivationally neutral, he does not treat it as an essential human potentiality, a self-generating and self-warranting *energeia*. In making *l'admiration* the first of the passions, Descartes is signaling his distance from dynamically teleological accounts of the working structure of the human mind. But in mapping its law-like associations with motivating passions, he nevertheless charts an internally functional system without indicating an over-arching external final aim towards which the individual – a specific interactive compound of mind and body – strives. To be sure, the mind has been divinely designed to be capable of accessing truths about the structure of the world. And a mind that has actualized its clear and distinct ideas is more perfect than one that has not. But although the will is autonomous, self-activating in each of its exercises, it does not in itself desire or seek the greater perfection of the mind. The mind would be fully accomplished, perfected as a mind if it were only to think the same eternal, necessary truth over and over. While desire – even the desire for knowledge – is a constitutionally natural passion, it is not an intrinsically essential part or function of the mind as such. Descartes constructs the philosophic frame that sets the stage for Spinoza's *conatus* to self-preservation, but he does not himself write the dramatic narrative for that stage. In contrast to Descartes' characterizing primitive desire as a passion, Spinoza describes it as “the very essence of man insofar as [that] essence is conceived to promote its self-preservation, appetite together with the consciousness of itself [as] determined to do [what] promotes [...] self-preservation [...]” (*Ethics* III1 and IIISchP9). While Descartes thinks that wonder – along with other passions – plays a significant role in preserving the body and the extension of knowledge, he does not join either Aristotle or Spinoza in treating the mind as itself essentially and actively engaged in self-improvement. Descartes thinks that neither the mind nor the body are, in

²³ See Brown 2006.

themselves, imperfect; and he also treats the body as a functionally organized, self-regulating machine. To be sure, the mind is perfected in its thinking, or rather in the power of the will to avoid error and to affirm truth. But both the will and the understanding are perfected in every exercise: the will does not will itself to become more perfect; the understanding evinces no movement from potentiality to full actuality. Despite treating passion-ideas as exogenous and therefore not essential to the mind's identity or existence, Descartes ironically nevertheless marks them as essential to whatever projects of self-improvement are available.

Although Descartes thinks that the two species of wonder – *estime* and *mépris* – are dispassionate *opinions* of a thing's importance or insignificance rather than directly motivating passions, he claims that they “often give rise to passions” (“a cause que, de ces *opinions*, il naît souvent des passions.”) (PA 149–50). When *estime* or *mépris* are directed to the self, their corresponding movements of the spirits can change an individual's appearances, gestures and actions (PA 151). Enter Descartes the travel-guide to the internal therapist: Wonder, self-esteem and *generosité* are most useful to the mind when they are focused on the individual's free control of his volitions (“cette libre disposition de ces volontés.”) (PA 152–3). When *generosité* has become a dispositional *émotion intérieure*, it enables an individual to feel within himself a firm and constant resolution to use [his will] well without requiring a specific activating cause to do so.²⁴ (“En partie qu'il sent en soi-même une ferme et constante résolution d'en bien user [la volonté] [...] de ne manquer jamais de volonté pour entreprendre et exécuter toutes les choses qu'il jugera être les meilleures.”) (PA 153)). As a disposition, *generosité* is expansive. Descartes thinks that “those who understand and have [the sentiment of appropriate self-esteem and *generosité*] are easily convinced that every other man can also have them about himself.” (PA 154). He treats them with the respect due to those with a sound free will (PA 154). The critical respect that prompts Descartes to engage in his extensive philosophic correspondence and that led him to request comments on the *Meditations* rests on his *émotions intérieures*, on his self-esteem and *generosité*. Combined with the dispositional directives of wonder and a passionate desire for truth, they serve inquiry and the emendation of misdirected passions, whose logic and dynamic associations are taxonomically mapped. Presumably it is for this reason that he considers them to be virtues, and their contraries to be vices (PA 151, 154–7, 158–9, 190). (We can think of Cartesian *generosité* as the distant ancestor of Kantian respect and the interpretive princi-

²⁴ See Hoffman 2009a

ple of charity, both of which are dispositionally capable of motivating directly, independently of any inclinations).

It seems then that Descartes has – within his complex epistemologically oriented psychology – fulfilled his promise to show that the good and ill of this life depends on the passions. Besides being crucial to the reliable functioning, *émotions intérieures* are capable of bringing joy to the soul in its own terms.²⁵

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Theo Verbeek

Generosity

Abstract: Although much has been written on Descartes's notion of 'generosity' (*générosité*) it remains difficult to interpret. In this paper an attempt is made to interpret it in the sense of human dignity – a generous person is someone who thinks and behaves in accordance with his particular status. However, whereas in traditional ideas on the excellence or dignity of man, this is founded in the fact that human beings are the only creatures endowed with reason, Descartes situates it in man's freedom. Although this transforms him into a privileged being and gives him certain rights (that of self-governance), certain duties are also imposed upon him, more particularly the duty to do whatever is best to protect our freedom. This also creates a more relaxed attitude with respect to the passions. Passions are neither good nor bad in themselves – they are good as long as we remain free and bad only in so far as they undermine our freedom.

Despite the fact that in the seventeenth century the *Passions de l'âme* (1649) was presumably Descartes' most popular work, it is now generally considered to be of less importance. There are many reasons for this. Apart from the fact that on the whole modern theories of the emotions have developed in a direction different from Descartes, his moral theory, rudimentary though it is, is obviously contrary to both utilitarian and Kantian theories. Moreover, many terminological and conceptual problems arise, for example, because Descartes classifies psychological phenomena like courage or cowardice as 'passions', which are nowadays seen rather as behavioural dispositions or habits that many would doubt are mental at all. Finally, the underlying physiology and neurology are of course hopelessly old-fashioned. Nevertheless, although the neglect of the *Passions* can be understood, there is also reason to regret it, especially because from the viewpoint of modern virtue theory, Descartes' approach could be interesting, provided certain concepts are reconstructed. One of them is the notion of *générosité*, usually translated as 'generosity,' which plays a key role in Descartes' moral theory.

The term 'generosity' seems to have been adopted by Descartes at a relatively late stage in the composition of his book, in any case after he submitted the text (which at that point probably did not comprise Pt III) to Princess Elisabeth. This becomes clear in Pt II, where Descartes provides a provisional

inventory of the passions (art. 53–67). As any reader of the work knows, Descartes reduces all passions to six that he calls primitive passions (*passions primitives*), which are either class names relating to the particular passions as *genera* to *species* (art. 149), or perhaps the various dimensions in which every passion can be described: wonder (*admiration*), love, hatred, desire, joy and sadness (art. 61). It is in the context of a preliminary discussion of the passions that constitute the family of wonder that the notion of generosity first emerges. Wonder is the surprise felt “when we judge that an object is new or very different from what we knew or supposed it to be” (art. 53). Wonder would be involuntary attention, which arises whenever we confront some unusual object “even before we know whether that object suits us or not.” Wonder, accordingly, does not presuppose an evaluative judgement in terms of good or bad, pleasant or unpleasant, useful or harmful – an aspect that differentiates ‘admiration’ from all the other passions (which are all concerned about something being good or bad, pleasant or unpleasant, useful or harmful). Although wonder is ‘disinterested’ in the sense that it is not based on an implicit or explicit value judgement, it does however serve as an indication that the object in question could be of interest. That turns wonder into an essential ingredient of any of the passions. Without wonder “we would not be moved and would regard the object without any passion” (art. 53). An object that does not excite wonder is by definition exactly as we knew or supposed it to be, thus leaving us indifferent and not exciting any passion, emotion or feeling. Inversely, in order to arouse any of the passions or emotions, an object perceived or imagined must have something that renders it extraordinary in order to be important. The object of a passion is always something unusual.

An object can be extraordinary in two ways: either because it is something great and overwhelming or because it is little and negligible. If it is great, the corresponding emotion is called respect (*estime*); if small, disparagement (*mépris*). The object can be a thing or another person, but it can also be ourselves. If it is ourselves there is, according to Descartes, magnanimity (*magnanimité*) and pride (*orgueil*) whenever we judge ourselves to be great; humility (*humilité*) and unworthiness (*bassesse*) if by contrast we judge ourselves to be small or insignificant. Accordingly, magnanimity would be a form of self-respect which, like pride, is based on our judgement that we are something great and overwhelming, just like humility and lowliness are forms of self-depreciation based on the judgement that we are negligible. Such a judgement is either true or false. Pride and *bassesse* would be based on a false judgement – those passions are an indication that we exaggerate our own greatness or our own insignificance. Magnanimity, however, like humility, would be based on a true judgement. That judgement is, however, not supposed to be a

value judgement. Indeed, admiration and wonder precede the knowledge that “an object is pleasant or not” (art. 53) or that an object is good or bad (art. 71). Accordingly, if we judge ourselves to be ‘great,’ that does not necessarily mean that we judge ourselves to be ‘excellent.’ For example, if we judge ourselves to be ‘greater’ than, say, an insect or a microbe, that would not necessarily mean that we judge ourselves to be better, or more useful, than a worm or a microbe (even though it is not exactly clear what we are supposed to mean, according to Descartes, by judging ourselves to be ‘great’). In any case, magnanimity would be a particular kind of attention (wonder), caused by the unexpected but true judgement that we are, absolutely or relatively, something great and overwhelming.

So far I have spoken of magnanimity instead of generosity, and for good reasons – in fact, ‘magnanimity’ (*magnanimité*) is the term actually used by Descartes in the body of the text. In the title of the paragraph, however, the term ‘magnanimity’ is replaced by that of ‘generosity’ (*générosité*), which, apart from Pt III of the *Passions*, where it is discussed in detail, never reappears.¹ This suggests that ‘magnanimity’ as it occurs in Pt II of the *Passions* was replaced by ‘generosity’ during a rapid revision of the text – a revision that took place after Descartes submitted Pts I and II to Princess Elisabeth of the Palatinate (1618–1680), and after he wrote Pt III. In other words, the notion of ‘generosity’ would belong to a later stage of reflection during which Descartes must have realised the differences between his own concept of self-esteem and the traditional notion of magnanimity (art. 161). Accordingly, the terminological switch from magnanimity to generosity marks a conceptual shift in Descartes’ thinking on the passions and on the nature of morality. In what follows, I shall first briefly examine the history of the older concept of magnanimity (*magnanimitas*), then clarify the notion of generosity in Descartes, and finally determine to what extent the notion of generosity can still be useful.

Magnanimity

Magnanimitas or *animi magnitudo* (magnanimity), from which the French *magnanimité* and the English *magnanimity* obviously derive, is the Latin equivalent of the Greek word *megalopsychia*. This notion is used for the first time in Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics* (iv, 3). Basically, *megalopsychia* is justified pride: “the man is thought to be proud [*megalopsychos*] who thinks himself worthy

¹ This inconsistency is not corrected in the Latin edition; see Descartes 1997, 29.

of great things, being worthy of them; for he who does so beyond his deserts is a fool, but no excellent man is foolish or silly” (1123b1–4).² Pride presupposes greatness and excellence, “as beauty implies a good-sized body” (1123b6). Greatness, moreover, has not only a moral, but also a political and social, dimension, if only because the honour (*timè*) that is the proud man’s concern, is a social and political virtue, which the author of the *Nicomachean Ethics* defines elsewhere as the real aim of political life (i, 5, 1095b23). In fact, of all virtuous acts, those of a political and military nature are the highest in rank (x, 7, 1177b6–17). Aristotle realises that this emphasis on greatness may seem contrary to the importance he usually attaches to the *meson* or *mesotès* (mean state, middle, moderation). For although the *megalopsychos* seems to be “an extreme in respect of the greatness of his claims, he is a mean in respect of the rightness of them; for he claims what is in accordance with his merits, while the others go to excess or fall short” (iv, 3, 1123b13–16). The extreme, which greatness by definition is, is compensated by the rightness of his judgement and the appropriateness of his actions: “he deserves and claims great things and above all the greatest things” (iv, 3, 1123b17). That is the reason why the proud man is eminently virtuous: “pride seems to be the crown of the excellences; for it makes them greater and it is not found without them” (iv, 3, 1124a1–3).

In the post-Aristotelian evolution of this idea an important role was played by Cicero’s *De officiis*, in which *megalopsychia* returns as *animi magnitudo*. Whereas Aristotle still leaves some room for *megalopsychia* as an innate characteristic, Cicero emphasises the necessity of discipline. Being acquired, like all virtue, through a mental struggle, greatness of soul is above all courage or fortitude (*fortitudo*). The fact that in this struggle the soul has proven victorious provides an extra dimension to virtue: “that achievement is most glorious in the eyes of the world which is won with a spirit great, exalted and superior to the vicissitudes of earthly life” (i, xviii, 61).³ Accordingly, magnanimity expresses itself as moral courage, indifference to outward circumstances, freedom of the passions, and commitment to social and political justice. A ‘great soul’ then is characterised by two things:

A soul that is altogether courageous and great is marked above all by two characteristics: one of these is indifference to outward circumstances [*rerum externarum despicientia*]; for such a person cherishes the conviction that nothing but moral goodness and propriety deserves to be either admired or wished for or striven after, and that he ought not to be

² Translations are from Barnes 1984. For a discussion of *megalopsychia* in Aristotle see Hardie 1978.

³ Translations are those of Miller 1961 (*Loeb Classical Library*).

subject to any man or any passion or any accident of fortune. The second characteristic is that, when the soul is disciplined in the way above mentioned, one should do deeds not only great and in the highest degree useful but extremely arduous and fraught with danger both to life and to many things that make life worth living (*De officiis* i, xx, 60).

Both – indifference to outward fortune and great deeds – are indispensable, but for different reasons: “All the glory [*splendor*] and greatness [*amplitudo*] and, I may add, all the usefulness [*utilitas*] of these two things lies in the latter; the rational cause however [*causa autem et ratio*] that makes men great in the former” (i, xx, 67). Greatness of soul primarily manifests itself as an active life in the service of the community, which, however, presupposes virtue and mental discipline. True greatness of soul is therefore, together with prudence, justice and moderation, one of the cardinal virtues.

Descartes, who during his days at *La Flèche* must have been confronted with Cicero on an almost daily basis, was undoubtedly familiar with this theory. But in the higher forms of the college his readings probably also included Thomas Aquinas – in any case “une somme de Saint Thomas” and a Bible were among the books he took with him from France (Descartes to Mersenne, 25 December 1639, AT II, 630). In the *Summa theologica* ‘magnanimity’ is the subject of a *quaestio* (II^a II^{ae}, qu. 129). According to Thomas, a magnanimous man is concerned with honour (art. 1); true honour, however, is not external worldly honour but honour to God (art. 2, ad 3); accordingly, the greatness with which a great soul is concerned is to cultivate the talents he was given by God (art. 3, ad 4). The effect of magnanimity is therefore to govern the hope which arises from love and desire in accordance with the rule of reason, the good proper to man (*proprium hominis bonum*) being identical with the good of reason (*bonum rationis*). Despite the fact that what is hoped for is often difficult (*bonum arduum*), magnanimity makes it possible in virtue of the confidence (*fiducia*) and security (*securitas*) a great soul has acquired through self-knowledge. Finally, greatness of soul can be the effect of fortune (*bona fortunae*), but also and particularly of divine grace. There is no contradiction therefore between greatness of soul and Christian humility.

From Aristotle to Thomas Aquinas the notion of magnanimity has taken on various meanings. Whereas in Aristotle it is above all an aristocratic virtue which, so to speak, lays out the social and political programme of the upper class, this social and political commitment is reinterpreted by Cicero as the natural effect of the path to wisdom. Both see greatness of soul as characteristic of exceptional beings – exceptional through birth and social position in Aristotle; exceptional through mental discipline in Cicero. Thomas finally reinterprets this ideal in a democratic sense to the extent that he connects magnanimity with the Christian virtues of faith, hope and charity. Someone great of

soul is still an exceptional being. He is exceptional, however, not in the worldly sense, but in the Christian sense. Truly magnanimous is only the Christian who, humbly trusting in God and in himself, achieves true perfection by doing the *bonum arduum*.

Descartes and the passions

The main reason why Descartes could not simply copy the traditional theory of the passions was the fact that in his philosophy there can be no room for the distinction, let alone the tension, between a higher part of the soul and a lower part, the soul being according to him essentially one (art. 47; cf. art. 68). This distinction is replaced by another one: that between the soul, or the mind, and the body. According to Descartes, what is a passion of the soul is also an action of the body (art. 1). During a passion the soul undergoes a specific action of the body which as such is not only natural but also entirely explicable by natural means, the body being part of nature. Passions are natural reactions of the body – the fact that the physiological equivalents of the passions are also perceived in animals is offered as proof (art. 138). Accordingly, passions are no more evil than hunger or thirst; they become evil or good through their use (*usage*). This allows not only a different moral evaluation but also a different and more precise medical assessment.⁴ On a purely physiological level passions are adaptive reactions of the body. Humans, however, are mind-and-bodies. Moreover, their minds are connected with their bodies, not like a shipper and his ship (*Discours v*, AT VI, 59), but in a very intimate manner. Accordingly, these adaptive reactions can also be caused and maintained by thoughts and imaginations, which in turn makes it possible for them to be prolonged beyond their natural limit. In certain cases (sadness, hatred) this can cause serious disorders; inversely, some passions, particularly love and joy, are almost invariably healthy (art. 97).

Again, as compared to traditional philosophy, Descartes' main point may well be that the soul is one, having no faculties or parts (art. 68). The only essential distinction within the soul is that between acting and being acted upon, between a passive and an active condition. The soul is active in so far as it wills; it is acted upon in so far as it perceives. However, the only thing the soul immediately perceives is the body. If we see the house on the other side of the street, what we actually perceive is the impression it makes on our

⁴ For a more detailed analysis see Verbeek 1989.

nervous system; if we imagine an absent friend, what we actually perceive is the traces our thoughts and perceptions of him have left in our brain. A passion is a specific perception, different, not only from seeing or remembering, but also from sensations like feeling hunger, thirst or pain, which are always located in a particular part of the body. What is perceived in a passion is ultimately not a pattern in the brain, as in sense perception and imagination and even in bodily sensations like pain, hunger and thirst, but a condition of the entire system, caused by a specific property of the blood which in turn results in, or from, an anomaly in the circulation. Hatred, for example, although it is caused by the perception or the imagination of a hateful object (that is, an object from which we want to detach ourselves), is primarily the awareness of what one might call a particular syndrome, composed of an irregular pulse, shivers, a painful heat in the breast and a feeling of queasiness (art. 98). That syndrome is caused by what is primarily a stomach disorder: the animal spirits are directed to the muscles of the stomach to prevent the food from mixing with the blood, so the usual reservoirs of nourishment, which are the spleen and the lower part of the liver (which contains a lot of bile) are opened in order to allow coarser blood particles to mix with the blood – the unequal composition of the blood in turn causes the fire in the heart to ‘burn’ irregularly, so that the animal spirits, which are nothing but the more subtle particles of the blood, are also irregular (art. 103). Hence the shivers, the irregular pulse, the painful heat in the breast, etc. However, feeling all those things is what turns an ordinary judgement (‘this person has done something ugly: we should have nothing to do with him’) into a *passion* (‘I hate him’). This feeling is neither a luxury nor an additional burden. Like the feelings of hunger, thirst and pain, which constantly and forcefully remind us that our body is in urgent need of food, water or care, it constantly and forcefully reminds us that we are in the presence of someone whom we should actually flee. They prevent us from being distracted from what should be our primary concern and in doing so provide certain of our volitions with a particular urgency.

Most importantly, the fact that the passions are no longer situated, as in classical theory, in the lower part of the soul but in the body makes it impossible that the soul will ever manage to completely control the passions (art. 46). To be sure, we can teach ourselves how to discipline the passions, that is, we can learn how to control certain bodily reactions, but the only way to do so is by using other passions. If we hate a person, a thing, a situation, but cannot avoid them, we can try and have thoughts we know give us love or joy and change our bodily condition so that it becomes incompatible with the syndrome of hatred. In such a case we use a passion to fight another passion.

However, we cannot simply by force of will or clarity of intellect eliminate a passion, given the fact that the body, which is what we actually feel when having a passion, is subject to the same laws as the rest of nature. Complete freedom of the passions, therefore, is not only unnecessary; it is as unnatural, as dangerous and as impossible as a life without pain, hunger and thirst. Not only are the passions the natural consequence of our being body-and-soul; like pain, hunger and thirst, we need them to compensate for our freedom.⁵

Descartes and Generosity

Like humility and lowliness, generosity and pride belong to the class of admiration and wonder, which makes them different from all other passions. Wonder affects only the brain, its only role being to draw attention to a certain thought. As a result, its only physical effect is in the brain, where one finds “the organs of sense which give us that kind of knowledge” (art. 71). Accordingly, it causes no changes in the heart and the blood, its object being neither something good nor something evil, but something unusual which is possibly important. Instead of being itself a passion, wonder is the precondition of each passion. Without wonder, that is, without the realisation that we are confronting something extraordinary we “consider the object without any passion” (art. 53). That this neutral interpretation of wonder cannot be carried through becomes clear not only from Descartes’ terminology (*estime*, *mépris*), which is by no means neutral, but also from other considerations. Thus, for example, we can not be indifferent, according to Descartes, about whether the object in question has, or has not, a free will, that is, whether that object can do good and evil (art. 55). In some of its manifestations wonder thus presupposes a moral judgement or in any case an awareness of moral values (whatever those may be). Moreover, unlike wonder in general, feelings like respect and disdain, especially if they are directed towards ourselves, affect not only the brain but

⁵ Although this argument is not explicitly in Descartes I think it is the only way to account for them metaphysically. The effect of freedom is a partial suspension of bodily mechanisms: Although we are not free to breathe or not to breathe, we are to a certain extent free to eat or not to eat. The feeling of hunger reminds us that the body needs food. Indeed, without the feeling of hunger we would not know that the body needs food – the intellect simply is not equipped to arrive by itself at an accurate judgement as to what the body needs at a given moment. Accordingly, the feeling of hunger is necessary because we are free. In a similar way we need passions like fear or even hatred (hatred is not bad if the object is actually harmful), to remind us of the necessity to act, even before we have intellectually decided that we should act.

also the animal spirits, and in a way which according to Descartes is so manifest and so obvious that “in those who think of themselves better or worse than usual, even their forbearance, their gestures and their entire behaviour is changed” (art. 151). This raises many questions, particularly with respect to the notion of generosity which is generally, and correctly, seen as the key concept of Descartes’ moral theory.

Here is first how Descartes describes it:

True generosity consists therein that one knows, on one hand, that among the things one has there is nothing that truly belongs to oneself but that free disposition of one’s acts of will [*cette libre disposition de ses volontés*] and that one can be praised or blamed only in so far as one makes use of that in a good or evil way; on the other hand that one feels in oneself the steady and constant determination to use it well, that is, never to lack the will to do and achieve whatever one judges to be the best – and that means to follow virtue perfectly (art. 153).

True generosity would be, first of all, knowledge, namely, the awareness of our own freedom – as opposed to all the other things we could know about ourselves (character, talents) in respect of which we are not entirely free. Freedom in this context is primarily freedom to act. Accordingly, the only things for which we can be praised or blamed are our acts in so far as they are freely willed. Pride is justified only in so far as we have reason to be proud of the acts we have truly willed. This freedom is something truly exceptional in so far as no other animals have it. In fact, the freedom of our will makes us “in a way similar to God to the extent that it turns us into masters over ourselves, provided we do not lose through cowardice the rights God has given us” (art. 152). As a result, we can be an object of wonder to ourselves – whenever we realise the freedom of our will we are surprised by our exceptional place in nature. The awareness of our own freedom confronts us with an extraordinary fact, namely, that of our extraordinary greatness. For, although we are animals like others in having a similar body, we are similar to God in having a God-like freedom. This divine property gives us a divine right, namely, the right to govern ourselves instead of being governed by nature. At the same time, we can forfeit those rights through cowardice, through lack of courage. However, courage belongs to the family of desire (art. 59). If generosity therefore consists in wonder about our exceptional place in nature, it can be sustained only through the persistent desire not to lose the right to govern ourselves, that is, to fall back to the purely animal state of being governed by nature.

There is yet another aspect of generosity. Generosity entails a particular relation to other free beings. Once again, it is not a matter of indifference whether we are dealing with ordinary objects or with humans, that is, with

beings that are free to do good or evil (art. 55). Not only is freedom a universal property of humans; provided it is rightly used freedom entails independence and responsibility. As a result, a truly generous person will behave respectfully towards others, in the belief that if they make a mistake “this will be the result of lack of knowledge rather than good will” (art. 154). He will also be humble, seeing that “his own mistakes are not smaller than those that can be committed by others” (art. 155). He is polite and helpful, ready to do great things (although averse from things which surpass his forces), and he is in control of his passions, “in particular of his desires.” He is free not only from envy and jealousy but also from fear “because the trust in his virtue gives him security.” Finally, he is free from anger (*colère*) because, “having little regard for what depends on others, he will not give his enemies the advantage of seeing that he is offended by them” (art. 156).

At first sight Descartes’ notion of generosity presents itself as an easy synthesis of the various elements he could find in Aristotle, Cicero and Thomas – indeed, one would say he had made a careful study of them all. But there are important differences, some of them grounded in Descartes’ general philosophy. Together they probably explain the replacement of ‘magnanimity’ with ‘generosity.’

Unlike Aristotelian or Ciceronian magnanimity Cartesian generosity is not the crown of all virtue or what makes other virtues splendid but virtue itself. The only way to be truly virtuous is to realise that one is free, that one has certain rights, namely those following from the right to govern oneself, but also that that right can be forfeited by not governing oneself in cases where it was possible to do so. In any case, knowledge of virtue does not precede generosity but is identical with generosity, that is, with wonder about one’s own exceptional place in nature. On the other hand, it is clear that Descartes integrates important elements of the theories of Cicero and Thomas. From Cicero he takes the idea that virtue can be sustained only through moral courage – a good is better when it is harder to achieve, if only because the better we do achieve it the more we realise our freedom. From Thomas he takes the idea that generosity entails humility – the more we are aware of our freedom, the better we realise our failures, which in turn makes us patient with the failures of others. The main difference, however, is that Descartes’ ultimate goal is not the elimination or suppression of the passions but their control in the service of freedom: all passions are legitimate and ‘natural’ as long as they do not prevent the exercise of our freedom. Virtue, on the other hand, would consist in cultivating our freedom, in manipulating ourselves, our passions, and our environment in such a way that we can remain an object of wonder for ourselves and continue to be aware of how we are something extraordinary.

The main difference from Aristotle, on the other hand, is that, whereas Aristotle clearly saw *megalopsychia* as an eminently aristocratic quality, manifesting itself primarily in typically aristocratic pursuits like the military and the body politic, Descartes gives it a ‘democratic’ turn – every human is free and even those who are not philosophers can be aware of their freedom. It should be admitted, however that on this particular point Descartes is not entirely consistent and perhaps even contradictory. Indeed, the very reason why Descartes prefers ‘generosity’ to ‘magnanimity’ is, that it is a question of birth:

there is no virtue to which a good birth contributes as much as that which makes that one esteems oneself in accordance with one’s exact value; it is easy to believe that all the souls God places in our bodies are not equally noble and strong (which is the reason why I call this virtue generosity, in accordance with our own language, instead of magnanimity, in accordance with the language of the Schools, where it is little known) (art. 161).

Thus the fact that not all souls are equally noble – that their strength and nobility are primarily an innate quality – would be the reason why Descartes prefers to speak of ‘generosity.’ Despite the reference to ‘our language’ (French supposedly), this suggests that Descartes uses the word in its ancient meaning, namely, that of nobility – it would only be secondarily that it is used for the properties that characterise the nobility, namely, liberality, etc., all of which can also be acquired. For according to Descartes

it is nonetheless certain that a good education is very helpful to redress the shortcomings of birth and that if one keeps considering what the free will is and how great the advantages produced by the firm resolution to use it well are, without forgetting how vain and useless are the concerns of the overambitious, one can excite in oneself the passion, and then acquire the virtue, of generosity, which being as it were the key to all other virtues and the general remedy against all the disorders of the passions, seems to me to deserve a proper study (art. 161).

There are noble and strong souls – and there is a good chance that those of noble birth have one – but nobility and strength can also be acquired, provided one is attentive to one’s freedom and does not cease to admire it.

Conclusion

Cartesian moral philosophy is not concerned with either acts or knowledge. What we need to know in order to be virtuous is not what constitutes a good act nor how many virtues there are and what they are but that we are free and

that our freedom is something exceptional – which in principle does not require much philosophy. And as soon as we fully realise that we are free and wonder at our freedom we no longer have to ask ourselves what we should do – we will do whatever is best to protect our freedom, carefully consider all the possible ways of acting and doing what is best, and having done it never regret it. This makes it possible to connect generosity with the notion of ‘dignity,’ which in modern debates on human rights plays a very important role. Generosity would be the awareness of the specific value of human beings, which according to Descartes, does not primarily consist in their being rational but in their being free. It would be in virtue of their freedom, rather than their intellectual capacities, that men achieve excellence and that they realise their specific dignity. This dignity is not just an object of pride and wonder; it gives us rights (namely, the right of self-governance) and it imposes duties (namely, the duty to act in accordance with that dignity). To deserve freedom and to preserve our privileges we should act with dignity, that is, we should avoid doing or suffering whatever could diminish our freedom. Accordingly, there is nothing intrinsically wrong with the passions. On the contrary, “those who are most moved by them can taste the sweetest things of life.” To be sure, they can also be “a source of great bitterness if they do not use them well and if life is against them.” But wisdom helps “in so far as it teaches us how to govern and discipline them in such a way that the evil they produce can be tolerated and that joy can be found in all” (art. 212).

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Édouard Mehl

Auto-affection et *cogito*

Sur le cartésianisme de Michel Henry

Abstract: In this paper, the aim is to reconstruct Michel Henry's interpretation of Descartes' *cogito* through the various phases of its elaboration (from the *Essence de la Manifestation* to the *Phénoménologie matérielle*), and to discuss its supposed 'phenomenological' character. Henry claims that Cartesian doubt reverses the 'clara et distincta perceptio' (*lumen naturale*); furthermore, he considers that the disqualification of the *lumen naturale* is a condition for attaining the *cogito* itself. Arguing that doubting cannot be implemented without the exercise of the intellect, an intellect that considers the *rationes dubitandi*, I attempt to show here that (and how) the feeling of existence, though still without a concept, can however be evoked and conceived as the production of an intelligible idea (*idea mei ipsius*), even though this idea, in my opinion, possesses no objective reality.

Une théorie des passions et des émotions à l'âge classique ne peut guère que s'ancrer dans la discussion sur la possibilité du *cogito* et la problématique cartésienne de l'union de l'âme et du corps. La connaissance des «passions de l'âme» présuppose celle de l'âme, au moins autant que celle du corps.¹ En revanche, peut-on en effet admettre que la connaissance des passions de l'âme apporte quoi que ce soit à celle de la *cogitatio* et à l'élucidation de son essence? Une philosophie qui conçoit avant tout les passions comme des causes de trouble ou de diversion de l'esprit, qui n'envisage la possibilité de la pure *theoria* que dans la méditation solitaire, l'*abductio a sensibus* et le silence des passions², peut-elle puiser en elles de quoi nourrir une réflexion sans précé-

1 D'autant que ce que l'on prend pour des passions de l'âme sont en fait, le plus souvent, des «pensées raisonnables» qui ne requièrent aucun corps, cf. *Descartes à Chanut*, 1^{er} février 1647, AT IV, 602, 3–8: «Et tous ces mouvements de la volonté auxquels consistent l'amour, la joie et la tristesse, et le désir, en tant que ce sont des pensées raisonnables, et non point des passions, se pourraient trouver en notre âme, encore qu'elle n'eût point de corps».

2 Descartes, *Discours de la Méthode*, II^e partie, AT VI, 11, 8–12: «[...] ne trouvant aucune conversation qui me divertît, et n'ayant, par bonheur, aucuns soins ni passions qui me troublasent, je demeurais tout le jour enfermé seul dans un poêle, où j'avais tout loisir de m'entretenir de mes pensées».

dent et sans exemple, comme veut l'être celle des *Meditationes de prima philosophia*, sur ce que penser est et signifie?

Cette question est notamment soulevée par une analyse contemporaine qui relève de la phénoménologie au sens large – encore que cette interprétation nous confronte justement à la *quaestio vexata* de la définition de la phénoménologie: il s'agit de l'interprétation du cogito par Michel Henry dans son maître ouvrage, *l'Essence de la Manifestation* (1963), et poursuivi dans sa *Généalogie de la Psychanalyse* (1985). Une étude de Jean-Luc Marion («Générosité et phénoménologie. Remarques sur l'interprétation du cogito cartésien par Michel Henry»)³ donne encore à cette lecture une extension nouvelle, en trouvant dans le *Traité des Passions de l'âme* et dans la générosité une illustration et une confirmation de ce que Michel Henry donne pour la structure intime de la *cogitatio* cartésienne: l'auto-affection.⁴ Cette lecture appelle trois questions, auxquelles on s'efforcera de répondre ici: 1. L'auto-affection décrit-elle, au lieu de l'intentionnalité, la structure de la *cogitatio*? 2. Qu'y a-t-il de strictement irréductible au «simple» cogito dans la générosité cartésienne? 3. Doit-on s'en tenir à cette disjonction représentation / (auto-)affection pour penser la manière dont l'existence affecte l'esprit?

1 *Cogito ergo sum*: Auto-affection vs intentionnalité?

Pour aborder ce premier point, il faut d'abord retracer, avec M. Henry et J.-L. Marion, les grandes lignes de l'histoire de l'interprétation du cogito, que ces deux auteurs ramènent à trois figures exemplaires: Kant, Husserl, Heidegger. On passera rapidement sur le premier, Kant, avec qui s'amorce une irrémédiable *Ichspaltung*, entre le *Je* sujet de la connaissance et celui qui en est l'objet, c'est-à-dire tel qu'il s'apparaît lui-même dans le sens interne. Cette *Ichspaltung* n'est en fait pas originaire: elle est précédée par une autre, plus essentielle – du moins plus générale – entre la représentation et la sensation. La sensation, pour Kant, serait l'autre absolu de la représentation, de telle sorte que «dans

3 Marion 1988 (repris 1990); version anglaise Marion 1993; recension critique de cette étude par Kambouchner 1991, 61–70.

4 Ces textes sont encadrés par plusieurs articles rédigés dans les années 1980, qu'on pourra lire dans Henry 2003, notamment «La critique du sujet», «L'ego du cogito» et «Le cogito de Descartes et l'idée d'une phénoménologie idéale». On se reportera également ici à la *Phénoménologie matérielle*, Henry 1990.

la représentation il n'y a pas de sensation possible»⁵, affirme Henry à propos de Kant; ceci, selon lui, vaut aussi bien de Husserl, auteur et victime d'un ruineux dualisme au sein même des «vécus» entre les moments matériels, hylétiques, et les intentions de signification.

D'où l'idée directrice que les représentations sont neutres, et n'affectent pas le sujet pensant; que la pensée représentative et le milieu extatique de la visibilité où se déploie le voir clair et distinct, excluent l'affectivité, sauf à n'en donner à voir que la représentation «vide» ou, si l'on préfère, «morte».⁶ Faute de voir ou de saisir que l'auto-affection originaire en quoi consiste la Vie est la condition primaire de tout apparaître, la pensée refoule l'affectivité en s'en dissimule l'essence sous la forme d'une définition neutre (les sentiments sont des «pensées obscures» comme disait Descartes, traduisant ainsi l'incapacité de la représentation à se saisir de la vie⁷). Toute «représentation» dans l'ekstasis du temps et de l'espace est donc une opération de substitution ou d'escamotage; la représentation comme telle masque et dissimule la vérité qu'est l'auto-affection originaire. Le *Je pense* n'est lui-même qu'un principe pensable, mais vide, dévitalisé, indigent, une représentation vide substituée à l'auto-affection qu'est la Vie s'éprouvant elle-même:

D'entrée de jeu Kant a substitué au *cogito* une représentation de celui-ci, il a substitué au mode selon lequel se phénoménalise la phénoménalité dans cette dimension originelle de révélation qui définit le *cogito* lui-même, l'âme, la pensée de Descartes – révélation dont Kant ne sait rien – la phénoménalité de la représentation, la seule qu'il connaisse, celle qui se produit dans l'*ekstasis*, dans la pensée considérée comme représentation, et aussi dans l'intuition.⁸

Cette lecture, sur laquelle on ne peut guère s'attarder ici, est fortement imprégnée de l'interprétation schopenhauerienne de Kant, un Schopenhauer selon

5 Henry 1985/2003², 131. Les sentiments ou sensations représentées étaient caractérisées, dans l'*Essence de la Manifestation*, Henry 1963/1990², 787, comme un sentiment «irréel». Si bien que «[...] c'est là ce qui fait de celui-ci, du milieu de la représentation et de la transcendance, le milieu ontologique de l'irréalité».

6 «Dans l'essence noématique de la *cogitatio* le pathos n'est jamais qu'une signification vide [...] Qu'est-ce qui nous permet d'appeler pathos un tel contenu noématique *mort*, dépourvu de la capacité de se sentir soi-même, quand le pathos n'est rien d'autre que cette capacité, que le souffrir immédiat de la vie?». Henry 1990, 126.

7 «Dans la révélation du sentiment, dans son être phénoménologique effectif et réel, il n'y a rien qui puisse être rendu homogène à la phénoménalité où s'accomplit la perception de la pensée ni se glisser en elle. C'est pourquoi il est faux de dire, comme le fait Descartes, qu'il y a dans nos sentiments une part de vérité, au sens où il l'entend, qu'on peut 'apprendre à distinguer' en eux 'ce qu'il y a de clair d'avec ce qu'il y a d'obscur'». Henry 1963/1990², 687. [AT VIII, 33 = PP I, art. 68].

8 Henry 1985/2003², 150.

qui la «représentation» détermine bien l'objectivité, mais recouvre le champ de l'expérience vivante et de l'intuition par le voile des apparences.⁹ En tous les cas, c'est avec Kant que la fenêtre entrouverte sur la Vie pensée comme auto-affection immanente se referme pour lui substituer la problématique d'une critique de la représentation et des conditions de possibilités de l'expérience (celle-ci entendue en son sens le plus restrictif comme le domaine de l'objectivité).¹⁰

Si Henry se montre par ailleurs très critique vis-à-vis de la phénoménologie husserlienne, qu'il accuse de poursuivre au fond le projet d'une «critique de la représentation», il reste que sa lecture du *cogito* cartésien demeure, à au moins deux égards, tributaire de la lecture husserlienne.

1) Eu égard, d'abord, à l'inflexion fondamentale et à l'élargissement que Husserl veut donner à la notion de «transcendental» pour y réintégrer la subjectivité vivante¹¹: Henry, lui, dans un geste qui n'est pas sans évoquer Husserl, mais retourné contre Husserl lui-même, abandonne la notion même de transcendantal au profit de la notion d'origine: ce qui était transcendantal chez Husserl devient originel, originaire, «archique». Lorsqu'il est donc question d'une dimension originelle de révélation qui définit la pensée elle-même (la pensée au sens de Descartes), il s'agit d'un *pathos*, d'une auto-affection originaire qui précède toute phénoménalité et toute représentation d'objet, et vis-à-vis de laquelle la pensée est radicalement passive, sans possibilité de se

9 Henry 1985/2003², 161. M. Henry a cependant bien relevé le «contresens» de Schopenhauer à propos du phénomène kantien, déréalisé et interprété en un sens qui renvoie davantage à Platon ou à la pensée indienne qu'à Kant lui-même. Mais ce «contresens» manifeste, pour Henry, le véritable génie de Schopenhauer dévoilant ainsi l'impossibilité d'accéder à la réalité dans l'*ek-stasis* de la représentation.

10 Cette lecture par trop radicale de la *Critique de la Raison Pure*, selon laquelle l'essence de la subjectivité devient littéralement impensable et anéantie par la position du sujet transcendantal, on préférera l'analyse plus mesurée de Benoist 1994, ch. III (*Que signifie pour le sujet d'être transcendantal?*).

11 Déjà, pour Husserl, l'ego ne peut être pensé comme un pur et simple pôle des représentations qu'en rapport à la vie: l'ego n'est pas un «vécu», mais bien celui qui les vit, ou bien celui en qui la vie se vit elle-même: «Il n'est rien sans ses actes, sans son flux de vécus, sans la vie vivante, qui flue de lui-même tout en étant contemporaine de lui» («Dieses reine Ich als Pol ist aber nichts ohne seine Akte, ohne seinen Erlebnisstrom, ohne das lebendige Leben, das ihm selbst gleichsam entströmt») Ms. E, III 2, 1920–1921, cité par Benoist 1994, 15–16. L'inflexion du transcendantal se marque donc déjà par la substitution des «vécus» aux «représentations». Il faut noter que cette emphase dans la description de la subjectivité vivante, jusqu'à une certaine forme de tautologie («das lebendige Leben»), prend directement position contre l'ouvrage exactement contemporain d'Heinrich Rickert *Die Philosophie des Lebens* (Rickert 1920), pamphlet rationaliste dirigé contre les soi-disant «philosophies» de la vie depuis le *Sturm und Drang* jusqu'à Nietzsche, Bergson, Scheler.

soustraire à ce souffrir qui est un se-souffrir et s'ouvrir à soi-même, un pathos qui définit l'essence même de l'ipséité – du *je pense*. Il y a donc chez Henry quelque chose comme un redoublement et une radicalisation de la critique husserlienne du kantisme, conçu comme une simple enquête sur les conditions de possibilité de l'expérience, et comme une ontologie de l'étant en tant qu'objet.

Reste à savoir si ce redoublement et cette radicalisation avec, en sus, l'abandon progressif du concept (même élargi) de transcendantal, demeure dans le champ de la phénoménologie, ou retourne à une forme de métaphysique archi-idéaliste construite sur ce pur noumène qu'est l'auto-affection (l'importance du recours à Schopenhauer dans la *Généalogie de la Psychanalyse* en témoignerait d'ailleurs). Henry maintient son appartenance à la phénoménologie en redéfinissant le champ de la phénoménalité, dont la «phénoménalité extatique» n'est selon lui qu'une espèce. Mais peut-on parler sans contradiction de phénoménalité inextatique, d'un apparaître qui demeure absolument hétérogène à tous les modes de la manifestation du visible, ou de cette «immanence muette»¹² supposée définir la pensée? On le peut, estime Henry, à la condition de renoncer à demander *comment ceci* – la pensée – *apparaît*, car Henry identifie strictement la pensée et l'apparaître: «L'apparaître comme tel, Descartes, dans son langage, l'appelle 'pensée'»; «l'âme tient son essence de l'apparaître et le désigne proprement».¹³ En ce sens, pour Henry, la question n'est pas de savoir s'il y a une phénoménalité (et partant une phénoménologie) inextatique, mais de comprendre pourquoi la phénoménologie historique, cartésienne puis husserlienne, s'est immédiatement rabatue vers les plus pauvres des «phénomènes», et, pour ainsi dire, vers l'arrière-ban de la phénoménalité, moyennant quoi l'*ego* transcendantal peine à constituer un monde vivant et vivable.

2) Deuxième caractère «husserlien» de la lecture henryenne du *cogito* cartésien: la fulgurance et la déchéance de l'absolu phénoménologique dans le discours cartésien. Comme Husserl, Henry gratifie Descartes d'une découverte sans précédent, d'une forme de commencement absolu mais aussitôt perdu en même temps que retraduit dans le code métaphysique de la substantialité, et noyé dans le projet cartésien, en quoi se résume la métaphysique des Temps Modernes: un projet d'objectivation de l'étant. Ce point de vue interprétatif présente l'avantage insigne qu'il permet d'assigner à Descartes à la fois la clairvoyance et la cécité, il permet de distinguer entre un cartésianisme primordial, authentique, dans lequel le philosophe aurait énoncé, avec le génie des

¹² Henry 1985/2003², 44.

¹³ Henry 1985/2003², 18, 22.

somnambules, la première vérité de l'étant, et un cartésianisme déchéant, prisonnier des intérêts épistémiques de la science classique et incapable de saisir l'être en dehors de l'idée claire et distincte, de l'évidence. On reconnaît sans difficulté le tour husserlien de cette lecture, même si, pour finir, exactement à l'opposé de Husserl, elle fait justement du primat du «transcendental» le signe même de la déchéance du cartésianisme, quand Husserl, lui, voyait plutôt cette déchéance dans le fait d'avoir raté (*Verfehlen*) l'orientation «transcendantale» de la science qu'appelait la découverte de l'*ego* comme «subjectivité transcendante».¹⁴

Le résultat de cette critique radicale n'est pas l'abandon du *cogito* mais l'affirmation d'un *cogito* non-représentatif, à l'opposé de la lecture heideggerienne qui interprète tout *cogito* comme un *cogito me cogitare* ce que, selon J.-L. Marion cette fois, Descartes dément expressément dans un texte capital des *Septimae Responiones*¹⁵, au nom de l'immédiateté d'un *ego cogitans* qui se sent penser sans écart entre un Je et un moi, sans redoublement réflexif, enfin sans l'extase de la représentation. L'inhérence des *cogitationes* est tellement immédiate qu'il est d'ailleurs impossible de les récuser, comme Descartes peut l'affirmer des passions de l'âme qui sont «si proches et si intérieures à notre âme, qu'il est impossible qu'elle les sente sans qu'elles soient véritablement telles qu'elle les sent».¹⁶ D'où, contre la formule forgée par Heidegger pour atteindre l'essence du *cogito* (*cogito me cogitare*)¹⁷, l'accent porté sur cette autre, authentiquement cartésienne: *videre videor* («il me semble que je vois», *Meditatio Secunda*), dont Henry fait la formule canonique du *cogito*. Par cette formule, Descartes déplacerait le poids de la certitude du voir, qu'on peut toujours récuser, à la «semblance» elle-même, à un sembler en quoi consiste l'apparaître même de la pensée, sans l'extase de la représentation.

Dans le procès de l'*ordo rationum* cartésien, la formule *videre videor* doit servir à démontrer que le sentir est un mode de la pensée, ce qui n'a rien d'évident; dans son commentaire henryen, il s'agit plutôt de montrer que penser est sentir, un se-sentir-pensant qui ne se laisse pas décrire dans la langue des phénomènes constitués, ni comparer avec ce que l'on appelle, d'une formule très amphibologique et problématique, les «objets des sens». La démons-

14 Husserl, *Cartesianische Meditationen*, §§ 8–10.

15 Marion 1988, 59–61.

16 Descartes, *Traité des Passions de l'âme* (désormais TPA), art. 26, AT XI, 348. Sur l'immédiateté de la conscience, PP 1, 9, AT IX-2, 28: «Par le mot de penser, j'entends tout ce qui se fait en nous de telle sorte que nous l'apercevons immédiatement par nous-mêmes». Cf. *Exposé géométrique*, AT VII, 160g: «[...] ut ejus immediate conscii simus [...]».

17 C'est principalement dans le *Nietzsche II* que se rencontre cette formule. Pour l'évaluation critique de sa pertinence, voir Marion 1981, 391, n. 32, puis Marion 1986, 102.

tration de M. Henry se fonde de manière constante sur la citation de l'art. 26 des *Passions de l'âme*, que l'on vient de citer, et plus précisément sur le dernier alinéa de cet article, qui fait ressurgir la situation du *videre videor*:

Ainsi souvent lorsqu'on dort, & même quelque fois étant éveillé, on imagine si fortement certaines choses, qu'on pense les voir devant soi, ou les sentir en son corps, bien qu'elles n'y soient aucunement; mais encore qu'on soit endormi et qu'on rêve, on ne saurait se sentir triste, ou ému de quelque autre passion, qu'il ne soit très vrai que l'âme a en soi cette passion.¹⁸

Henry conclut de ce texte à l'immanence radicale du sentir, dans la mesure où, pour lui, le rêve désigne l'immanence d'une *cogitatio* dont la phénoménalité extatique est forclosée. Mais il faut demander si le texte ne dit pas précisément l'inverse, à savoir que l'intentionnalité que le rêve postule, au lieu de l'annuler (puisque rêver c'est «imaginer [...] certaines choses, qu'on pense [...] voir devant soi, ou [...] sentir en son corps», et que «les imaginations [...] peuvent être d'aussi véritables passions que les perceptions [...]») porte à elle seule le poids de la constitution d'un monde: le monde public de la veille, et le monde privé du rêveur, qui n'est pas moins «monde» que l'autre.¹⁹ N'est-ce pas là aussi tout le sens du *videre videor*, qui n'est pas de disqualifier le «voir» comme tel (celui que Husserl appelle la «vue pure») mais bien d'affirmer qu'encore que tout soit possiblement faux, et encore même qu'il n'y ait peut-être aucun – vrai – monde, je ne laisse pas d'avoir le *sentiment de voir*, d'entendre, de me chauffer, etc. Qu'est-ce à dire, de surcroît, sinon affirmer le caractère purement transcendantal de l'idée de monde, «monde» qui ne désigne pas le tout de l'étant subsistant, mais la structure même du penser, ou bien du *sentir*, toujours ressenti et interprété dans et comme une certaine expérience d'un monde²⁰, fût-il celui, souvent pauvre et asphyxiant – mais alors d'autant plus impérieux, et pour parler comme Heidegger, *waltend* – du rêve ou de la folie?²¹

La démonstration entreprise par la *Généalogie de la Psychanalyse* pour exhumer la vérité du *cogito* comme immanence du sentir originel (donc un

¹⁸ AT XI, 348, 28–349, 7.

¹⁹ Cf. Héraclite, *Fragments*, Diels-Kranz B 89, Pradeau 117, Héraclite 2002, 174.

²⁰ On notera l'usage du pronom indéfini dans le *Synopsis* des *Meditationes*, contrastant avec le caractère assertif de l'énoncé (*revera esse*), AT VII, 16, 1: «*revera esse aliquem mundum*».

²¹ *Weltlosigkeit* et «solipsisme» ne sont donc pas du tout les caractères fondamentaux de l'*ego* cartésien, comme au fond, Heidegger lui-même semble l'avoir entrevu en esquisant une interprétation de *Dasein* par un retour à la formule *ego sum cogitans* (*Sein und Zeit*, § 43; nous rejoignons ici – par d'autres voies – Marion 1989, 155). De fait, la critique heideggerienne de la «subjectivité» en est surtout une de la *Vorhandenheit*, comme le rappelle Courtine 2009, 103–115.

cogito non représentationnel et non transcendantal) repose en grande partie sur l'analyse du doute en ce qu'il a d'«hyperbolique»; en effet, l'hyperbole du doute consiste à récuser et à mettre entre parenthèses le transcendantal lui-même, ou bien le dimensionnel extatique de la représentation qui constitue le champ et le domaine d'exercice de la lumière naturelle: M. Henry décrit encore le doute comme «la mise hors-jeu de la structure de la représentation elle-même». ²² Le doute hyperbolique n'est pas un doute rationnel, mais un doute «contre la nature de l'entendement, contre la *ratio*». ²³ Aussi Henry peut-il affirmer que «l'entendement n'intervient en aucune façon dans le procès de la réduction», un réduction qui n'aboutit donc pas à l'ego comme *intellectus sive ratio*, mais au *videor*, à cet apparaître dit «originel» qui définit à lui seul l'âme, autrement dit, selon des formules propres à Henry, où la redondance n'est pas censée énoncer une pure tautologie: la «venue à soi de l'apparaître», «l'auto impression originelle en laquelle toute impression s'auto-impressionne elle-même» ²⁴, «l'auto donation originelle de la donation [...] soit [...] la *cogitatio*» ²⁵, etc.

Pareille lecture fait évidemment violence au texte cartésien, qui ne cesse de clamer et revendiquer sinon la parfaite rationalité du doute, du moins sa pleine et entière vraisemblance. Si l'ego méditatif peut effectivement douter, c'est parce que des «raisons de douter» (*rationes dubitandi*) s'offrent à lui avec une certaine vraisemblance, fût-elle momentanée seulement. Si le même *ego* méditant doit se rendre à l'évidence que cette affirmation, *je suis, j'existe*, est la première et la plus certaine de toutes, c'est parce que l'inconsistance de l'argument du malin génie s'impose à une lumière naturelle qui ne peut être mise hors-circuit, le doute y trouvant sa condition de possibilité. C'est donc certainement là, dès le doute, qu'achoppe la lecture henryenne du *cogito*. Mais l'objection la plus sérieuse qu'on puisse lui faire concerne la prétendue disjonction entre la représentation (qui est toujours représentation d'un autre, jeté en face) et la sensation, ou plutôt le «sentir» comme mode originel selon lequel la pensée s'apparaît à elle-même, hors l'extase de la représentation et

²² Henry, «La critique du sujet», in Henry 2003, 14.

²³ Henry 1985/2003², 48.

²⁴ Henry 1985/2003², 130.

²⁵ Henry 1990, 74. Henry signale d'ailleurs que toutes ces formules tautologiques entendent désigner rigoureusement l'être même, ni plus ni moins, puisqu'elles ont toutes trait à l'apparaître pur (sens 1: phénomène au sens strict) de ce qui paraît (sens 2: phénomène au sens trivial, mondain, antique, etc.), donc à la phénoménalité «pure», autrement dit – avec Heidegger – «L'apparaître [sens 1] qui lui [sc. le phénomène au sens 2] donne de se montrer ainsi et d'être de la sorte le se-montrant, le manifeste, c'est l'être dans sa différence d'avec l'étant». Henry 1990, 115.

la distance qu'impose la *Gegenständlichkeit*. Cette disjonction fonde une nouvelle espèce de dualisme qui nous semble ruineux pour la compréhension des *Meditationes* et des *Passions de l'âme*, dualisme auquel il faudra tenter d'opposer l'indifférenciation des énoncés cartésiens, comme celui-ci qui est bien connu: «Cette connaissance [«je pense donc je suis»] n'est point un ouvrage de votre raisonnement [...] votre esprit la voit, la sent et la manie».26 Ici, *voir* et *sentir que l'on voit* sont une seule et même chose, c'est l'acte propre de ce que Descartes appelle, assez rarement de fait, mais sans états d'âme, la «conscience».27

Le texte des *Septièmes Réponses*, supposé militer contre le caractère représentationnel du *cogito*, énonce bien le caractère immédiat de la *cogitatio* qui n'exige ni redoublement ni dédoublement réflexif:

Car la première pensée, quelle qu'elle soit, par laquelle nous apercevons quelque chose, ne diffère pas davantage de la seconde, par laquelle nous apercevons que nous l'avons déjà auparavant aperçue, que celle-ci diffère de la troisième par laquelle nous apercevons que nous avons déjà aperçu avoir aperçu auparavant cette chose; et l'on ne saurait apporter la moindre raison pourquoi la seconde de ces pensées ne viendra pas d'un sujet corporel, si l'on accorde que la première en peut venir.28

Ce texte appelle plusieurs remarques.29 Premièrement il n'a pas vocation à décrire la structure de la *cogitatio* mais à évaluer le poids d'une objection faite

26 Descartes [à Newcastle?], mars ou avril 1648, AT V, 138, 3–6.

27 Descartes, *Principia Philosophiae*, I, art. 9, AT VIII-1, 7, l. 30: «[...] ipso sensu sive conscientia videndi aut ambulandi [...]». Pour l'introduction par Descartes du néosémantisme «conscience» (qui n'est donc pas, de ce fait, l'invention de Locke), voir Carraud 2009, 140–149.

28 *Septièmes Objections et Réponses*, AT VII, 559, 16–22. Voir l'analyse de cette discussion chez Leibniz *Reflexio* [1683 bis 1685 (?)], N° 283, in Leibniz 1999, VI, 4, B, 1470–1471, pour qui Descartes affirme sans droit ni preuve (*nulla allata probatione*) que (tr.) «la perception de cette chose ne diffère pas plus de notre perception de la perception, que la perception de la perception de la chose [ne diffère] de la perception de la perception perçue» (...a perceptione perceptionis perceptae [!]). De fait, Leibniz nie l'identification cartésienne de la pensée et de la pensée consciente au motif que le redoublement infini de la perception consciente condamnerait l'esprit à n'avoir qu'un seul objet (*Nouveaux Essais sur l'entendement humain*, livre II, ch. 1, Leibniz 1990, 93 (cf. Henry 1985/20032, 82): «il n'est pas possible que nous réfléchissions toujours expressément sur toutes nos pensées; autrement l'esprit ferait réflexion sur chaque réflexion à l'infini sans pouvoir jamais passer à une nouvelle pensée»).

29 On en trouvera le commentaire le plus élaboré dans les premières pages de l'exposé du cartésien Lambertus van Velthuysen, *De Initii primae philosophiae juxta fundamenta clarissimi Cartesii tradita in ipsius Meditationibus, nec non de Deo et mente humana*, Utrecht, T. ab Ackersdijck, 1662. Texte reproduit en annexe.

à Descartes: à savoir qu'on ne passe pas si facilement du concept indéterminé de *res cogitans* à celui d'une substance spirituelle dont «toute la nature ou l'essence n'est que de penser». Selon l'objecteur, la spiritualité de la *res cogitans* ne s'atteste que dans un acte réflexif, ou encore dans l'aperception qui prend conscience des *cogitationes*:

par une action réfléchie il envisage sa pensée (*actu reflexo intueatur*) et la considère, ce qui fait qu'il pense, ou bien qu'il sait et considère qu'il pense (ce que proprement on appelle apercevoir, ou avoir une connaissance intérieure [*quod vere est esse consciunt, & actus alicujus habere conscientiam*]).³⁰

C'est ce que conteste Descartes en affirmant que le nom de pensée (*cogitatio*) revient à ce dont nous sommes *immédiatement conscients*, en sorte qu'il est impossible et contraire à la définition même de la pensée de supposer une différence entre une pensée (quelconque) et la conscience qu'on en a. Ceci n'interdit nullement le redoublement réflexif, mais Descartes l'entend autrement que Bourdin, d'abord parce que ce redoublement est temporalisé: à la lettre, la formule *cogito me cogitare* n'a pas de sens, parce qu'il faudrait lui préférer cette autre, *cogito me cogitasse*. Mais penser à une pensée passée, c'est penser à nouveau, ni plus ni moins, sans que la pensée seconde ajoute rien à la première. Ensuite, en faisant valoir le caractère immédiat de la pensée, Descartes ne prétend nullement définir un *cogito* non-représentationnel, mais tendrait au contraire à souligner le rapport d'immédiateté qui unit l'ego à ses «représentations», ou pour utiliser un lexique plus cartésien, à ses «idées». ³¹

Ses idées, à savoir des modes de la pensée, dont certaines peuvent signifier des objets, d'autre non: l'*idea mei ipsius* n'est pas autre chose que la pensée, comme une *species* intelligible qui lui servirait à se penser elle-même, et l'on peut dire de l'ego que son *idée* est dépourvue de toute réalité objective – au sens cartésien de la *realitas objectiva*. Quant à l'idée de Dieu ou celle de l'éten-

³⁰ *Sept. Obj.*; «Réponse à la deuxième question», § 12, n°5, AT VII, 554, 29–555, 2.

³¹ Immédiateté au demeurant bien perçue et rappelée par M. Henry: voir le texte de *Phénoménologie Matérielle*, qu'il faut citer *in extenso*: «Ainsi Husserl se rend-il confusément compte, au moment même où il commet son erreur la plus grave – la réduction de la *cogitatio* à l'évidence qui la donne – qu'en réalité *entre l'évidence de la cogitatio et son existence il faut choisir*. Que Descartes ait fondé l'existence de la *cogitatio* sur elle-même, sur sa structure phénoménologique interne en tant que la forme par la perception immédiate de laquelle la *cogitatio* a conscience d'elle-même [cf. AT VII, 160, 14–16], sans aucune médiation par conséquent et sans la médiation de l'évidence notamment, laquelle est réputée douteuse en cet instant, c'est ce que Husserl ne peut se représenter, pour autant qu'il réduit la donation à l'évidence comme à sa formulation la plus parfaite». Henry 1990, 82.

due géométrique, elles présentent immédiatement leur contenu plus qu'elles ne représentent un objet³². La problématique de la «représentation» (définissant l'«objectivité»³³) n'apparaît donc chez Descartes qu'en ce qui concerne les choses matérielles et donc les «objets des sens». ³⁴ Comment les perceptions sensibles, en tant que simples affections corporelles, peuvent-elles *en même temps* représenter des choses distinctes supposées être la cause de ces affections? Et comment dire que ces choses nous affectent par elles-mêmes, sans en être elles-mêmes affectées d'aucune manière? Cette question montre bien que la difficulté pour Descartes n'est pas de comprendre la possibilité d'une auto-affection (empirique ou non) car toute affection est celle d'un *ipse* qui s'en ressent et s'éprouve lui-même au travers de ces affections. Le problème cartésien est bien plus celui de l'hétéro-affection: comment la cloche peut-elle m'affecter, comment puis-je dire entendre sonner une cloche, alors que je n'entends proprement rien que des sons, engendrés par la vibration du tympan? À cette question, Descartes tente une réponse qui met en avant l'union intime de l'âme et du corps, et l'activité de l'esprit, qui par une opération relevant de la «géométrie naturelle du regard», mais aussi bien par une sorte de métonymie transcendante, assigne la cause de ses perceptions à des choses: «nous pensons voir le flambeau même»³⁵, alors que nous ne voyons évidemment aucun flambeau, nous n'entendons aucune cloche, etc., et tout ce travail par lequel l'esprit se figure un monde à l'origine des sensations est l'œuvre de l'imagination. En déniait toute réalité à ce travail, qui définit pourtant ce que Descartes appelle, en son langage, l'*institution de nature*, Michel Henry entraîne Descartes dans l'extrême de l'idéalisme, avec les conséquences ruineuses que cela comporte.

32 Voir, en ce qui concerne l'idée d'étendue, Kambouchner 2006, 71–86. Comme Leibniz l'a bien noté, la définition générale de l'idée comme «forme de la pensée» (*Sec. Resp.*, AT VII, 160, 14–16) se caractérise par l'absence de référence à un objet: «Si l'idée était la forme de la pensée, elle naîtrait et cesserait avec les pensées actuelles qui y répondent; mais en étant l'objet, elle pourra être antérieure et postérieure aux pensées» (*Nouveaux Essais*, II, 1, Leibniz 1990, 87).

33 Précisément, le concept de «représentation» n'est mobilisé par Descartes que pour décrire la réalité objective de l'idée comme «l'entité ou l'être de la chose représentée par l'idée, en tant que cette entité est dans l'idée» (*Sec. Resp.*, AT VII, 161, 4–6 / AT IX-1, 124).

34 Formule assez équivoque, dont on trouve au moins une occurrence dans les *Méditations* (MM V, AT IX-1, 52), traduisant *sensuum objectis* (AT VII, 65, 10).

35 TPA, art. 23, AT XI, 346.

2 La générosité à l'épreuve de l'auto-affection

Dans un deuxième temps il convient de s'interroger sur le prolongement donné par Jean-Luc Marion au *cogito* inextatique de Michel Henry à travers la thématique de la générosité, envisagée comme l'illustration adéquate de l'auto-affection et comme offrant donc la meilleure définition du *cogito*. Comme l'on sait³⁶, la générosité est, chez Descartes, la passion qui fait qu'on s'estime soi-même, pour une juste et unique raison: à savoir pour ce que nous sommes libres et décidés à faire toujours le meilleur usage de notre liberté. Tout autre motif ou raison de s'estimer soi-même est illégitime et ne donne lieu qu'à un orgueil vicieux et blâmable.

Il y a bien, sans conteste, un élément décisif qui fait le lien entre le *l'ego* du *cogito* et le généreux cartésien: c'est la liberté. Comme les *Principes* y ont insisté après les *Meditationes*, le Moi se découvre lui-même en même temps qu'il découvre sa liberté, sinon comme celle-ci: «[...] en même temps que nous doutions de tout [...] nous apercevions en nous une liberté si grande, que nous pouvions nous empêcher de croire ce que nous ne connaissions pas encore parfaitement bien». ³⁷ Ceci dit, le texte dit sans la moindre ambiguïté que l'expérience interne par laquelle notre liberté est connue est une connaissance «claire» et «distincte», et le noyau de l'expérience intérieure dans laquelle la liberté est connue n'a rien d'obscur: c'est la vision évidente, évidentissime même, «ut nihil sit quod evidentius comprehendamus». ³⁸ Le royaume du voir clair et distinct ne se confond donc en aucune façon avec le domaine de l'extériorité et de l'étrangeté propre aux objets de l'expérience: au contraire, l'*idea dei* et l'*idea mei ipsius* doivent être tenues pour les plus *claires* de toutes les idées qu'on puisse trouver en nous. Cette clarté n'est pas autre que celle dans laquelle nous sont donnés les objets de l'expérience: il n'y a précisément *pas*, entre la lumière qui me fait voir (ou sentir) que je pense, et celle qui me fait juger que «ceci est un morceau de cire», la différence qu'il y a entre la lumière de la nature et celle de la grâce. Il n'y a *pas même* la différence entre deux facultés (un sens interne, et un sens externe), il y a au contraire l'unité d'une seule et même «lumière», spontanée, instinctive, invincible: la lumière naturelle.

Mais il y a plus: on peut en effet se demander si aborder la générosité comme un cas exemplaire d'auto-affection ne conduit pas à perdre le sens d'une vertu qui gît tout entière dans le rapport à la transcendance d'Autrui: il

³⁶ Voir ici même la communication de Theo Verbeek.

³⁷ PP I, 39, AT IX-2, 41.

³⁸ PP I, 41, AT VIII-1, 20, 24.

conviendrait donc plutôt de soustraire la générosité à son interprétation métaphysicienne pour la replacer dans la grande tradition du commentaire moral et la théorie de l'âme noble – telle qu'on la voit par exemple exposée dans le *Banquet* de Dante³⁹ –, l'âme noble et généreuse étant celle qui, par définition est d'abord affectée par la vertu et la grandeur d'Autrui; le généreux se représente en effet Autrui comme une autre soi-même, c'est-à-dire comme un autre aussi bien capable de liberté et de fautes qu'il l'est lui-même; autrement dit, le généreux ne s'estime lui-même qu'en tant qu'il porte estime aux autres aussi bien qu'à lui-même. La générosité cartésienne ne suppose pas la possibilité théorique de l'intersubjectivité: elle la produit, par cela même que le généreux ne se tient pas dans la sphère d'immanence de sa *cogitatio*, qu'il découvre aussi bien hors de lui, en Autrui. La générosité est une passion nécessairement transitive; en ce sens, Descartes a parfaitement assuré le passage du sens archaïque et aristocratique du terme (la générosité comme «bonne naissance»), à son sens moderne, où la générosité est cette vertu qui fait regarder autrui autrement que comme un «autre», et le fait regarder comme aussi bien capable de cette volonté que le généreux «sent» en lui-même.⁴⁰ Ce faisant, Autrui présente les mêmes caractéristiques phénoménologiques que l'ego lorsque celui-ci se pense, et lorsqu'il considère, solitairement, l'*idea sui ipsius*: une évidence *pure*, ce que l'on peut entendre comme vide de réalité objective, comme, analogiquement, la lumière n'est rien des objets qu'elle éclaire.

Cette dimension intersubjective de la générosité constitue précisément l'élément irréductible au *cogito* cartésien, et plus encore au *cogito* inextatique de Michel Henry, en sorte qu'au lieu d'en offrir la définition la plus exacte, la générosité cartésienne en serait plutôt l'au-delà et, pour user d'une métaphore spatiale peut-être trop facile, comme l'*envers*. La générosité est précisément un *cogito* extasié, par lequel je pense qu'un autre peut sentir en soi la même chose (la même volonté) que moi. Quant au sentiment même de soi, auquel seul le généreux peut s'adonner de manière légitime, et qui a pour nom la «satisfaction de soi-même», elle n'est jamais qu'une conséquence habituelle de la générosité, et n'en saurait être une condition.⁴¹

39 Ou bien encore dans l'essai que lui consacre Leibniz 1999, VI, 4, C, 2271 (N° 476, *Sur la générosité*, 1686–1687?): «Il ne reste donc que de dire quelque chose de la justice; qui est l'âme de la générosité [...] Or le principe de la justice est le bien de la société, ou pour mieux dire le bien général, car nous sommes tous une partie de la République universelle, dont Dieu est le Monarque, et la grande loi établie en cette république est de procurer au monde le plus de bien que nous pouvons».

40 Descartes, *Traité des Passions de l'Âme*, art. 154, AT XI, 446–447.

41 Descartes, *Traité des Passions de l'Âme*, art. 190, AT XI, 471.

3 *Cogito* et sentiment d'existence

Reste la question de l'affection, dont on a dit plus haut qu'elle était toujours auto-affection au sens où seul un *ipse* peut se sentir affecté et se ressent de ses affections (siennes). Affection immanente, sans distance, dit Henry: ni la distance spatiale (que Gassendi, dans un texte commenté dans *L'Essence de la Manifestation*, considère comme une condition de possibilité des phénomènes en général⁴²), ni «distance phénoménologique», celle-ci étant comprise comme la possibilité de la première, et comme «le pouvoir ontologique qui nous donne accès aux choses»⁴³. Mais faut-il distinguer entre distance spatiale et distance phénoménologique? Ici comme ailleurs, avec ce redoublement de l'affectivité «empirique» par une affectivité «originale», comprise comme révélation de l'être à lui-même dans le sentiment, révélation sans distance et sans reste, n'avons-nous pas affaire à une forme de réalisme transcendantal inévitablement doublée d'idéalisme empirique? Bref, ceci ne mène-t-il pas la phénoménologie à retomber dans une métaphysique, voire une mystique de la conscience comme apparaître pur – et purement invisible –? Faut-il vraiment quitter le nouveau sol, découvert dans les *Meditationes* – la lumière naturelle, que Descartes ne prend ni pour une médiation ni pour un «milieu de visibilité», mais pour l'*instinct intellectuel*⁴⁴ – pour la nuit où toutes les vaches sont grises?

Nous signalions plus haut le recours de la *Généalogie de la Psychanalyse* à Schopenhauer; mais l'importance des lectures fichtéennes de M. Henry dans *L'Essence de la Manifestation* eût déjà permis de le soupçonner: si Henry ne veut comprendre que l'apparaître lui-même dans l'*ego* ou la *mens* cartésienne, c'est qu'il a substitué à cet *ego* la conscience au sens fichtéen, conscience identique à l'Être au à l'Apparaître. La conscience fichtéenne, voire l'intellect matériel d'Aristote, car en effet dire, d'une formule incontestablement adroite et puissante, que l'«*ego* est le lieu de la phénoménalité», est-ce dire vraiment autre chose que ce qu'a dit Aristote, reprenant aux platoniciens la description du *nous* comme *topos eidôn*⁴⁵? C'est dire que l'analyse henryenne du *cogito*,

42 Henry 1963/1990², § 9. *Quintae Objectiones*, AT VII, 292.

43 Henry 1963/1990², 77.

44 À *Mersenne*, 16 octobre 1639, AT II, 599₆₋₁₂. C'est cette lettre (en fait un commentaire sur le *De Veritate* de Herbert de Cherbury) que cite littéralement Husserl dans un inédit de jeunesse sur Descartes édité par Majolino 2003, 181–189 (*sub fine*).

45 Dans un passage du *De Anima* (III, 4, 429 a 20) qui transpose de manière parfaitement contrôlée l'indétermination du *topos* (ou *khôra*) du *Timée* platonicien à l'intellect matériel. *Timée*, 50e-51a: l'entité nommée entre autres *khôra* doit être dépourvue de toutes caractéristiques comparables à celles des choses qu'elle reçoit, «autrement il l'offusquerait par son propre aspect» (Platon 1970, 169); argumentation littéralement reprise par Aristote au

plus spéculative que phénoménologique, fait peu de cas du caractère spécifiquement cartésien de l'énoncé qui n'a de sens et de possibilité qu'à travers l'*ego* qui le profère et le vérifie à chaque fois qu'il le profère. Ce n'est pas un *ego* universel, ni une conscience absolue qui aurait absorbé le monde dans sa sphère d'immanence, c'est un *ego* qui pense, c'est-à-dire qui entend, qui veut, qui voit *et qui sent* – mais qui sent *quelque chose*, et ne se sent jamais exister que dans «quelque monde» [*aliquem mundum*] –.

Notre propos sera, pour finir, de revenir sur cette lecture éminemment idéaliste qui offre un peu trop facilement le *cogito* cartésien en pâture à la *Réfutation* kantienne. Est-il exact que la saisie cartésienne de l'existence soit à la fois plus immédiate, plus certaine et indépendante de la perception des choses «extérieures»? On peut d'abord remarquer que M. Henry est passablement discret sur la manière, tout aussi immédiate et intime, dont l'*ego* méditant est affecté par l'existence de Dieu, existence dont on a dit plus haut qu'elle était plutôt présente et présentifiée que «représentée», si tant est qu'il faille comprendre, ainsi que l'a fait Heidegger, la représentation comme cela même qui *isole* dramatiquement le sujet du monde, un monde figuré dans la représentation sans être vécu, un *Weltbild* en lieu et place du monde, donc un *Weltbild* comme insigne de la *Weltlosigkeit* des Temps Modernes.⁴⁶ Rappelons que, pour Heidegger, la tentative kantienne pour recomposer le rapport du sujet isolé avec un «monde», dans sa *Réfutation de l'idéalisme*, et pour réaccorder l'existence de l'*ego* à celle des choses (*Das Dasein der Gegenstände*, dit Kant) ne fait, somme toute, qu'entériner la destruction (*Zertrümmerung*) cartésienne du phénomène originaire de l'être au monde, et la «Réfutation» de l'idéalisme (supposé cartésien) ne fait qu'en confirmer les positions ontologiques.⁴⁷

Il nous semble que toutes ces lectures ont en commun de transformer en thèse ce qui n'est jamais chez Descartes qu'un moment de la réflexion, et, qui plus est, de déterminer les conséquences pratiques (le sujet «isolé», sa *Weltlosigkeit*, etc.) d'un discours purement théorique qui n'a aucune prétention à décrire un état de choses ou la condition humaine. Descartes le rappelle suffisamment: le doute est contre nature. Or ce que Kant définit comme une position philosophique propre à l'idéalisme subjectif (la seule certitude *immé-*

sujet de l'intellect matériel: «L'interférence de l'étranger crée, en effet, un obstacle et doit faire écran» (cf. Aristote 1993, 222 et n. 9). On ne saurait apporter de meilleure raison à l'appui de l'hypothèse formulée plus haut, selon laquelle l'*idea mei ipsius* est (nécessairement donc) dépourvue de toute réalité objective.

⁴⁶ Ce que rappelle Fischback 2009 et qu'il compare au concept d'aliénation (à partir de Marx et Arendt notamment).

⁴⁷ Voir notre étude Mehl 2006, 57–77.

diate est celle que l'ego a de son existence, l'autonomie du sens interne par rapport au sens externe) nous renvoie à l'exercice du doute et à ce que Descartes entend par méditer. Or il est constant que Descartes, s'il met hors-circuit les objets des sens, et même le corps propre en tant qu'objet des sens (ce corps que je sens être mien), ne suspend nullement le sentir lui-même. L'ego méditant est un ego qui (se) sent, qui a chaud, froid, qui voit, qui entend, etc., bref irrémédiablement livré à sa facticité. Non seulement le doute, loin d'abolir la sensation ou la vue, ne fait que modifier le *video* en *videre videor* mais de surcroît cette vue pure qui se saisit des *cogitationes* n'a pas d'autre objet ni d'autre horizon que celles-ci: sans le flux des *cogitationes* (quand bien même fausses, douteuses, illusives, etc.) en quoi consiste la vie naturelle, le «voir pur» n'aurait absolument aucun objet. Quand, en revanche, sans méditer, et pour ainsi dire dans la «vraie vie», nous «pensons ouïr la cloche» ou nous «pensons voir le flambeau», la pensée n'a pas affaire à ses représentations ni à ses idées: elle est aux choses mêmes: le bâton paraît *vraiment* brisé, la cloche paraît *vraiment* sonner. La philosophie cartésienne commence par constater que l'ego vit dans cette présence aux choses mêmes, dans le miracle continué qu'est la présence au monde, monde chatoyant, parfois illusoire, mais toujours vraiment là. Le doute permet certes de saisir cette réalité comme un tissu d'idées, ou de le considérer comme «ma représentation», et c'est seulement dans ce contexte que Descartes est effectivement passible d'un idéalisme au moins problématique, voire dogmatique. Mais cette réduction n'a de sens et de validité qu'en régime de doute, et comme l'envers de l'attitude naturelle. On oublie souvent de le dire, et c'est ainsi que l'on substitue à la philosophie première des *Meditationes* la fable de la «métaphysique des Temps Modernes».

Cette idéalité de la «représentation» (disons-le très simplement: les représentations n'existent pas!) vaut aussi bien de cette mystérieuse affectivité inextatique, qui n'existe pas davantage, et qui n'a pas plus le privilège de définir l'essence d'un *cogito* non-intentionnel ou non-représentatif. Dans l'attitude naturelle comme dans l'attitude théorique, l'ego cartésien existe, il se sait et se sent exister, et cette sienne existence est absolument identique au sentiment qui la livre, sans écart ni variation (on ne se sent pas plus ou moins existant)⁴⁸,

48 Sur le virage du *cogito* au «sentiment d'existence», voir Bardout 2003, 163–206. Cette problématique du sentiment d'existence et de ses degrés (qu'il n'a précisément pas) pourrait sans doute être reconduite à la problématique aristotélicienne des *Catégories* (3b33): «Il semble bien que la substance ne soit pas susceptible de plus ou de moins», bien qu'il ait été reconnu que les substances premières (les individus) sont «plus substances» que les secondes (les espèces et les genres). Problématique qui, de Descartes à Spinoza, se traduit par celle du «degré de réalité», supposé nécessairement plus grand dans les substances que dans les attributs et dans les modes. Sur cette question et ses aboutissants, voir notamment Benoist 2006, 179–196.

comme le sentiment d'existence est strictement coextensif à la perception claire et distincte dans laquelle la *res cogitans* s'apparaît à elle-même comme une *res vera et vere existens*. Comme le dit si parfaitement le narrateur méditant, aussi bien que Rousseau ou Descartes, au seuil de la *Recherche*, le «sentiment d'existence», isolable en certaines circonstances exceptionnelles, précède toute représentation de soi, composée par le souvenir: «[...] quand je m'éveillais au milieu de la nuit, comme j'ignorais où je me trouvais, je ne savais même pas au premier instant qui j'étais; j'avais seulement dans sa simplicité première le sentiment de l'existence comme il peut frémir au fond d'un animal».49 Cette perception, loin de définir un «sentiment irréal» selon la terminologie de l'*Essence de la Manifestation*, constitue le prototype même de l'évidence, et partant, de la certitude. Finalement, si l'interprétation henryenne du *cogito*, au demeurant féconde et même jusqu'à un certain point fascinante, nous paraît achopper, c'est à cause du présupposé que l'extase de la représentation ne peut fournir qu'un simulacre de l'affect. Disons plutôt que les «idées» en constituent, bien au contraire, à la fois toute la grammaire, la chair et la vérité.

Annexe

Lambertus van Velthuysen, *De Initiis primae philosophiae juxta fundamenta clarissimi Cartesii tradita in ipsius Meditationibus, nec non de Deo et mente humana*, Utrecht, T. ab Ackersdijck, 1662. Sectio Prima. *De cognitione in genere*.

[A r°, p. 1] Omnium hominum consensu constat, in vera et proprie sic dicta cognitione requiri conscientiam; nempe quia est de natura omnis cognitionis, quod is, qui percipit, scit, aut intelligit aliquid, scit se aliquid percipere, scire & intelligere. Neque id tantum de cognitione *reflexa*, qua cognitionis aut cogitationis meae conscientiam eam habeo, qua animadverto me aliquid animadvertisse, intelligendum est, sed idem etiam statuimus de prima quavis perceptione, aut intellectione, per quam aliquid advertimus: dolorem, famem, sitim verbi gratia. Et quaevis prima cogitatio, aut perceptio, per quam aliquid percipimus aut intelligimus, non magis differt a secunda, per quam animadvertimus nos illud primum advertisse, quam tertia a secunda: & ambae sunt aequae immateriales. Ideo nullus, qui mentis compos est, rebus sensu destitutis, cognitionem proprie dictam attribuit: non lapidi, non arbori, non metallis, &c. [...]

49 Marcel Proust, *À la Recherche du Temps Perdu*, édition Pierre Clarac et André Ferré, Paris, Gallimard (Bibliothèque de la Pléiade), 1954, vol. I, p.5.

[A 2 r^o, p. 3] At per se notum est, conscientiam absque aliqua cogitationis specie esse non posse: imo esse aliquam cogitationis speciem, sc. illam immanentem substantiae cogitantis actionem, qua scit se aliquid reipsa cognoscere & percipere. Estque illa operatio plane spiritualis, & intellectio strictissime dicta, neque minus spiritualis quam cognitio reflexa: quia anima in iis imaginem corpoream non intuetur; *doloris enim perceptio*, verbi gratia, non sentiri aut imaginari, sed tantum *intelligi potest*: & mens in ea operatione *seipsa* tantum utitur, nullis aliis extra se rebus egens, quod quivis, experiundo & explorando quomodo istam operationem exserat, cognoscere potest; intelligetque illas operationes, quae conscientiam inferunt, sine molestia semper a se exseri, quocunque etiam modo corpus constitutum esse possit. Nam quamvis v. g. sentire, aut imaginari non possum sine corpore, actio tamen illa mentis, qua sensationis aut imaginationis conscius sum, plane spiritualis et incorporea est: sic somnia non peraguntur sine corporeis speciebus: sed actio illa mentis, qua conscii sumus nos somniare, aut somniasse, plane spiritualis est. Et tam manifeste in hac cogitationis specie se prodit spiritualitas actionis, quam in actione voluntatis.

[f. A 3 v^o, p. 6 – A 4 r^o, p. 7] Agemus itaque tantum de cognitione proprie dicta; et quidem de cognitione humana; & cujus res spiritualis tantum capax est: et a qua *conscientiam inseparabilem* diximus. Quamvis enim variae cogitationes dentur, quas etiam postea recensebimus, omnibus tamen id proprium & *essentiale* est, quod conscientiam involvant: estque illa conscientia menti adeo manifesta & intrinseca, ut nunquam in ea falli possit, putando se alicujus cogitationis conscientiam habere, & in eo tamen animo falsus esse. Quamvis enim mens de perceptione et intellectione sua varia judicia, etiam falsa, formare possit, nunquam tamen mens in eo fallitur, quod, cum se percipere & intelligere putat, tunc non percipiat et intelligat: quando quidem illa cogitatio sive intellectio semper a mente in mente perficitur, fieri non potest, quod, cum putem me aliquid audire, tunc cogitationem illam non habeam: quamvis fieri possit, & saepius contingat, me revera nihil audire, & organum auditus nulla re affici, cum illud affici puto; ut contingit quando somniamus.

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Delphine Kolesnik-Antoine

La structure passionnelle de l'âme malebranchiste: entre Descartes et Regius?

Abstract: It has seldom been underlined that Malebranche's analyses of the fallen soul are not so different from arguments inspired by Gassendi. When some did, it was often for the sake of rejection. Malebranche would have resorted to these arguments by default in order to better conceive the conditions for an authentic knowledge of the soul by itself, which in the end would have matched that proposed by Descartes.

But the analysis of passions and the unveiling of their priority in this world over thoughts of the pure understanding justify our identifying the object of the Oratorian's philosophy as that which experience reveals. More precisely, the critique of the false physics that projects chimerical entities into the world of bodies forms a relevant scheme for conceiving a true anthropology whose moral, social and political consequences would prove fundamental.

On that account the relationship to Regius appears most fruitful; and it is also the case when revisiting the opposition that Descartes wished to draw between his own philosophy and that of his most heretic disciple, from 1645 on.

Quel lien unit les développements originaux du livre V de la *Recherche de la vérité* et le *projet général* de Malebranche dans cet ouvrage? Le livre I, qui s'attache à réinvestir le combat engagé par Descartes en physique contre les formes substantielles et les qualités occultes et se trouve décliné à *chacune* des étapes de l'argumentation de la *Recherche*, fournit une grille de lecture particulièrement opportune pour comprendre les analyses consacrées aux passions. La physique fausse des scolastiques permet de penser l'anthropologie vraie, c'est-à-dire de décrire les modalités du remplissement de l'âme par la matière depuis la chute, et le cas de la passion est exemplaire parce que la vérité de cette dernière s'épuise tout entière dans la conscience biaisée que l'âme en prend. La passion devient ainsi paradigmatique de cette âme impuissante et obscure mais en rien passive, qui s'auto-affecte de manière à se forger «son» monde extérieur et à travestir la perception de sa propre intériorité par toute une série de médiations venant la recouvrir. Le livre II explicite le rôle de l'imagination dans la construction de ce réseau; le livre III en thématise la nature et les raisons pour justifier la difficulté dans laquelle nous nous trou-

vons présentement d'accéder aux idées pures; le livre IV insiste sur l'impossibilité quasi constante de l'âme déçue à être inclinée vers un objet sans que vienne s'y mêler quelque passion petite ou grande; et le livre VI culmine dans la dénonciation de «l'erreur la plus dangereuse de la philosophie des Anciens» après s'être longuement attaché à l'application des règles de la nouvelle méthode au registre privilégié de la physique.

Cet élément est décisif à plusieurs titres. D'un point de vue interne au malebranchisme, il fait du phénomène passionnel un passage obligé pour penser les thèses les plus abstraites du système, comme par exemple l'impossibilité de prouver l'existence des corps extérieurs autrement qu'en recourant à une preuve de sentiment. Mais plus généralement, il instaure entre le malebranchisme et les théories empiristes un lien beaucoup plus étroit que celui que l'histoire des idées a généralement consenti à reconnaître. La grande histoire de la philosophie cartésienne de Francisque Bouillier, qui fait de Malebranche la deuxième figure, majeure, idéaliste, de la réception de Descartes, propose à ce titre une analyse très significative. D'un côté, son Malebranche «mérite bien» du cartésianisme par la curieuse théorie de la vision en Dieu, qui résout les apories des expositions insatisfaisantes de l'innéisme chez son illustre prédécesseur.¹ Mais de l'autre, Malebranche «compromet» Descartes par «de dangereuses bizarreries» voire par de «graves hérésies» fondées sur le refus de la connaissance de l'âme par idées claires et distinctes:

On s'étonne de le voir, en ce point essentiel, abandonner Descartes pour suivre Gassendi. L'âme est plus certaine et plus claire que le corps, selon Descartes, et, selon Malebranche, comme selon Gassendi, c'est le corps qui est plus clair sinon plus certain que l'âme. Mais, tandis que Gassendi arrive à cette conséquence par la préoccupation du sensible, c'est par la préoccupation du divin que Malebranche a perdu le sentiment de l'évidence et de la réalité de la conscience.²

Bouillier reconnaît donc la proximité des analyses malebranchistes et empiristes de l'âme, mais en souligne les fondements et finalités distincts afin d'excepter l'idéalisme de l'Oratorien de toute parenté positive avec la branche gassendiste.

¹ «La doctrine de la raison impersonnelle était en germe dans la preuve de l'existence de Dieu par l'idée d'infini; mais ce germe a été admirablement développé par Malebranche. Le vague et l'indécision des idées innées de Descartes, la dépendance où il plaçait toute vérité à l'égard des décrets arbitraires de la toute-puissance divine, avaient favorisé la tendance empirique de Régis [il s'agit de Pierre-Sylvain Régis, auteur du *Système de Philosophie* en trois tomes, paru en 1690] et de quelques-autres cartésiens». Bouillier 1854, 74–75 (tome II, chap. III).

² Bouillier 1854, 58 (tome II, chap. III).

Nous souhaitons pour notre part réinterroger ce lien, en postulant que l'aptitude des descriptions malebranchistes de l'âme passionnée à se dissocier de leur enracinement théologique dans une certaine postérité dix-huitiémiste ne constitue pas une erreur ou un retournement contre-nature, mais bien un élément productif «normal» de l'histoire des idées, appelé par la logique même du système dont elle procède et par rapport auquel elle finit par s'autonomiser.³ Pour cela, notre référent ne sera pas Gassendi mais un penseur très proche de ce dernier sur le plan théorique, et dont à notre connaissance Malebranche n'a pas encore été rapproché par les commentateurs: Regius. Regius entretient en effet avec Descartes une relation plus ambiguë et par certains aspects plus intéressante que Gassendi, pour notre compréhension du malebranchisme. Le compte-rendu de la traduction française de la *Philosophia naturalis* (1654), parue à Utrecht en 1686⁴, dans le numéro des *Nouvelles de la république des lettres* d'octobre 1686⁵, résume parfaitement la nature tumultueuse des échanges entre les deux hommes et la manière dont Regius était perçu à l'époque de Malebranche:

Cet Auteur a été le premier apôtre du cartésianisme, car c'est lui qui commença de le faire retentir dans les Auditoires.⁶ Il n'est pas besoin de dire que cela lui fit des affaires auprès des Théologiens d'Utrecht tout le monde est assez instruit de cette aventure et du contrecoup que M. Descartes en ressentit.⁷ On n'ignore point non plus que ce Philosophe a changé de sentiments pour ce Disciple premier né. Pendant quelque temps il avoua pour sa doctrine celle de M. Regius, et s'intéressa dans ses procès Académiques. Il lui envoya même un plan de réponse, où il lui conseille entre autres choses de donner à M. Voetius les titres les plus obligeants et les plus avantageux qu'il pourrait, et de lui écrire une bonne lettre, où il dirait qu'ayant vu les très doctes, très excellentes et très subtiles Thèses qu'il avait publiées touchant les formes substantielles, etc. mais comme M. Regius ne crut point qu'il fut de sa dignité de Professeur de marcher sur les traces de M. Descartes pas à pas, il le quitta en diverses choses, il se dégoûta de ne philosopher que par commission; et il voulut le faire pour son propre compte. M. Descartes en fut piqué comme il le témoigne dans la Préface de ses *Principes*, en déclarant qu'il ne reconnaît plus pour sa doctrine celle de ce Professeur. Il faut avouer néanmoins que dans l'Ouvrage qu'on nous donne ici en Français, et qui n'est pas celui que Monsieur Descartes avait en vue⁸, Monsieur Regius n'est au fond que Cartésien. On a fort bien fait de traduire cette Physique,

3 Cf. Kolesnik-Antoine, 2011.

4 C'est dans le texte de cette traduction, attribuée à Claude Rouxel, que nous citerons Regius. Notre exemplaire est daté de 1687.

5 Amsterdam, pp.1219–1221.

6 Lorsque Regius accède à la chaire de médecine et de botanique de l'Université d'Utrecht en 1638.

7 L'affaire est consignée dans la *Querelle d'Utrecht* (Verbeek, 1988).

8 Les *Fundamenta Physices*, parus en 1646, constituent la première mouture de la *Philosophia naturalis*, qui sera remaniée au gré des éditions de 1654 et 1661.

car quoi que celle de M. Rohault soit très bonne, elle ne fournit pas les lumières que l'on trouve dans celle-ci à l'égard des corps animés. Un habile Professeur en Médecine tel que Monsieur Regius est préférable sur cela à Monsieur Rohault. Je ne m'étendrai pas sur cet Ouvrage, il y a longtemps qu'il est connu, il suffit d'apprendre à ceux qui ne pourraient pas le lire en Latin qu'on l'a traduit en Français, et de dire en gros qu'on y trouve l'explication d'une infinité d'expériences, dont il y en a beaucoup qui n'ont pas été touchées par M. Rohault, ou éclaircies par des figures comme elles le sont ici. Les personnes de l'un et de l'autre sexe qui sans latin ni étude veulent raisonner sur les matières de Philosophie doivent se pourvoir de cet Ouvrage.

Cinq enseignements peuvent être tirés de cet extrait pour notre propos: 1. lorsqu'on s'intéresse à la philosophie de Descartes dans le dernier tiers du XVII^e siècle, on gagne à s'instruire du détail des productions de Regius et à ne pas postuler entre elles et le cartésianisme une incompatibilité de principe; 2. le fond du problème, donc aussi l'intérêt de cette étude, est à rechercher dans la critique des formes substantielles et son évolution; 3. la traduction française de la dernière version de la *Philosophia naturalis*, dans laquelle Regius s'éloigne le plus de Descartes sur les questions métaphysiques, est considérée comme plus cartésienne au moins sur les questions physiques; 4. sur le problème des corps animés et des expériences proposées, Regius surpasse Rohault; 5. la vulgarisation permise par la traduction française succède à une large diffusion et connaissance préalables de la pensée de Regius dans les milieux cultivés, au point que quiconque s'intéresse à la philosophie gagne à se procurer cet ouvrage pour sa bibliothèque.

Venu à la philosophie en 1664 par la lecture du traité de *L'Homme* chez un libraire de la rue saint Jacques, Malebranche ne peut pas ne pas avoir été sensible à la nécessité de se positionner par rapport à cette branche empirique du cartésianisme. Il possède un exemplaire de la *Philosophia naturalis* dans l'édition parue à Amsterdam 1654 (cote 157 dans le relevé d'André Robinet), et si Regius n'est pas nommé dans la *Recherche de la vérité*, il reste que les références explicites et implicites aux débats suscités avec Descartes (jusque dans les *Notae in Programma*) et aux thèses ultérieures de la *Philosophia naturalis* sont nombreuses. Au titre des renvois explicites, on mentionnera par exemple la célèbre peinture de Voët sous les traits du parfait hypocrite hérétique⁹, dans le livre IV. Parmi les congruences thématiques manifestes, on pourra évoquer la critique de l'innéisme et plus généralement de l'abstraction, les réflexions approfondies sur la relation entre la substance, ses attributs et ses modes, ou encore la thèse de l'obscurité de l'âme à elle-même en cette vie. Et au nombre des réfractations de problématiques généralement situées dans les

⁹ Malebranche 2006, 46–48 (livre IV, chapitre VI, § IV).

Remarques de La Forge sur *L'Homme* ou identifiées comme étant propres à Malebranche, dans l'histoire de l'occasionalisme, on pourra répertorier les développements mécanistes sur la contagion entre la mère et le fœtus ou sur la théorie des imaginations fortes, ébauchés dans le livre IV de la *Philosophie naturelle* de Regius et retravaillés seulement ensuite par la Forge puis Malebranche à des fins différentes. Tout se passe ainsi comme si Malebranche dialoguait toujours, en sous-main mais d'une façon qui devait être manifeste pour les lecteurs contemporains, avec un double interlocuteur: un Descartes «rationaliste», dont les tentations d'hybris théorique sont tempérées par un Regius «empiriste» auquel cependant Malebranche ne s'identifie pas.

Le cadre de la présente contribution ne nous permet pas de reconstituer l'intégralité de cette conversation à trois voix. Mais en suivant ce fil conducteur de la critique des formes substantielles, tissé chez Descartes et systématisé chez Regius, nous tenterons de montrer, par l'exemple paradigmatique des passions, comment Malebranche réinvestit l'empirisme de ce dernier pour proposer une troisième voie.

I. Le fil conducteur de la critique des formes substantielles

La critique des formes substantielles et des qualités occultes constitue à la fois le nerf du projet commun de Descartes et de Regius et la source de leur rupture.¹⁰ Car après avoir radicalisé l'argumentation en physique et en physiologie, en mettant au jour le caractère inutile et néfaste du recours aux entités pour rendre mécaniquement raison du fonctionnement du corps, Regius s'est enquis d'appliquer le rasoir à l'âme humaine elle-même, en reléguant hors du champ de la philosophie naturelle (dans le registre de la révélation¹¹) la connaissance indubitable de son immatérialité et de son immortalité. Aucune connaissance évidente de l'essence de la substance pensante n'est possible par des moyens seulement naturels, et l'affirmation du contraire revient à hypostasier en métaphysique ce que l'on s'acharne par ailleurs à dénoncer en physique.

¹⁰ Sur cette question, cf. Clarke 2010, 187–207 et, du même auteur 2008. Cf. aussi Kolesnik-Antoine, 2012.

¹¹ Sur ce point, cf. Bos 2012. Son édition annotée de la correspondance entre Descartes et Regius (Bos 2002), qui donne également le texte de la *Physiologia, sive Cognitionis sanitatis* (Utrecht, 1641) est un outil de travail très précieux pour quiconque s'intéresse à la pensée de Regius.

Or la critique des formes substantielles revient dans tous les livres de la *Recherche*, comme si elle en constituait le leitmotiv théorique, et s'accompagne d'une critique du cogito, au nom du renversement de l'union de l'âme et du corps en dépendance depuis la chute.¹² Quelles en sont les modalités et raisons précises?

Dans une lignée très cartésienne, elle sert d'abord à mettre au jour la propulsion du psychisme humain à la projection hylémorphique. Spontanément, tout homme a tendance à exporter les qualités de son âme dans les corps extérieurs, pour les revêtir de couleurs, de saveurs, d'odeurs, de plaisir, de douleur, ou encore, pour ce qui concerne les animaux, d'une volonté, alors que l'étendue, la figure et le mouvement local suffisent à rendre raison de toutes leurs variations. La critique malebranchiste est ainsi formulée dans des termes rigoureusement comparables à ceux que l'on trouve chez Regius.

L'exemple le plus récurrent sous la plume de l'Oratorien est celui auquel la physiologie cartésienne a conféré le rôle le plus important: le feu. C'est à son sujet que les hypothèses les plus absconses sont mobilisées parce que c'est à lui que sont imputés les effets les plus violents des corps, comme les déflagrations ou la pulsation cardiaque. Il faut donc s'attacher à expliquer la véritable nature du feu et souligner la puissance heuristique de cette dernière pour endiguer un tel recours:

si les hommes, au lieu de s'attacher aux impressions de leurs sens et à quelques expériences fausses ou trompeuses, s'arrêtaient fortement à cette seule notion de l'esprit pur, qu'il n'est pas possible qu'un corps très peu agité produise un mouvement violent, puisqu'il ne peut pas donner à celui qu'il choque plus de vitesse qu'il n'en a lui-même, il serait facile de cela seul de conclure qu'il y a une matière subtile invisible, qu'elle est très agitée, qu'elle est répandue généralement dans tous les corps, et plusieurs autres choses semblables qui nous feraient connaître la nature du feu, et qui nous serviraient encore à découvrir d'autres vérités plus cachées.¹³

12 On en trouve par exemple une présentation synthétique dans Malebranche 2006, 488 (chapitre X du livre III): «L'esprit et le corps, la substance qui pense et celle qui est étendue, sont deux genres d'êtres tout à fait différents et entièrement opposés; ce qui convient à l'un ne peut convenir à l'autre. Cependant la plupart des hommes, faisant peu d'attention aux propriétés de la pensée, et étant continuellement touchés par les corps, ont regardé l'âme et le corps comme une seule et même chose; ils ont imaginé de la ressemblance entre deux choses si différentes. Ils ont voulu que l'âme fut matérielle, c'est-à-dire étendue dans tout le corps, et figurée comme tout le corps. Ils ont attribué à l'esprit ce qui ne peut convenir qu'au corps. De plus, les hommes sentant du plaisir, de la douleur, des odeurs, des saveurs, etc., et leur corps leur étant plus présent que leur âme même, c'est-à-dire s'imaginant facilement leur corps et ne pouvant imaginer leur âme, ils lui ont attribué les facultés de sentir, d'imaginer, et quelquefois même celle de concevoir, qui ne peuvent appartenir qu'à l'âme».

13 Malebranche 2006, 23–24 (livre IV, chapitre II, § V).

Or l'adjonction, à l'hypothèse de la chaleur, de celle de la grande agitation de la matière subtile, pour expliquer le mouvement violent, est une des corrections apportées par Regius à l'explication cartésienne du battement du cœur, dans la *Philosophia naturalis*. C'est en effet faute de s'être suffisamment attaché à expliciter la nature du mouvement des esprits animaux que Descartes a encouru le risque d'une résurgence des qualités occultes pour rendre raison de la violence du battement cardiaque. Aux objections aristotéliennes formulées par Plempius dans la correspondance de 1638, accusant la fermentation de reposer en réalité sur l'hypothèse des formes substantielles, il faut ainsi répondre par un durcissement du mécanisme et par l'adjonction d'un élément d'explication:

[...] la raréfaction, ou la fermentation du sang, qui se fait d'ordinaire dans le cœur est une cause peu considérable, et trop faible pour pousser le sang dans les veines et les artères d'un animal; comme si c'était le *principas*, pour ne [pas dire le] seul principe (comme Aristote prétend au livre de la respiration et Descartes dans sa méthode) qui meut immédiatement le cœur et qui repousse le sang vers lui. Or les mouvements violents des animaux qui sont causés par les esprits animaux dont voir assez clairement quelle est la force et l'efficace de ces esprits.¹⁴

Dans le cas de Malebranche comme dans celui de Regius, la critique des formes substantielles entraîne ainsi une extension et une complexification du mécanisme visant à identifier la cause véritable du phénomène physique qu'il s'agit à chaque fois d'expliquer sans faire appel à un principe excédant sa nature matérielle.

Mais la critique est toujours chez Malebranche reliée à un dessein absent du propos de Regius: la mise au jour de l'unicausalité divine. Lorsqu'il s'applique, en des termes comparables à ceux que Regius utilise, à dénoncer l'abstraction de ces chimères ou la dimension purement logique de la physique qui les sous-tend, c'est pour faire passer le rasoir sur les fausses idées de Dieu et pour mieux isoler «cette présence intime, nécessaire de Dieu, je veux dire de l'être sans restriction particulière, de l'être infini, de l'être en général, à l'esprit de l'homme».¹⁵ Chez Malebranche, la recherche de la cause occasionnelle opportune pour couper court aux recours aux qualités occultes est toujours solidaire du rappel de la concentration de toute causalité véritable dans l'être divin. La poussée des limites de l'explication mécanique s'accompagne *in fine*

¹⁴ Regius 1687, 329 (livre IV, chapitre VIII).

¹⁵ Livre III et livre VI, seconde partie, chapitre II, où Malebranche qualifie les 8 livres de la Physique d'Aristote de «pure logique» où ce dernier «n'enseigne que des termes généraux», «parle beaucoup» mais «ne dit rien». Malebranche 2006, 266.

d'un saut dans la méta-physique, que Regius considère pour sa part comme hors de propos en philosophie naturelle.

Si, en outre et dans la lignée de Regius, Malebranche s'attache à critiquer la capacité de l'âme à connaître clairement et distinctement son essence en cette vie, c'est pour dénoncer le préjugé de l'efficacité de la volonté sur le corps dont Descartes lui-même avait montré qu'il fondait l'explication scolastique de la pesanteur.¹⁶ Malebranche, autrement dit, applique bien le rasoir de l'éradication des formes substantielles à l'âme humaine elle-même. Mais alors que Regius s'en servait pour bâtir une théorie autonome de l'activité des modes, dissociés de leur inconnaissable substrat, Malebranche vise à détruire toute idée d'une puissance qui proviendrait de l'âme même. Les développements consacrés à la volonté dans le § 1 du premier chapitre du livre III sont à ce titre extrêmement révélateurs. En retravaillant la définition cartésienne de la pensée comme tout ce qui se fait en nous de telle sorte que nous en soyons immédiatement conscients, Malebranche montre que la puissance de vouloir est à la fois non essentielle à l'esprit et inséparable de lui. Or cela ne peut se comprendre que si l'on se souvient que la volonté n'est autre chose que «l'impression de l'Auteur de la nature, qui nous porte vers le bien en général». La volonté est donc inessentielle à l'esprit non au sens où on pourrait trouver un esprit sans volonté, mais parce qu'elle ne provient pas du propre fond de l'esprit. Elle ne se trouve pas «en» lui mais «en» Dieu. Elle désigne bien une modalité *de* l'âme, au sens où la condition incarnée de cette dernière réfracte et particularise ses choix en arrêtant les mouvements de l'amour divin sur des biens particuliers. Mais elle vient bien *de* Dieu, qui est l'origine première de tout mouvement. La dissociation de la modalité et de la substance a pour corrélat l'enracinement de l'activité de la dite substance dans la causalité divine. Malebranche est donc à la fois fondé à décrire l'activité de l'âme en autonomisant la réflexion sur les modes, et à dénier à l'âme humaine l'origine première de cette activité.

Par-delà leurs différences, un point de contact absolument fondamental entre les deux philosophies peut ainsi être identifié: la conviction de l'incapacité, pour l'âme humaine selon Regius, pour l'âme humaine *déchue* selon Malebranche, d'accéder à autre chose qu'à la connaissance de ses modalités.

Chez Regius, ces thèses sont développées dans le cinquième livre de la *Philosophie naturelle* consacré à l'homme, où on trouve les ajouts et reformulations les plus considérables au gré des différentes éditions. Il s'agit de répondre à la thèse cartésienne selon laquelle la possibilité de penser adéquatement

¹⁶ Cf. le Xe scrupule des *Vie Réponses*. Nous avons étudié la critique malebranchiste de la «force qu'a l'âme de mouvoir le corps» dans notre thèse (Kolesnik-Antoine 2009).

l'âme indépendamment du corps, et inversement, impliquerait la contrariété des deux natures. L'argumentation s'articule autour de la redéfinition de la modalité produite dans le livre I. Si les modes sont bien essentiels à la substance, ils ne sont pas essentiels à son attribut principal; et si l'attribut principal n'est pas essentiel à la substance, alors il n'exclut pas, *ipso facto*, au sein de cette substance, tout attribut qui ne serait pas compris dans son idée. Contre la mise au premier plan, par Descartes, de l'essentialité de l'attribut principal, dans la première partie des *Principes de la philosophie* et dans les *Notae in Programma*, Regius entend détruire la notion d'attribut principal exclusif d'un autre attribut principal. Ce qui importe, c'est le mode plus que l'attribut et l'attribut plus que la substance. Si l'esprit peut être pris pour un attribut ou pour un mode de la substance corporelle, et si la philosophie naturelle ne peut nous faire accéder qu'à des distinctions modales et non réelles, il en résulte que l'essence même de la chose envisagée (l'âme ici) peut être conçue comme contingente. Ce qui compte, ce n'est donc pas de rechercher à connaître l'essence d'une âme abstraite qu'on n'expérimente pas davantage que la quadrature du cercle, mais de se demander de quoi nous avons besoin pour expliquer la diversité des opérations de chacune des âmes en particulier. A cette fin, aucun recours aux idées innées ou à un quelconque intellect pur n'est requis. Le mouvement local et ses variations suffisent à l'éclaircissement de la grande variété de nos perceptions; l'explication mécanique de la sensation peut donc être élargie à tout type de pensée: nous ne pouvons rien vouloir ou décider, rien nous rappeler, ni rien imaginer ni rien percevoir, si l'idée n'en a pas été présentée à l'esprit par la sensation, de manière médiate ou immédiate.

Chez Malebranche, le primat de la modalité reçoit deux types de justifications: 1. une justification théologique et 2. une justification anthropologique.

1. Reprenons l'exemple du premier paragraphe du chapitre I du livre III, dont est extraite l'analyse de la volonté. A Descartes, et pour les besoins de l'étude de l'entendement pur, Malebranche concède qu'il va s'attacher «ici» à «la pensée substantielle, la pensée capable de toutes sortes de modifications ou de pensées». Dans cette optique, les modifications ne sont pas essentielles à l'esprit et son essence peut être adéquatement définie par cet attribut principal qu'est la pensée. Pour autant, Malebranche précise que l'esprit sans ses modifications serait «entièrement inutile»¹⁷ et incapable de cette variété de mouvements pour lesquels il est fait. Cet argument théologico-finaliste permet de réintégrer aussitôt une certaine primauté des modes, rapportés à l'action de Dieu en l'esprit et à la capacité de l'âme, une fois détachée du corps, de recevoir une variété infinie de modifications dont elle ne peut même pas avoir

¹⁷ Malebranche 2006, 407–408 (livre III, Ire partie, chapitre Ier).

ici bas quelque idée (§ 2). L'argumentation vise ainsi à montrer la caducité de toute théorie prétendant connaître, au sens ici de comprendre, la nature de l'âme. Elle renvoie la connaissance humaine à celle de certaines des modalités de l'âme, qui rendent raison de son existence sans nous permettre de statuer infailliblement sur son essence. Elle joue Regius contre Descartes en préservant d'un côté («ici», au moment de l'étude de l'entendement pur) la connaissance de la spiritualité substantielle de l'âme et en dénonçant de l'autre la prétention de cette dernière à expliquer toute la nature de l'âme.

2. Le livre III, que l'on présente généralement comme le lieu d'exposition de la théorie de la vision en Dieu, est ainsi tenaillé entre l'exigence de montrer la possibilité d'une telle connaissance «pure» et le constat de l'impossibilité dans laquelle l'homme déchu se trouve d'y accéder sereinement. L'entendement lui-même n'échappe donc pas aux travers dénoncés par ailleurs au sujet des sens, de l'imagination, des inclinations naturelles et des passions. La référence à Bacon, récurrente chez Malebranche pour stigmatiser la propension des philosophes à inventer de nouvelles entités pour cacher ce qu'ils ignorent¹⁸, sert à le montrer: «toutes les perceptions, des sens comme de l'esprit, ont proportion à l'homme et non à l'univers, et l'entendement ressemble à un miroir déformant qui, exposé aux rayons des choses, mêle sa propre nature à la nature des choses, qu'il fausse et brouille».¹⁹

Si l'on peut par certains aspects s'autoriser à considérer la connaissance pure comme un télos de l'entreprise malebranchiste, il demeure ainsi que l'objet principal de l'enquête, dans la *Recherche*, est bien l'ensemble des modifications de l'âme, plus précisément encore la manière dont la force de ces modifications nous fait donner titre d'être à des entités chimériques, à l'extérieur de nous mais aussi en nous. Alors que les sensations n'enferment point de rapport nécessaire avec les corps qui semblent les causer²⁰ et que l'imagination parvient, lorsqu'elle est échauffée, à créer des effets de réel similaires à ceux que produit une authentique mise en présence sensorielle²¹, «nous jugeons encore plus témérairement que la cause de nos passions, qui

18 Voir par exemple livre IV, chap. II, § V, pour la référence au *Novum Organum*, I, 50: «Les hommes ne peuvent pas si facilement se représenter des parties subtiles et déliées, et ils les regardent comme des chimères à cause qu'ils ne les voient pas. *Contemplatio fere desirât cum aspectu*, dit Bacon.» Malebranche 2006, 25.

19 Livre II, chapitre III. Il s'agit de nouveau d'une citation du *Novum Organum*. Malebranche 2006, 18.

20 Ce point est posé dès le chapitre I du livre I, significativement consacré à la nature et aux propriétés de l'entendement. Malebranche 2006, 125–126.

21 Voir sur ce point, par exemple, la différence seulement de degré entre les visionnaires des sens et les visionnaires par imagination, livre II, IIIe partie.

n'est souvent qu'imaginaire, est réellement dans quelque objet»²², et «c'est principalement par les passions que l'âme se répand au-dehors». ²³ Parce qu'elles condensent l'aptitude de l'âme déchue à répandre sur l'extériorité des caractéristiques qui n'appartiennent qu'à elle et à importer en retour dans son intériorité les illusoire qualités dont les autres hommes passionnés se revêtent par contrecoup, les passions peuvent adéquatement être décrites en ces termes mêmes par lesquels la physique fautive croit pénétrer l'essence des êtres. On peut le déplorer eu égard à la condition de l'âme avant la chute ou à cette cité idéale que les partisans d'Augustin continuent d'espérer. Mais il reste qu'une telle explication demeure nécessaire pour faire comprendre aux hommes sur quelles valeurs repose la société dans laquelle ils vivent.

Nous allons suivre ce fil conducteur politique chez Malebranche, pour revenir au lien avec Regius, via la théorie de la vraisemblance qui se dégagera de ces analyses.

II. L'application particulière de la critique des formes substantielles à l'étude des passions

L'explicitation du lien unissant la critique des formes substantielles à la description du mécanisme passionnel est fournie par Malebranche lui-même au livre V²⁴:

La cause la plus générale des erreurs de nos sens est, comme nous avons fait voir dans le premier livre, que nous attribuons aux objets de dehors ou à notre corps les sensations qui sont propres à notre âme, que nous attachons les couleurs sur la surface des corps, que nous répandons la lumière, les sons et les odeurs dans l'air, et que nous fixons la douleur et le chatouillement dans les parties de notre corps, qui reçoivent quelques changements par le mouvement des corps qui les rencontrent.

Il faut dire à peu près la même chose de nos passions. Nous attribuons imprudemment aux objets qui les causent ou qui semblent les causer, toutes les dispositions de notre cœur, notre bonté, notre douceur, notre malice, notre aigreur, et toutes les autres qualités de notre esprit. L'objet qui fait naître en nous quelque passion nous paraît en quelque façon renfermer en lui-même ce qui se réveille en nous, lorsque nous pensons à lui, de même que les objets sensibles nous paraissent renfermer en eux-mêmes les sensations qu'ils excitent en nous par leur présence.

Il en résulte deux conséquences fondamentales pour notre propos: 1. la réalité de nos passions s'épuise dans la manière dont elles se phénoménalisent à

²² Malebranche 2006, 160 (livre V, chapitre VI).

²³ Malebranche 2006, 100 (livre IV, chapitre XIII).

²⁴ Malebranche 2006, 159 (livre V, chapitre VI).

l'âme en investissant de part en part les «objets» que nous supposons les causer; 2. la propension de l'âme passionnée à donner «titre d'être», fut-ce de manière très versatile (car on peut haïr aussitôt après avoir aimé) aux qualités qu'elle projette en autrui au sens large produit à son tour un effet de réel qui fonde les relations sociales entre les hommes. Reprenons ces deux points.

1. L'aptitude de l'âme, par ailleurs impuissante, à se forger activement un monde intérieur dont le lien objectif avec une quelconque extériorité reste toujours douteux, est illustrée par l'exemple de l'homme outragé par imagination qui «se figure dans son cabinet que tel, qui ne pense pas même à lui, est en état et dans la volonté de lui nuire». ²⁵ On pourrait être tenté d'imputer cette création *ex nihilo* à la puissance des sollicitations corporelles et à une forme de pathologie, comparable à la folie des lycanthropes décrite à la fin du livre II. Mais Malebranche souligne aussitôt que ce qu'il vient de dire de cet homme lui pourrait arriver «quand même il n'aurait point de corps»:

Il n'est pas même absolument nécessaire que cet homme reçoive ou s'imagine recevoir quelque affront, ou trouver quelque opposition dans ses desseins, afin que le mouvement de sa volonté reçoive quelque nouvelle détermination: il suffit pour cela qu'il le pense par l'esprit seul, et sans que le corps y ait de part. ²⁶

L'âme peut donc par elle-même occasionner dans le corps les mouvements des esprits animaux requis pour entretenir la passion de haine, augmenter ensuite en elle cette passion sous l'effet de la vivacité des sollicitations corporelles, et afficher sur le corps auquel elle est unie une disposition, un air et des manières se rapportant à cette passion:

si l'injure est atroce, et que son imagination soit échauffée, il se fera un grand ébranlement dans son cerveau, et les esprits se répandront avec tant de force, qu'ils formeront en un moment sur son visage et sur son corps l'air et la contenance de la passion qui le domine. S'il est assez fort pour vaincre, son air sera menaçant et fier. S'il est faible, et qu'il ne puisse résister au mal qui va l'accabler, son air sera humble et soumis. ²⁷

En vertu des liens institués par Dieu entre l'âme et le corps d'un homme, entre les nerfs intercostaux et les nerfs exprimant les passions sur le visage, et entre les cerveaux des hommes, donc entre les corps et les âmes des hommes ²⁸, un

²⁵ Malebranche 2006, 128 (livre V, chapitre III).

²⁶ Malebranche 2006, 129 (livre V, chapitre III).

²⁷ Malebranche 2006, 130–131 (livre V, chapitre III).

²⁸ Ces différents liens sont étudiés dans le livre II. Il faut y ajouter le lien entre le cerveau de la mère et celui de l'enfant, par lequel Malebranche explique la propagation du péché originel. A ce sujet, cf. Kolesnik-Antoine 2009, 85–110. Sur la communication des passions chez Descartes, cf. Kambouchner 2008.

phénomène de contagion ne manquera pas de se produire: «Ses gémissements et ses pleurs excitant naturellement dans les assistants, et même dans son ennemi, des mouvements de compassion, ils en tireront le secours qu'il ne pouvait espérer de ses propres forces».²⁹

L'effet de réel et de projection dans l'ennemi fantomatique agit donc ici à trois niveaux: 1. *en l'homme passionné*, il vient caractériser la nature de la cause imaginaire offensante (cet homme «est» méchant, injurieux, etc.) et la nature de la passion éprouvée par la victime présumée (je le hais et je «suis» accablé, menacé, légitimé à me venger, etc.); 2. *dans l'auditoire*, il produit une identification similaire, mais accentuée par le phénomène de contagion (on pourrait imaginer, à partir de là, que se forge une théorie du bouc-émissaire); 3. *la circulation de l'homme passionné à l'auditoire passionné* autonomise ces relations imaginaires et en fait le fondement, à prendre en considération comme tel, de la vie sociale. C'est le second point que nous soulignons plus haut.

2. Le schème de la critique des formes substantielles sert ainsi à penser la construction imaginaire du moi en société et les relations d'estime viciées sur lesquelles elle se fonde. La République des Lettres n'est pas épargnée: elle fourmille de ces esprits de polymathie se complaisant à faire de leurs têtes des bibliothèques de dictionnaires afin de mieux étourdir leur auditoire par la récitation péremptoire de discours aussi savants que creux. L'esprit content de lui est conforté dans sa morgue et son illusion d'expansion par l'air de vénération affiché dans l'auditoire, et les spectres de l'humilité et de la fierté perverses peuvent circuler de l'un à l'autre pour entretenir cette curieuse *illusion vraie*.

Pourtant, la création imaginaire de notre «être tel» par cette intériorisation des marques extérieures d'estime a des vertus positives en société. Malebranche consacre ainsi un passage remarquable du livre IV à expliquer que le désir de tous les hommes pour la grandeur et la peur qu'ils éprouvent à constituer la partie la moins considérable du tout auquel ils appartiennent, entraînent, à la manière de la considération de la répartition du bon sens au début du *Discours de la méthode*, une sorte de contentement universel:

tous les hommes possèdent en quelque manière la grandeur qu'ils désirent: les grands la possèdent réellement, et les petits et les faibles ne la possèdent que par imagination, étant persuadés en quelque manière par les compliments des autres qu'on ne les regarde pas pour ce qu'ils sont, c'est-à-dire pour les derniers d'entre les hommes.³⁰

²⁹ Malebranche 2006, 131 (livre V, chapitre III).

³⁰ Malebranche 2006, 104–105 (livre IV, chapitre XIII).

Car la passion de gloire, qui naturellement tend plutôt à la dissolution de la société, est tellement partagée, que ceux qui sont en réalité les moins estimés n'ont point coutume d'en désirer plus de marques extérieures qu'on leur en témoigne généralement. La société tout entière fonctionne ainsi sur ces relations imaginaires: les hommes sont les uns à l'égard des autres comme autant de formes substantielles ou de qualités rendant illusoirement raison d'effets quant à eux bien réels.

Ce détour par la politique, dont Malebranche souligne qu'il a tout à nous apprendre sur la nature de l'esprit³¹, nous permet de retrouver Regius.

Dans une lignée toute cartésienne, Malebranche définit en effet la passion comme une mise en rapport, fut-elle imaginaire, avec un objet, qui produit en notre âme des effets de réel se traduisant par un mouvement des esprits animaux plus violent que de coutume. Et à la suite de Descartes encore, il propose de s'attacher aux effets les plus généraux produits par cette mise en rapport, afin de dénombrer les passions principales. Cependant, les jugements des biens et des maux accompagnant les passions sont toujours faux par quelque endroit³² et se modalisent de tant de manières différentes en fonction du sexe, de l'âge, du lieu d'habitation, de l'état de santé ou de maladie, de l'emploi occupé, etc. de l'âme qui en est la proie, que la raison se montrerait bien présomptueuse si elle prétendait les comprendre ou les déduire à partir de principes généraux. Les développements sur les passions, dans le chapitre X du livre V, sont ainsi tiraillés entre la tentation de rendre raison de la nature et de l'ordre des passions d'une façon partageable parce qu'elle statue sur ce que les choses sont en réalité, et le constat de l'infinie variété des sentiments intérieurs caractérisant la mise en rapport, illusoire mais productrice de réel, des passions de l'âme déçue.³³ Le mélange de l'âme au corps depuis la chute

31 Ce sont les derniers mots du § II du chapitre XIII du livre IV: «Je n'ai jamais eu dessein de traiter à fond de la nature de l'esprit, mais j'ai été obligé d'en dire quelque chose pour expliquer les erreurs dans leur principe, pour les expliquer avec ordre, en un mot, pour me rendre intelligible». Malebranche 2006, 109.

32 Cf. par exemple livre V, chapitre VI: «[...] nous nous trompons en toutes choses, les jugements de passion n'étant jamais d'accord avec les jugements de la vérité». Malebranche 2006, 157.

33 Sur ce point, cf. notamment la page 201, qui tente de faire droit à la possibilité de la connaissance rationnelle des passions tout en soulignant le caractère souvent infructueux: «[...] on ne doit pas penser que ceux qui découvrent le mieux les ressorts de l'amour-propre, qui pénètrent le mieux et qui développent d'une manière plus sensible les replis du cœur de l'homme, soient toujours les plus éclairés. C'est souvent une marque qu'ils sont plus vifs, plus imaginatifs, et quelquefois plus malins et plus corrompus que les autres. Mais ceux qui, sans consulter leur sentiment intérieur, ne se servent que de leur raison pour rechercher la nature des passions, et ce qu'elles sont capables de produire, s'ils ne sont pas tou-

entraîne l'incapacité dans laquelle l'âme se trouve de constituer un référent substantiel stable par-delà la variété de ses modalisations, dont elle est toujours incapable de savoir si elles lui appartiennent vraiment. Or le primat, par défaut, de ces modalisations, est corrélé à une conception de la science étonnamment proche de celle de Regius.

Le livre V de la *Philosophie naturelle* circonscrit en effet les domaines de la vérité certaine et de la vraisemblance. L'esprit accède à la première par la révélation, que Regius distingue de l'enthousiasme improprement dit «qui n'est qu'une vision de fous et de fanatiques que tout homme sage a raison de rejeter»³⁴; et la philosophie naturelle, c'est-à-dire l'étude des modalités des corps comme des âmes, définit le registre de la seconde. Cette distinction a trois conséquences essentielles.

1. D'une part, elle implique une requalification de l'évidence cartésienne dans le registre de la «vraisemblance imaginaire». Car la clarté et la distinction qui ne proviennent pas de la révélation encourent toujours le risque de n'être que des perceptions construites par la «faiblesse de notre jugement» et sans relation avec «la vérité de la chose».

2. D'autre part, elle congédie le recours à la véracité divine pour distinguer les choses «vraies par vraisemblance» et les choses «vraies indubitablement», puisque la parole de Dieu est «évidente par elle-même, sans avoir besoin d'aucunes preuves».

3. Ainsi, quand bien même Dieu ne serait créateur que d'apparences, il ne serait pas trompeur. Car de telles apparences sont véritables en tant que nous les percevons, et leur vraisemblance suffit à diriger nos actions:

il ne sert de rien aussi de dire que par là on introduirait le pyrrhonisme. Car quiconque connaît Dieu comme tout-puissant et très libre, et reconnaît la faible portée de l'esprit humain ne pourra jamais admettre cette vraisemblance des choses, ou ce pyrrhonisme naturel, si l'on peut l'appeler ainsi. Or bien que, hors la révélation, on n'ait aucune certitude démonstrative de l'existence des êtres hors de notre esprit, mais seulement une certitude morale ou probable. Cependant elle nous suffit pour régler assez bien toutes les actions de notre vie: vu que pour cet effet nous n'avons besoin que de la vraisemblance ou d'une certitude morale, comme l'expérience nous le montre.³⁵

Or Malebranche opère exactement le même recouvrement des disciplines de physique, notamment de la médecine, par le lexique de la certitude seulement

jours aussi pénétrants que les autres, ils sont toujours plus raisonnables et moins sujets à l'erreur, car ils jugent des choses selon ce qu'elles sont en elles-mêmes».

³⁴ Regius 1687, 442.

³⁵ Regius 1687, 445.

morale.³⁶ Si toutes les sciences de pratique peuvent être considérées comme contingentes, c'est à la fois parce que nous n'en détiendrons jamais une connaissance compréhensive et parce que nous les aborderons toujours par rapport à nous et non selon la vérité de la chose. Alors que dans la morale, les hommes commettent l'erreur de statuer sur le général à partir du particulier (la rencontre avec un Italien «fier et incommode» nous fait qualifier la «nature» italienne dans son ensemble de fière et d'incommode³⁷), en physique ils ont tendance à écraser les différences sous des principes généraux. Aussi la hantise de la vraisemblance chez les faux savants est-elle toujours corrélée à la passion de gloire, qui préside à l'illusion d'être dans le vrai et d'y accéder le premier.

De Descartes, Malebranche retient ainsi la conception rationnelle de l'évidence comme un télos. Mais avec Regius, il souligne la dimension bien souvent chimérique consistant à franchir le cap de la simple vraisemblance, légitime comme telle, vers la vérité. C'est pourquoi

[...] on peut, et on doit donner son consentement aux choses vraisemblables, prises au sens qui porte l'image de la vérité; mais on ne doit pas donner encore un consentement entier [...] et il faut examiner les côtés et les faces inconnues, afin d'entrer pleinement dans la nature de la chose, et bien distinguer le vrai d'avec le faux, et alors sentir entièrement, si l'évidence nous y oblige. Il faut donc bien s'accoutumer à distinguer la vérité d'avec la vraisemblance, en s'examinant intérieurement, comme je viens d'expliquer, car c'est faute d'avoir eu soin de s'examiner de cette sorte, que nous nous sentons touchés presque de la même manière de deux choses si différentes.³⁸

Le début de ce travail mobilisait une référence à Bouillier pour souligner la répugnance d'une bonne partie de la critique à inclure dans le malebranchisme des considérations de nature empirique. Les analyses qui ont suivi ont soutenu la thèse d'une parenté positive entre ces dernières et les descriptions de l'âme déchue «comme terrestre et comme matérielle». Ce point est fortement souligné par un concurrent de Bouillier au concours ouvert en 1839 par l'Académie

36 Un des passages les plus parlants sur ce point est le chapitre III du livre I: «[...] dans la morale, la politique, la médecine et dans toutes les sciences qui sont de pratique, on est obligé de se contenter de la vraisemblance, non pour toujours, mais pour un temps, non parce qu'elle satisfait l'esprit, mais parce que le besoin presse, et que si l'on attendait pour agir qu'on se fût entièrement assuré du succès, souvent l'occasion se perdrait. Mais, quoiqu'il arrive qu'il faille agir, l'on doit en agissant douter du succès des choses que l'on exécute, et il faut tâcher de faire de tels progrès dans ces sciences, qu'on puisse dans les occasions agir avec plus de certitude, car ce devrait être là la fin ordinaire de l'étude et de l'emploi de tous les hommes qui font usage de leur esprit». Malebranche 2006, 144.

37 C'est un des exemples du chapitre XI du livre III.

38 Malebranche 2006, 144 (livre I, chapitre III).

des Sciences morales et politiques sur l'histoire du cartésianisme: Jean-Baptiste Bordas-Demoulin. Dans la première partie, section II, chapitre IV, de son ouvrage *Le cartésianisme ou la véritable rénovation des sciences*, il tente ainsi de distinguer Malebranche de son successeur le plus lockéen: Condillac, en maintenant chez le premier une voie des idées abandonnée par le second:

[...] gardons-nous de confondre l'homme de la chute avec l'homme d'aucun de ces sensualismes. Directement ou indirectement, ces sensualismes anéantissent les idées, tandis que la chute ne fait que les rendre plus difficiles à saisir. L'expérience invoquée par Condillac pour établir que depuis la chute nous ne pensons qu'avec les sens, l'accuse hautement d'erreur. Toute expérience n'est pas dans la sensation; l'entendement en a une qui nous est plus intime et plus palpable, si j'ose parler ainsi, puisqu'elle se passe dans le fond de notre être.³⁹

Cependant, l'analyse des passions et la mise au jour de leur primat, ici bas, sur les pensées de l'entendement pur elles-mêmes, nous incite à identifier plus positivement encore l'objet de la philosophie comme celui que l'expérience fait connaître. La question n'est plus alors de distinguer la voie malebranchiste de la voie «rationaliste» d'une part et «empiriste» de l'autre mais de rechercher, *au sein de l'empirisme lui-même*, le «lieu» le plus propice à la philosophie de l'oratorien. C'est en ce lieu que la relation avec Regius nous est apparue comme la plus constructive, y compris pour reconsidérer l'antagonisme que Descartes voulut établir entre sa propre philosophie et celle du plus schismatique de ses disciples, à compter des années 1645.

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³⁹ Bordas-Demoulin 1843, 212 (volume 1, partie I, chapitre IV).

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II. Exploring Spinoza's theory of the affects

Susan James

Spinoza on the Passionate Dimension of Philosophical Reasoning

Abstract: “An affect”, Spinoza tells us, “is only evil or harmful insofar as it prevents the mind from thinking.” By implication, then, affects that do not prevent the mind from thinking are not harmful. But what affects are respectively harmful and harmless, and how is it that some prevent the mind from thinking while others do not? In the *Theologico-Political Treatise* Spinoza argues that a certain kind of passionate love plays a vital role in enabling ordinary, ignorant people to become capable of acquiring philosophical knowledge. Learning to think philosophically, I argue, is for Spinoza a theologico-political as well as an intellectual enterprise, and depends upon collective and as well as individual passions.

Spinoza writes at length about the epistemological deficiencies of the passions; but he also insists that some of them – notably a form of passionate love – are conducive to philosophical reasoning. Without this kind of love, reasoning cannot get off the ground or be sustained by communities of ordinary people. So there is a sense in which love helps us to think: reason and passion work together, and the first depends on the second. Until recently, many commentators tended to overlook this feature of Spinoza’s philosophy, preferring to emphasise the traditional dichotomy between the two categories that is undeniably present in his texts. However, led by the inspirational work of a sequence of French scholars, this orientation has lost its dominance.¹ The close links between reason and passion, as Spinoza represents them, have come to be generally acknowledged, and the nature of their interdependence is recognized as one of his major themes.

There are, nevertheless, certain aspects of this relationship which have received comparatively little attention, and in this essay I explore one of them. In the *Theologico-Political Treatise*, Spinoza makes a form of passionate love definitive of a way of life that he calls true religion. As many commentators have pointed out, a truly religious way of life is meant to encourage people to

¹ Leading figures here include Gilles Deleuze, Alexandre Matheron, Pierre Macherey and Etienne Balibar. In Anglophone philosophy, notable exponents of the same line of interpretation include Moira Gatens, Genevieve Lloyd and Amélie Rorty.

live together peacefully, but is organized around, and tolerant of, false beliefs. There is consequently a temptation to construe it as a panacea for the destructive passions of the ignorant masses. By encouraging the populace to live in a peaceful fashion, it seems, true religion generates conditions in which philosophers can pursue the truth. Nevertheless, religion does not itself pursue truth, and therefore has no part to play in the elite project of philosophising. I contend that this interpretation underestimates the depth of Spinoza's concern with the question of how ignorant, passionate people can become capable of acquiring philosophical knowledge. Addressing this problem, he maps the distinction between passion and reason onto a social nexus comprising theology, politics and philosophy, and provides an analysis of the social conditions and constellations of passion on which the growth of philosophical knowledge depends. Learning to think philosophically, as he presents it, is not merely an individual undertaking, but also depends on the passionate orientations of communities. It is a theologico-political as well as an intellectual enterprise, deeply sensitive to the various ways in which the affects can both enhance and impede our thinking and the ways of life in which they are embedded.

I.

In one of the most thought-provoking propositions of the *Ethics*, Spinoza declares that “an affect is only evil or harmful insofar as it prevents the mind from thinking.”² By implication, then, affects that do not prevent the mind from thinking are not harmful. But what affects are respectively harmful and harmless, and how is it that some prevent the mind from thinking while others do not? I shall argue that Spinoza answers these questions in two complementary ways, and that, although one of them is metaphysically subordinate to the other, both are essential to his account of the processes through which individuals enhance their capacity to think, progressively adjusting their passions to the demands and pleasures of philosophical reasoning. After drawing on the *Ethics* to sketch what is, perhaps, Spinoza's most obvious response to the questions I have posed, I shall explore a second line of reply that he articulates most clearly in the *Theologico-Political Treatise*.

² “Affectus eatenus tantum malus seu noxius est, quatenus mens ab eo impeditur, quominus possit cogitare”, Spinoza, *Ethica* in Gebhardt ed. 1924, vol. 2; translation in Spinoza, 1985, vol. 1; E5p9. (All translations are Curley's, and references to the *Ethics* follow the standard form.)

How, then, do affects prevent the mind from thinking? In the *Ethics*, Spinoza distinguishes two types of affect and aligns them with two different kinds of thought, imagining and reasoning. When we imagine, we register the ways in which external things act on us. However, because the resulting thoughts or ideas are the fruit of random interactions that we do not determine for ourselves, and because the ways in which we interpret and act on them are governed by psychological laws of which we are largely ignorant, imagining is a passive form of thinking.³ Not that it renders us inert. On the contrary, we busily interpret the ideas that our senses, memories and fantasies deliver to us. The point is rather that, without the stimulus of external things, imagining would not occur, so that in imagining we are always directly or indirectly acted on.

The passivity of imagining is also reflected in its epistemological shortcomings. Rather than interpreting our perceptions, memories and so forth as a record of partial and arbitrarily-ordered interactions with external things, we normally regard them as reliable indications of what we and the world are like.⁴ As Spinoza puts it, we treat them like complete arguments when we should view them as “conclusions without premises”, waiting to be examined and justified.⁵ This disposition is damaging because the ideas that imagination works with are mutilated and confused, or as Spinoza usually puts it, inadequate, and consequently fall short of the truth. When our knowledge is limited to what we can learn by means of imagination, there are many types of error we persist in making, and many things we fail to understand.

Among the inadequate ideas that imagining delivers are our passions or passive affects – the varieties of *laetitia* and *tristitia* that register increases and decreases in our power as we interact with other things, together with the appetites and desires that such interactions generate.⁶ Like other inadequate ideas, passions do not present themselves to us in their true guise. Rather than

³ Our perceptions arise “I. from singular things that have been represented to us through the senses in a way that is mutilated, confused and without order for the intellect; for that reason I have been accustomed to call such perceptions knowledge from random experience; II. from signs, e.g. from the fact that, having heard or read certain words, we recollect things, and form certain ideas of them, which are like them, and through which we imagine them” (E2p40s2).

⁴ “The mind has only a confused and mutilated knowledge of itself, of its own body, and of external things, as long as it perceives things from the common order of nature, i.e. as long as it is determined externally, from fortuitous encounters with things, to regard this or that” (E2p29s).

⁵ “The ideas of the affections, insofar as they are related only to the human mind, are like conclusions without premises, i.e. [...] they are confused ideas” (E2p28).

⁶ E3p11.

experiencing them as marks of our own fluctuating power, we tend to read them as appropriate response to the properties of external objects. (The tyrant is hateful and that is why I hate him; you are lovable and that is why I love you.) Moreover, by interpreting our affects in this way, we generate misleading ideas of ourselves and external things that often prompt us to behave self-destructively.

The remedy for these deficiencies lies in a second kind of thinking, namely reasoning. When we reason, we form and connect what Spinoza describes as adequate ideas, which are not distorted, and possess a clarity and distinctness that reveals them to be true.⁷ Since an idea is adequate when we understand its causes, transforming our inadequate ideas into ideas fit for reasoning with is a matter of gaining a fuller grasp of the causal networks to which they belong. As one extends one's knowledge of the antecedent causes of an idea and the effects that follow from it, one's conception of it becomes less inadequate or confused. At the same time, one becomes progressively more able to think about it for oneself, in the light of one's knowledge of its causes and effects, and correspondingly less reliant on the inadequate, imaginative idea from which one began. To put the point another way, the more one thinks with adequate ideas, the less passive and more active one's thinking becomes and the more one's actions flow from one's active understanding.⁸

As we would by now expect, this transformation also has an affective dimension. By increasing our power of active thinking, understanding generates forms of joy that make the experience of reasoning a pleasurable one and are themselves classified as affects. But whereas our passive affects are caused by the way things act on us, these affects are an aspect of our own activity and are consequently described as active. Following a long tradition, the *Ethics* distinguishes the passive affects or passions that are integral to imagining from the active affects that are a feature of understanding.

In demonstrating his claim that the affects are only harmful insofar as they prevent the mind from thinking, Spinoza refers us back to two earlier propositions (E4p26 and p27) about what it is like to reason in the sense just described. According to Proposition 27, once we have learned to think with adequate ideas and experienced the joy they arouse, the mind "wants nothing other than understanding, nor does it judge anything to be useful to it except what really leads to understanding". Moreover, as our adequate knowledge increases, we come to recognize that "nothing is certainly good except what really leads us to understanding, and conversely, nothing is certainly evil except what can prevent us from understanding."

7 E2 Def. 4.

8 E3Def. 2; E4p3, p4.

How, though, are we to pursue this conception of the good? The only way to extend one's understanding is to enlarge one's stock of adequate ideas; but in practice, our finitude makes it impossible for us to transform all our inadequate or passive ideas into adequate ones. Embodied and relatively powerless as we are, we cannot avoid being acted on by external things, and our minds are incapable of grasping all the causes of the multitude of inadequate ideas that this process generates. The development of our understanding is therefore inevitably both gradual and incomplete. As Spinoza recalls in a letter to Hugo Boxel, "when I learnt Euclid's *Elements* I first understood that the three angles of a triangle are equal to two right angles, and I clearly perceived this property of a triangle although I was ignorant of many others." By the time he wrote this sentence, we can presume, Spinoza was equipped with a fully adequate idea of a triangle; but some of his ideas still remained incomplete. "I do not say that I know God entirely, but only that I understand some of his attributes, though not all, nor even the greater part of them [...]"⁹ Reasoning or understanding is thus a matter of increasing as far as we can the proportion of adequate as opposed to inadequate ideas that our minds perceive, and thus increasing the extent to which our thinking is active rather than passive.¹⁰ Moreover, as we undergo this alteration we can expect to become increasingly strongly motivated to go on reasoning. The joy of active thinking generates a desire for more pleasure of the same kind so that, rejoicing in its own activity, the mind strives to increase its understanding.

By referring back to this earlier argument, Spinoza makes it clear that, when he says that the affects are only harmful insofar as they prevent us from thinking, the kind of thinking he has in mind is reasoning rather than imagining. So what sort of affects might impede reasoning? Obviously not the active ones. They play such an integral part in this form of thinking that it is impossible to reason without them. By elimination, then, Spinoza must be talking about the passive affects. If any affects are harmful to reasoning they must be passions, and in fact, the structure of oppositions we have been tracing makes it clear why this should be so. As we have seen, passions are inadequate ideas and are therefore not of the right type to reason with. At best, they will be neutral with respect to reasoning; but as Spinoza sees the matter they impede it. If we were not rendered passive by the way that external things act on us, our minds would not perceive any inadequate ideas and would be wholly active. If we were not led astray, as it were, by the passionate investments that imagining creates, our unobstructed, adequate thoughts would home in on the

⁹ Spinoza 1966, Letter 61.

¹⁰ E5p20s.

causes and effects that constitute knowledge of our true good. As it is, however, passive affects hold us back. By distorting and mutilating our grasp of the world and ourselves they hinder our capacity to think, so that if we are to cultivate the activity proper to human minds we must do our best to transcend them.¹¹

There is no doubt that Spinoza wants the readers of his *Ethics* to grasp this conclusion. It plays a vital part in the argument of the text, and paves the way for the account of liberation in which it culminates. However, although passive affects cannot by definition constitute reasoning, there remains the possibility that they may have a part to play in enhancing our ability to engage in this activity, and that some passions may be better suited to this role than others. When Spinoza says that nothing is useful to the mind “except what really leads to understanding”, he is reminding his audience that the reasoning mind focuses on its pursuit of adequate ideas, and emphasizing the difference between imagination and philosophical thought. But in driving these points home, he marginalizes a more positive conception of the relationship between passionate and rational thinking that he is elsewhere keen to defend. This latter conception does not challenge the argument we have so far traced, but it nevertheless contends that, without certain constellations of passion, we cannot cultivate the capacity to reason. Working within the realm of imagination, we can distinguish passive affects that inhibit thinking from passive affects that make it possible. We therefore do not need to condemn all passions as inimical to understanding.

Spinoza develops this aspect of his philosophical position most fully in the *Theologico-Political Treatise*, where he examines the process of increasing one’s power to think, considering it not so much as an alteration that individuals undergo, but rather as a collective phenomenon. While it is true that a particular passion may increase or diminish an individual’s capacity to reason, passive affects are usually more consequential when they are upheld by social practices and shared by groups of people. My hatred, for example, may harm me and those closest to me; but the common hatred of the members of a community is liable to have broader destructive effects, some of which may diminish its members’ capacity to make themselves more active by extending their philosophical understanding. In the *Treatise*, moreover, Spinoza explains how different patterns of passive affect constitute different levels of empowerment, some of them more conducive than others to thinking. Institutionally-supported fear, he argues, impedes thought and, particularly in societies where superstition is rife, makes it extremely difficult to cultivate the general habit

¹¹ E4p27.

of reasoning; but institutionally-supported love is more productive. Love of this variety is undoubtedly passive, but it is not an obstacle to thinking. On the contrary, it is necessary for the practice of reasoning to take hold and become embedded in a collective way of life.

II.

Although the workings of the passions are lengthily dissected in both the *Ethics* and the *Theologico-Political Treatise*, the two discussions are set within different organizing frameworks, answering to the demands of imagining in one case and reasoning in the other. In the grand scheme of the *Ethics*, where Spinoza is largely concerned with the transition from imagining to reasoning (and ultimately to the further kind of thinking that he describes as intuition), he offers a single comprehensive account of the passive affects, defining them all as forms or combinations of *laetitia*, *tristitia* and *cupiditas*. Hatred, aversion, fear, despair and remorse are varieties of *tristitia*; love, devotion, hope, gladness and self-esteem are types of *laetitia*; and each of these passions comes in a host of forms, varying with its object and the constitution of the individual agent being acted on. One might expect the same classification to be employed in the *Theologico-Political Treatise*, written during an interlude in the long labour of composing the *Ethics*. But the *Treatise* serves a different purpose, and its treatment of the passive affects is adapted to its goal. While the *Ethics* locates imagination within the broader landscape of human thought, the *Treatise* aims to show how imaginative and therefore passionate people can avoid the deprivations latent in their own affective constitutions, and develop peaceful ways of life within which they can cultivate philosophical understanding. The work is therefore focused on the differences between better and worse forms of imaginative life, and on the distinct patterns of affect that characterize them.

Concentrating on this narrower domain, Spinoza organizes his argument (without comment) around love and fear. In doing so, he takes up a celebrated classical *topos* and enters a longstanding debate about whether it is better to rule by fear or by love. Posing a traditional question, he asks which of these two passions must dominate a political community of ordinary imaginative people if it is to be peaceful and secure. At the same time, however, he gives this standard query a less familiar twist by asking which affect a society should rely on to promote the growth of reasoning. Turning a familiar discussion in a new direction, he focuses on the relation between passion and knowledge.

To many generations of writers, the answer to the traditional question had seemed obvious: societies flourish when their rulers strive to be loved.¹² But by the time Spinoza was writing, this comfortable orthodoxy had been challenged by Machiavelli and Hobbes, two authors whose shadows loom large over the *Treatise*. Rejecting Cicero's faith in the benefits of benevolent government, Machiavelli had advised "that it is much safer to be feared than loved", and Hobbes had confirmed, in a memorable phrase, that "the passion to be reckoned upon is fear".¹³ Against this pair of influential dissenting voices, the *Treatise* reaffirms the efficacy of love, considered as a passive affect. Spinoza defends his restoration of classical orthodoxy on political grounds. (Inadequate and unreliable though passionate love may be, it is nevertheless essential to the cultivation of a politically harmonious way of life.) But he also has philosophical reasons for upholding it. One of the central aims of political society is to create conditions in which the freedom to philosophise can flourish, and love is a condition of achieving this end.

III.

As Spinoza acknowledges in both the *Ethics* and the *Tractatus*, a community whose members are already wise will be devoted to the project of extending their philosophical knowledge. Appealing to their adequate ideas and motivated by their active affects, they will strive to work out how it is optimal for them to live, and will develop ways of life geared to the harmonious pursuit of understanding. In practice, however, communities of this kind are extremely rare, if they exist at all. Ordinary societies are predominantly composed of individuals whose ideas are more inadequate than adequate, and whose thinking is more imaginative than rational. In deciding how to organize their collective affairs, these people have to rely on their imaginative resources, examining themselves in the light of their inadequate ideas and the passions that run through them, and doing their best to find ways of empowering themselves. Sometimes this process results in comparatively stable and effective ways of life, where there is room for philosophical understanding to grow. In other cases, however, the forms of social and political organisation that it generates are dysfunctional. There are, of course, many ways in which social institutions

¹² The classic statement is Cicero, *De Officiis* (Cicero 1913). See I.16.41 on avoiding force and fraud, and especially II.7.23 on how being loved secures people and holds them to you, whereas being feared has the opposite effect.

¹³ Machiavelli 1988, 58 (ch. 17); Hobbes 1996, 99.

can stand in the way of reasoning; but among these potential obstacles, Spinoza focuses on a way of life dominated by superstition, a condition in which the ability to think is choked by a peculiarly disabling form of fear. Superstition therefore provides a paradigm case of a harmful social practice in which a passion constitutes an impediment to thinking.

Like the pros and cons of fear and love, the political implications of superstition had been widely discussed by a long tradition of classical authors. On the one hand, superstition could pacify the people, thus making them easier to rule; on the other hand, it could make both rulers and subjects anxious and inconstant, thus destabilizing government. These possibilities are further explored in numerous sixteenth and seventeenth century works. In addition, however, early-modern writers take over a classical interpretation of the phenomenology of superstition (vividly described, for example, by Plutarch and subsequently rehearsed by philosophers, dramatists and medical authorities).¹⁴ Superstition, as these authors present it, is fundamentally a fear of the gods that typically manifests itself in various forms of anxiety, including insomnia, nightmares, fantasies and hallucinations. In an effort to assuage their fears, superstitious people habitually project them onto the world, imaginatively peopling the environment with witches or angels, good omens or bad. Needless to say, these fantastical devices are liable to let them down; but when they do so, the superstitious are not inclined to alter their outlook. Instead, they desperately repeat the same miserable cycle, shifting from one inadequate conception to another and prey to recurrent distress. As Plutarch (in Holland's translation) sums up the process,

Thus, unhappy and wretched superstition, by fearing overmuch and without reason, [...] never taketh heed how it submitteth itself to all miseries; and for want of knowledge how to avoid this passionate trouble [...] forgeth and deviseth for itself an expectation of inevitable evils, even unto death.¹⁵

Re-creating this image with his own philosophical materials, Spinoza traces the origin of superstition to the imaginative habit of forming anthropomorphic images of a God who serves human ends and satisfies human desires.¹⁶ By

¹⁴ Plutarch, 1603. On early early-modern reworkings of Plutarch's claims see James 2009, 80–98.

¹⁵ Plutarch 1603, 262–3.

¹⁶ People first inferred that there was a ruler or rulers of nature who adapted things to human use. "And since they had never heard anything about the temperament of these rulers, they had to judge it from their own. Hence, they maintained that the Gods direct all things for the use of men in order to bind men to them and be held by them in the highest honour. So it has happened that each of them has thought up from one's own temperament different ways of worshipping God, so that God might love them above all the rest, and

representing the deity as an extremely powerful being who, like an absolute monarch, can arbitrarily satisfy or thwart our desires, we make him an object of fear, thus subjecting ourselves to the very passion through which superstition “arises, is preserved and is encouraged”.¹⁷ Since fear is a form of *tristitia*, it registers a diminution of power and is debilitating in itself; but the fact that superstitious anxiety is “an inconstant sadness that has arisen from the image of a doubtful thing” introduces two further forms of disempowerment that make it yet more destructive.¹⁸ First, because fear always alternates with hope, it is invariably accompanied by some degree of mental vacillation. As the *Ethics* puts it, “He who is suspended in hope [...] fears that the thing he imagines will happen, while he who fears hopes that the thing he imagines will not take place”.¹⁹ However, vacillation and doubt also make us credulous. When we are not sure what to do or think, we are psychologically disposed to give more weight to our hopes than our fears, so that we “easily believe the things we hope for [...] and regard them more highly than is just.” But acting on this basis cannot firmly dispel doubt, which simply resurfaces, driving us inconstantly from one opinion to another. Secondly, the doubt that accompanies fear makes us timid, and in extreme cases brings thinking to a halt by preventing us from resolving on a decision or course of action. In cases where fear significantly outweighs any accompanying hope, this is not a serious psychological threat. Hating the things we fear, we do all we can to oppose them. But in cases where we are divided between fear of a state of affairs and fear of what will happen if we resist it, we can find ourselves so torn between two alternating inclinations that, “willing what we do not will and not willing what we will”, we are unable to act.²⁰ In this condition, Spinoza claims, we experience the passion of timidity (*timor*), itself a form of cowardice²¹ that he associates with superstition. (All the things men have worshipped in superstitious and illusory religions, he remarks, “have been nothing but apparitions, the delusions of a sad and timid mind.”²²) But when the alternating anxieties in ques-

direct the whole of nature according to the needs of their blind desire and insatiable greed. Thus, this prejudice was changed into superstition and struck deep roots in the mind” (E1 Appendix I).

¹⁷ Spinoza, *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* in Gebhard ed. 1924, vol. 3, 5–6. (Henceforth I use the standard system of citation, e.g. TTP III/5.) All translations are from Edwin Curley’s English edition of the *Tractatus*, forthcoming with Princeton University Press.

¹⁸ E3p18s2.

¹⁹ E3 Definition of the Affects, xiii exp.

²⁰ E3p39.

²¹ E3 Definition of the Affects xlii.

²² “Eaque omnia, quae unquam vana religione coluerunt, nihil praeter phantasmata, animique tristis, et timidi fuisse deliria,” TTP II/6.

tion are very great, timidity turns into consternation (*consternatio*), a passion that arises from a double timidity and “keeps a man so suspended in considering it that he cannot think of other things by which he could avoid that evil”.²³ In this most acute form, superstitious fear makes us incapable of seeing what to do or how to remedy our own debilitating state.

Bringing these two afflictions together, Spinoza launches into a violent denunciation of the inconstancy and credulity of superstitious people, who vacillate wretchedly between hope and fear, have a mind ready to believe anything at all, are driven this way or that, and, especially when shaken by hope and fear, are unable to act.²⁴

If, while they are tossing in fear, they see something happen which reminds them of some past good or evil, they think it portends either a fortunate or an unfortunate outcome; so they call it a favourable or unfavourable omen, even though it may deceive them a hundred times. Again, if, with great wonder, they witness something strange, they believe it to be a portent, which indicates the anger of the Gods or of the supreme Divinity. Prey to superstition and contrary to religion, they consider it a sacrilege not to avert the disaster by sacrifices and prayers, and, as if nature were as insane as they are, interpret it in amazing ways.²⁵

These habits of thought and action constitute an outlook that leans to madness and is deeply destructive. For one thing, it tends to spread. A general psychological disposition to try to affirm ourselves by getting others to share our ideas and ways of life works in this case to ensure that the superstitious try to get those around them to share their hopes and fears, along with the vacillation and inconstancy that accompanies them.²⁶ They thus aim, as Spinoza puts it, “to make others as wretched as they are, so it is no wonder that they are generally burdensome and hateful to men”.²⁷ Furthermore, the attempt to satisfy the ever-changing needs of superstitious people generates a plethora of diverse practices, each with its own temporarily committed adherents, and thus sets the stage for conflict between them. Reflecting on his own experience, Spinoza bitterly condemns sectarian churchmen who, themselves the victims of superstitious fear, manipulate the anxieties of the populace in order to uphold their own status, and rails again at sovereigns who employ the same device for political ends.

²³ E3p52s; E3 Dftn of the Affects xlii; E3p39s.

²⁴ TTP III/5.

²⁵ TTP III/5.

²⁶ E3p17; E3p31.

²⁷ E4p63s.

Alongside these familiar complaints, we also find a powerful strand of argument about the intellectual degradation that superstitious fear induces. The anxious vacillation around which it is constructed makes us impressionable and obsessive, and gives us an investment in a range of inadequate ideas. At the same time, it blocks our ability to reflect on our passionate condition or critically assess its effects and, by cutting us off from ordinary habits of truth-seeking, creates an obstacle to reasoning. Expressing the point in more general terms, the *Ethics* notes that people attached to superstitious beliefs and ways of life interpret their fear (which is really a debilitating form of *tristitia*) as a good, and, mistaking disempowerment for empowerment, appeal to superstition as a means of avoiding evil. (“If we just do what the omens prescribe, God will not be angry with us” or “This miraculous cure shows us that the pious will escape damnation”.) But cultivating one form of disempowerment in order to avoid another is, Spinoza protests, antithetical to reasoning, which is by definition a means of increasing one’s power.²⁸ By contrast with understanding, superstition enacts the debilitating strategy of restraining people by fear, so that they flee evil rather than love virtue.²⁹

Societies where superstition is used to uphold political power therefore engender a double form of servitude. On the one hand, superstitious practices propagated by absolutist governments can gain such a hold over the people that they will “fight for slavery as they would for their freedom”. On the other hand, such practices “fill everyone’s judgment with so many prejudices that they leave no room in the mind for sound reason, not even to be in doubt.”³⁰ Superstition is not only a theologico-political pathology. It is also harmful because, by rendering us impotent in the face of our own anxieties, it prevents us from thinking.

IV.

Since seventeenth-century writers habitually characterize superstition as a form of false religion, it comes naturally to them to oppose it to true religion, and Spinoza is no exception. The political and intellectual deprivations of superstitious practices can be mitigated, he argues, by a truly religious way of life, hospitable both to political cohesion and philosophical inquiry. In delineating the principles and practice of true religion, Spinoza sketches a way of

²⁸ E4p64, p65.

²⁹ E4p63s; E4 App. xxxi.

³⁰ TTP III/7.

life organized around a constellation of passive affect, yet nevertheless conducive to understanding. Rather than preventing us from thinking, as superstitious fear does, true religion enhances our capacity to think and supports rather than hinders the project of learning to reason. While false religion undermines philosophical thinking, true religion sustains it.

On the basis of a long theological discussion occupying much of the *Treatise*, Spinoza identifies true religion with a form of love. The one and only tenet of a truly religious way of life, he claims, is that we should steadily love our neighbours by treating them charitably, honourably and justly. Since nothing beyond this pattern of behaviour is required, and since it depends on very few specific beliefs, there are hardly any doctrines to which religious people must subscribe. Moreover, the small number of tenets to which religious people must commit are open to individual interpretation, so that, as long as one's theological beliefs do not prevent one from living in a co-operative or loving fashion, they are acceptable. Drawing on the Bible, and indeed on other sources, individuals and groups are free to internalize any images and narratives that enable them to love their neighbours, whether by providing them with exemplars of virtue to imitate or by generating a desire to attain co-operative goals. However, since images and narratives are themselves signs, which are in turn one of the classes of ideas at work in imaginative thinking, true religion is also an aspect of the imagination.³¹ And since the affects integral to imagining are passive, it follows that the love of one's neighbour around which true religion is organized will be a passion, answering to Spinoza's definition of passionate love as "joy accompanied by the idea of an external cause".³² To love and be loved by one another, neighbours must act on one another in a way that generates some form of joy in each of them, specifically the kind of joy that we take in being treated justly, charitably and honourably.

Mutual love of this sort is, however, a two-sided process. In the first place, I shall only be able to experience my neighbours as lovable in circumstances where they are for the most part just and can on the whole be relied on to remain so. In this respect, Spinoza argues, a truly religious form of life is simultaneously a political one, in which our confidence in others is sustained by a framework of laws and punishments that uphold a common standard of co-operative behaviour. Such a way of life must be designed to generate and sustain neighbourly love; and when it succeeds it will also counter superstition. By creating conditions in which people are constrained to co-operate in ways that are on balance advantageous to them, truly religious communities

³¹ E2p29s.

³² E3 Dftn of the Affects vi.

aim to put individuals in a position where they can see how to act for their own good. Protected from deep doubt and vacillation, they are not particularly vulnerable to the credulousness to which these states give rise; and seeing how to pursue their advantage, they are not exposed to the timidity or consternation that is liable to arise when people confront a choice of evils.

At the same time, a co-operative way of life requires individuals to be capable of loving their neighbours, an ability that may of course be blocked by their own affective constitutions. Someone who is eaten up by superstition, for example, may have such mutilated ideas of their interactions with their just and well-meaning neighbours that they experience the latter as a threat and come to hate them. Someone who is exceptionally proud may regard their neighbours with contempt and treat them accordingly. And so on. To avoid the disempowering relationships that such passions breed, individuals and groups must somehow use their imaginative resources to generate and sustain their capacity to love, and this, in Spinoza's view, is where religious images and narratives begin to be important. However inadequate they may be, imaginatively grounded ideas of God, such as those to be found in the Bible, can encourage and sustain our capacity to treat others justly; and where they have this effect, they fulfill a valuable function. So much so, in fact, that each truly religious individual is in Spinoza's view under something resembling an obligation to cultivate theological beliefs that will motivate them to live lovingly with others. Alongside its political element, true religion therefore has a theological dimension, and this is why it is properly described as theologico-political.

True religion is clearly designed to overcome the social conflicts that superstition promotes. In place of hatred and competition rooted in fear, it offers the possibility of security and confidence in one's fellows. But is there any reason to suppose that a truly religious way of life can enhance our capacity to think, and thus that love of one's neighbour is an aid to reasoning? At first glance, Spinoza's answer seems to be in the negative. The goal of a truly religious life, he emphasises, is not to pursue the truth, as philosophical reasoning does, but simply to create circumstances in which people are able to employ their imaginations to live together peacefully and harmoniously. Individuals may, for example, be motivated to co-operate by deeply inadequate anthropomorphic beliefs about God, envisaging him, for instance, as a father, a king or a judge. Moreover, given the differences between human beings, individuals and groups within and between communities will cleave to disparate and sometimes conflicting theological opinions. However, as long as such people manage to treat one another justly and honourably, there is no religious reason to work out which of their beliefs are correct. It seems, then, that

although a religious way of life will be much more harmonious than a superstitious one, it remains indifferent to the truth-focused demands of philosophical thinking. The love of one's neighbour around which it is organized is accommodated to human beings in all their fallibility and ignorance, and does not impose psychological or epistemological demands that can be counted on to generate a more philosophical outlook. In the name of co-operation, truly religious communities will refrain from enquiring too closely into the means by which people form their religious beliefs or the degree of confusion that these beliefs exhibit. Instead, they will focus on the behaviour in which such beliefs are expressed ("Does this person treat their neighbours lovingly?"), and simply accept that individuals can lead pious lives on the basis of profoundly inadequate ideas.³³

At first glance, then, true religion appears to be particularly devoid of the critical standards to which philosophers appeal, particularly uninterested in developing them, and particularly tolerant of falsehood. To learn to live religiously is to learn to accept loving individuals as they are, however crazy, setting aside differences in belief and outlook, and refusing to jeopardize the benefits of harmony by probing their convictions. In the *Tractatus*, where Spinoza sets out to show that the freedom to reason or philosophise is not incompatible with true religion, this argument plays a central role. However, while it highlights one aspect of a religious way of life, it leaves another in shadow. On closer inspection, we find that the capacity to think is enhanced in communities organized around love of one's neighbour, both because such societies afford the opportunity for thinking, and because they demand the cultivation of attitudes that are themselves conducive to philosophical reasoning.

The first of these two claims is straightforward. By allowing individuals and groups to arrive at their own religious beliefs and live in the light of them, truly religious communities create conditions in which people are free to examine their convictions and alter them as their understanding grows. Testing the truth or falsehood of one's beliefs by subjecting them to increasingly rigorous standards of confirmation becomes an option, and there is consequently space for people of a philosophical bent who want to press this process of clarification as far as they can, and make their ideas as adequate as possible. As long as philosophers continue to love their neighbours, true religion gives them latitude to transcend the limits of imaginative thinking and devote themselves to reasoning.

While this is not a trivial conclusion, it is nevertheless comparatively weak. To be sure, the imaginatively grounded pattern of affect around which true

33 TTP III/176.

religion revolves does not prevent thinking, and to this extent is less harmful than superstitious ways of life dominated by fear. However, we still have no evidence that true religion actively encourages philosophical reasoning. It is equally hospitable to adequate and inadequate ideas, and is in fact upheld by inadequate ideas and passive affects that, judged by the light of reason, are profoundly mistaken and misdirected.³⁴ So although truly religious communities give people the freedom to engage in philosophical reasoning if they can, they do not support their efforts and are not well-placed to do so.

There is, however, a further and more substantial way in which loving one's neighbour promotes attitudes integral to reasoning, this time by imposing a demand for what we might describe as intellectual respect. According to the *Treatise*, one of the vices that truly religious people must avoid is stubbornness – an adamant and unyielding adherence to beliefs and attitudes that one is sufficiently well placed to recognize as discredited.³⁵ Spinoza's attack on this habit of mind is partly aimed at theologians who insist on upholding bankrupt interpretations of Scripture, but he is also making a general point: that among the actions to which true religion requires us to respond lovingly are people's expressions of their ideas. When groups or individuals voice opinions that differ from our own, religion calls on us to respond justly, honourably and charitably by giving their beliefs due consideration. As well as requiring us to put up with other people's ideas, neighbourly love demands that we treat one another as beings who are passionately invested in our ideas, and who strive to empower ourselves by communicating our thoughts to one another. Stubbornly refusing to consider the beliefs that people offer, and on which they ground their capacity to treat others justly and honourably, is consequently a failure of love. Willfully misinterpreting claims that we find unpersuasive is, for instance, a failure of *charitas*, liable to damage the freedom to reason that religious ways of life afford. Lazily dismissing an outlook is a failure of justice, embodying the kind of unfair treatment that true religion aims to overcome and jeopardizing the security that it aims to create. Deliberately ridiculing an opinion or trying to humiliate its advocates is a way of treating them dishonourably, thereby sowing the seeds of resentment and conflict.

These standards of intellectual respect are difficult for passionate people to achieve, and Spinoza himself sometimes fails to live up to them. However, like other aspects of a truly religious way of life, the capacity to respond lovingly to other people's beliefs and attitudes represents an ideal that may be more or less fully realised. Where a community is unable to create a political

³⁴ E1 Appendix [I].

³⁵ TTP III/176–7.

structure capable of sustaining a recognizably just way of life, its rulers may find, as Machiavelli had pointed out, that it is safer to rule by fear. “The mob” (*vulgus*), Spinoza comments, “is terrifying if unafraid” and we therefore should not be surprised that even the prophets encouraged debilitating affects such as humility and repentance in order to control it.³⁶ Nevertheless, this is a dangerous policy, because harmony born of fear “is without trust”.³⁷ It is consequently inimical to neighbourly love, and cannot avoid provoking the doubts on which superstitious anxiety feeds. As far as they are able, communities should therefore eschew fear as a tool for maintaining peace, and strive instead to develop loving ways of life.

A parallel argument applies to the communicative aspect of true religion. Where individuals or groups lack the imaginative resources to engage with outlooks that offend them, or are incapable of overcoming their own stubborn attachments to particular inadequate ideas, this dimension of neighbourly love will remain weak. But even where this is so, the evaluative structure of true religion will continue to hold out the possibility of a way of life where standards of justice and honour extend to the exchange of beliefs and opinions, and will impose a demand to cultivate stronger habits of critical self-reflection and fair assessment. Because learning to live co-operatively or lovingly is partly a matter of learning to think co-operatively or lovingly, communities that aspire to live in a truly religious fashion will strive to develop this capacity. Politically, they will aim to build institutions that promote co-operative thinking; and when individuals search for images and narratives to sustain and strengthen their neighbourly love, they will take this aspect of it into account. In doing so they will lay down and reinforce habits that protect them against the credulousness and doubt on which superstitious fear thrives, and by which thinking is degraded.

V.

Spinoza is adamant that the passive affect of neighbourly love falls short of the active joy and desire that reasoning generates, and that the inadequate ideas in which this form of love is embedded lack the clarity and distinctness on which philosophising trades. Excluded from reasoning, neighbourly love cannot be constitutive of philosophical thinking. However, as we have now

³⁶ E4p54s.

³⁷ E4 Appendix XV.

seen, it is nevertheless constitutive of the conditions in which individuals and communities are able to think. Without a way of life organized around neighbourly love, ordinary imaginative people are vulnerable to corrosive and disempowering passions that inhibit, and at worst destroy, their ability to reason, exemplified in Spinoza's account by superstitious fear. Without neighbourly love, our attempts to recognize the distinction between inadequate and adequate ideas will remain stunted and fragile. Forms of social organization answering to Spinoza's description of true religion are therefore essential to the development of philosophical understanding, and as long as we remain passionate, will always be needed to sustain it. There is thus a robust sense in which the constellation of passive affects that make up neighbourly love does not prevent us from thinking and is not harmful. On the contrary, it helps us to think.³⁸

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Spinoza on Imagination and the Affects

Abstract: Spinoza defines imagination in *Ethics* 2p17s as those ideas which present external bodies to us as existing. That is, for him, imagination consists in our awareness of the bodies before us. This paper considers how Spinoza accounts for our awareness of some bodies rather than others in the causally connected order of Nature and suggests that the affects, the ways in which things differentially impact our power of persevering, fix our awareness and explain our representing the particular things we do. This account helps to explain why Spinoza shifts from sensation to imagination as the model of our inadequate understanding of the world, and begins to explicate a more substantial relation between Part. 2 and 3 of *Ethics*.

1.

What is imagining for Spinoza? There seems to be a quite straightforward answer to this question, for Spinoza defines his terms in *Ethics* 2p17s¹:

Next, to retain the customary words, the affections of the human body whose ideas present [*repraesentant*] external bodies as present [*praesentia*] to us, we shall call images of things, though they do not reproduce [*referunt*] the figures of things. And when the mind regards [*contemplatur*] bodies in this way, we shall say that it imagines.

It thus seems that to imagine something (a body) is to be aware of that body as being there before us, that is, to take that body to exist. These imaginings, as modes of the human mind, have their parallel in modes of the human body, which Spinoza terms images. Think of our canonical cases of imagining, both historical and contemporary. When Descartes asks in the Sixth Meditation for his meditator to try to imagine a chiliagon and a pentagon, he is asking for him to form a mental image of each of these figures, one that tracks perfectly their material existence, making them present to us. It is the meditator's failure

¹ References to Spinoza will be cited internally using the following abbreviations: the first numeral refers to parts; 'd' means definition; 'a' means axiom; 'p' means proposition; 'dem' means demonstration; 'post' means postulate; 'c' means corollary; 's' means scholium; e.g., 4p37s means *Ethics*, part 4, proposition 37, scholium. Unless otherwise noted, translations are from Curley 1984.

to do this that undermines his effort to establish the existence of material things (7:72–74; 2:50–51).² Equally, when we are immersed in a good novel, we transport ourselves to that place and that time, and it is as if we are there then identifying and interacting with its characters. We take the world of the story as present to us. The genius of authors from Jane Austen and Marcel Proust to David Mitchell and Ian Rankin is their making it easy for us to do this. For Spinoza, imagining certainly can include cases like these, in which we take things to exist which we know do not,³ but it also includes *all* cases of ideas which present bodies to us. And it is here that the question begins to get a grip. What is it to present an external body as present to us? What is it to be aware of a body as being there, to take a body to exist?

There are two angles of approach to this set of questions. One begins with the epistemic: What is involved in representing things in the world as existing? We can then ask whether our representations are a guide to reality. The other begins with metaphysics: What things exist in the world? And we can go on to ask whether we can know things as they are. The view I will argue is Spinoza's takes the former route, but along a trail that is not often taken – one that runs through his discussion of the affects. I will conclude, however, with a suggestion that addresses the latter question. For while Spinoza certainly wants to hold that Nature exists prior to understanding of it, it is far from clear that he would maintain that we can make sense of particular things existing, if these particulars are to have a nature corresponding to, or resembling, our representations of them.

Let me begin by considering Spinoza's definition of imagining *vis à vis* a problem that frames Descartes' *Meditations*. Recent work on Descartes has highlighted the shift that occurs in that work from the First to the Sixth Meditation.⁴ In the First Meditation, the skeptical arguments which undermine the authority of our sensory beliefs presuppose that our sense perceptions give us information about the world – represent it – through resemblance. The skeptic's arguments – that our senses sometime deceive us, that we cannot distinguish waking from realistic dreaming experience – hang on an assumption that for our sensations to tell us about the world, they must resemble what they represent. If there is any doubt that this assumption is front and center here, the analogy with painting should dispel that. As the meditator notes:

² Descartes's works will be cited internally and follow this format, Volume: page of AT; Volume: page of CSM/K. 'AT' refers to Descartes 1996/1964–74. 'CSM' and 'CSMK' refer respectively to Descartes 1984 and 1991.

³ Much philosophical energy has been spent in efforts to articulate just how we can believe in things we recognize as fictions. I simply take the phenomenon for granted without aiming to explain it here.

⁴ See for instance, Carriero 1987; Simmons 1999; De Rosa 2010.

Nonetheless, it must surely be admitted that the visions which come in sleep are like paintings, which must have been fashioned in the likeness of things that are real, and hence that at least these general kinds of things – eyes, hands, and the body as a whole – are things which are not imaginary but are real and exist. (Descartes, First Meditation 7:19–20; 2:13)

This same assumption that ideas resemble their objects seems to figure still in the Third Meditation, where the meditator characterizes ideas properly speaking to be “as it were the images of things” because they include only “the likeness of the thing” (7:37; 2:25–6). But by the Sixth Meditation this assumption has been rejected. The meditator is clear that our sensory ideas need not resemble their objects in the proof he offers for the existence of material things, for though corporeal things must exist as the cause of our ideas of them, on pain of God’s being a deceiver, “they may not all exist in a way that exactly corresponds with my sensory grasp of them” (7:80; 2:55). While he acknowledges that the aspects of these sensory ideas that are clearly and distinctly perceived – those “comprised within the subject matter of pure mathematics” – do represent veridically the way things are, the meditator’s task in the rest of the meditation is to offer an account of how the other aspects of sensory ideas still can tell us something about the world without resembling it.⁵ Thus, the *Meditations* are framed by a critique of accounts of sensory representation.⁶

Spinoza’s notion of imagination contains his own contribution to this critique. Spinoza makes a point of noting that the images of things, the ways things affect our body, do not report or reproduce the ‘figures’ of the things

5 See for instance, “Similarly, although I feel heat when I go near a fire and feel pain when I go too near, there is no convincing argument for supposing that there is something in the fire which resembles the heat, any more than for supposing that there is something which resembles the pain. There is simply reason to suppose that there is something in the fire, whatever it may eventually turn out to be, which produces in us the feelings of heat or pain, And likewise, even though there is nothing in any given space that stimulates the senses, it does not follow that there is no body there. In these cases and many others I see that I have in that of misusing the order of nature. For the proper purpose of the sensory perceptions given me by nature is simply to inform the mind of what is beneficial or harmful for composite of which the mind is a part; and to this extent they are sufficiently clear and distinct. But I misuse them by treating them as reliable touchstones for immediate judgements about the essential nature of the bodies located outside us.” (7:83; 2:57f.)

6 In making this claim I do not want to deny in the least that a critique of an Aristotelian metaphysics and a proposal for a revisionist First Philosophy is central to the work. Many scholars have focused on this aspect of the work, as well as on the degree to which it is indebted to the Scholastic traditions it criticizes. See for instance, Carriero 2009; Rozemond 1998; Ariew, 1999. It is an interesting question how Cartesian metaphysics is related to the project of rethinking sensory representation, but one I will not address in the least here.

which cause those affections. That is, he makes a point of rejecting a resemblance account of representation. The effects of the world on our bodies do not resemble their causes, so our minds, in representing the states of our bodies, cannot in any way be thought to represent the causes of our bodily states – things in the world – by a resemblance relation. But if our imaginings of existing things do not necessarily conform to the natures of actually existing things, how do we imagine what we do? And how are we to think that our imaginings get us knowledge of the world? Built into Spinoza’s definition of imagination, then, is a general problem of mental representation: if not by resemblance, how do our minds represent things in the world? So the first thing to note is that Spinoza is clearly invested in the form of Descartes’ critique of sensory representation. Closely on its heels, the second thing to note is that Spinoza has replaced the faculty of sensation wholesale with imagination.

It is, if not natural, then common to think that the primary means through which bodies are represented as present to us is sensation. Descartes certainly thinks as much, as reflected not only in the First Meditation but also in his explicit reliance on sensation over imagination to establish the existence of corporeal things. But Spinoza very rarely alludes to sensation or sense perception of objects in the *Ethics*. Indeed, I can find only a handful of such occasions: E1Appendix, 2p10cS and 2p40s2⁷ stand out.⁸ In the Appendix to Part I,

7 E1Appendix: “The other notions [of good, evil, order, confusion, warm, cold, beauty, ugliness through which natural things are explained] are also nothing but modes of imagining, by which the imagination is variously affected; and yet the ignorant consider them the chief attributes of things ... and call the nature of a thing good or evil, sound or rotten and corrupt, as they are affected by it. For example, if the motion the nerves receive from an object presented through the eyes is conducive to health, the objects by which it is caused are called beautiful; those that cause a contrary motion are called ugly. Those which move the sense through the nose, they call pleasant-smelling or stinking; through the tongue, sweet or bitter, tasty or tasteless; through touch, hard or soft, rough or smooth, and the like; and finally, those which move the ears are said to produce noise, sound or harmony. That is why, when they contemplated natural things, they thought of nothing less than they did of the divine nature; and when afterwards they directed their minds to contemplating the divine nature, they could think nothing less than of their first fictions, on which they had built the knowledge of natural things, because they could not assist knowledge of the divine nature. So it is no wonder that they have generally contradicted themselves.”

2p10cS: “The cause of this [confusion about the relation between God and created things], I believe, was that they did not observe the [proper] order of philosophizing. For they believed that the divine nature, which they should have contemplated before all else (because it is prior both in knowledge and in nature) is last in the order of knowledge, and the things which are called objects of sense are prior to all.”

8 There are other uses of ‘sense’ (forms of the Latin *sentire*), but these uses seem to invoke a general feeling or sensibility rather than an awareness or apprehension of the properties of particular objects. See E2ax4 and E2ax5; E2p13c; E2p49s; E3p26s; E3p50; E3p57s; E4p59;

Spinoza takes to task views which take sense perception to give us some knowledge of properties of things. According to him they mistakenly connect the ways in which the ‘imagination is variously affected’ – that is, the ways in which things are beneficial and harmful to our health – and real properties things have independently of us. The examples he gives here appeal to the five sense modalities, and it is clear that Spinoza thinks that they give us little insight into the world around us. In E2p40s2 this dismissal of sense perception is affirmed. There, in outlining the three kinds of knowledge, he notes that we form universal notions “from singular things which have been represented to us through the senses in a way that is mutilated, confused and without order for the intellect.” Spinoza terms these perceptions “knowledge from random [*vaga*] experience.” From E2p29c, to which he alludes, it seems that all Spinoza means by sensation here is the basic way in which our bodies are affected by other bodies. There is indeed no immediately intelligible order to this, as presumably our bodies are impacted by multitudes of other bodies at every moment, and we are flooded with information about the world. However, that information does not come pre-packaged to consciousness. Any universal notions we might happen to form to organize that information would be ‘mutilated, confused and without order for the intellect’.⁹

The second ‘way of regarding things’ that Spinoza counts as part of the first kind of knowledge is what he calls knowledge from opinion or imagination. As Spinoza describes it, we form universal notions “from signs, for example, from the fact that, having heard or read certain words, we recollect things, and form certain [*quasdam*] ideas of them, like those through which we imagine things” (E2p40s2). It is hard to know how to parse this description, but Spinoza seems to be contrasting the certain ideas formed with the use of signs and those mutilated and confused notions without order gained from the senses. Thus, signs allow us to order our experience and for our ideas to gain some degree of definiteness. Moreover, Spinoza further maintains that our imaginings are paradigm cases of our having certain ideas in this sense. It is far from clear, however, whether our imaginings, like our recollections, involve the use of signs, or become ‘certain’ in some other way.

We thus arrive at some further questions about imagining for Spinoza. First, what is Spinoza’s motivation for moving from considering sensation as

E4p57. E5p23s does align sensing with knowledge, but does not suggest that the sensation at issue is through the sense organs: “Still we feel [*sentimus*] and know by experience that we are eternal.”

⁹ This characterization of sensory knowledge is consistent with Spinoza’s use of *sentire* to indicate a general awareness rather than a perception of properties.

our principal way of accessing the world around us to his focus on imagination? Second, what distinguishes ideas without order from certain (or definite) ideas? How do signs serve to effect that distinction? How are we to understand imagination as a paradigm of our forming definite ideas through signs?

One approach to answering these questions might involve looking to possible historical antecedents to Spinoza's views. Have other philosophers, either contemporaries or precursors, also focused on the faculty of imagination over sensation? Do other accounts of imagination bear a relation to a theory of signs in the defining of ideas? How do Spinoza's views relate to or reconfigure standard faculty psychologies? These are important questions, but they will not be my concern here. Rather, I want to begin to address the original set of questions by considering imagination in relation to the discussion of the affects in *Ethics* Part III. My view is that this discussion is key to understanding Spinozistic imagination, and until we make a start at understanding Spinoza's own account, it will prove difficult to situate him properly with respect to other thinkers.

2.

As everyone is aware, Part III of the *Ethics* is devoted to introducing Spinoza's account of emotions, or what he terms the affects. What follows in Part IV very much depends on the moral psychology Spinoza lays out here, and so it is not surprising that commentators have treated Part III as laying the ground for the ethics proper articulated in Part IV. But Part III is not separated from what has come before. My suggestion will be that the account of the affects can help in addressing a number of the questions about the details of Spinoza's account of imagination in Part II.

Let me begin by defending the plausibility of this suggestion, for it can seem to be an odd one. Consider E2p17, the proposition through which imagining is introduced:

If the human body is *affected* with a mode that involves the nature of an external body, the human mind will regard the same external body as actually existing, or as present to it, until the body is affected by an *affect* that excludes the existence or presence of that body. (Emphasis added.)

Though the term 'affect' appears in this proposition, and equally in the definition of imagination itself in the scholium, it is tempting to think it must be a different sense of the term than that defined in Part III. After all, if it were the same sense wouldn't it be a somewhat surprising deviation from the geometri-

cal method Spinoza is deploying to wait until Part III to define ‘affection’ and ‘affect’? Moreover, the definition of E3d3 of affects – as “affections of the body by which the body’s power of acting is increased or diminished, aided or restrained, and the same time, the ideas of these affections”¹⁰ – increases this temptation. It is quite commonplace to think of our ideas of objects – of bodies that are present to us – as attaching to affective states, but not as themselves intrinsically affective. It would seem that objects, simply in being what they are, do not differentially impact our power of acting. If our imaginings are just ideas of existing objects, then, they should not be affects, according to E3d3.

And yet in E2p17s Spinoza does characterize imaginings as affects, and there is no good indication that he is using ‘affect’ in a sense different from the E3 definition. Ought we to take Spinoza as holding the counter-intuitive view that our imaginings are about the differential impact of the world on our body’s power of acting? It can seem as if we can both attribute a consistent usage of ‘affect’ to Spinoza and deny that our imaginings are about differential impacts on our power of acting. In E3post1, Spinoza does allow for some affections which have no differential impact on our power of acting: “The human body can be affected in many ways in which its power of acting is increased or diminished, and also in others which render its power of acting neither greater or less.” Reading the characterization of imaginings as affects through this postulate can seem supported by the account he offers of affects such as love and hate, and other affects internal to the propositions. In E3p13s, he writes:

From this we understand clearly what love and hate are. Love is nothing but joy with the accompanying [*concomitante*] idea of an external cause, and hate is nothing but sadness with the accompanying [*concomitante*] idea of an external cause.¹¹

Given that this scholium aims to explicate E3p13, which concerns the mind’s imagining things, it can seem natural to read Spinoza as here explaining how our ideas of an external cause – our imaginations – are themselves intrinsically neutral with respect to our power of acting, but then come to ‘accompany’ a basic affect – joy, sadness, and desire – and then through this attachment come to have value.

I do not think that this can be Spinoza’s view. For one, Spinoza himself does not explicitly identify imaginations and those affects that are neutral with

¹⁰ A passion is just an affection caused, at least in part, by something external to us, whereas an action is an affection for which we can be an adequate cause.

¹¹ See also E3p18s2.

regard to our *conatus*, and there is no good reason to presuppose he implicitly does so. Here it is useful to reconsider the definitions of the affects. Other than joy, sadness and desire, every affect is *defined* as involving an imagination. While Spinoza's language is similar to that in the definition of love and hate – as a primitive affect accompanied by imagination – it is clear that the imagination itself is integral to the non-primitive affects. Insofar as affects such as love, hatred, inclination, hope, fear, and so on, are distinct species of increase or decrease of power to act, and so distinct from the joy or sadness which figures in them, it must be the case that the imaginative dimension of these affects *itself* impacts our power to act. Moreover, it is clear that our imaginations themselves have this differential impact on our power of acting. Consider E3p12: “The mind as far as it can, strives to imagine those things that increase or aid the body's power of acting.” The proposition itself suggests that our imaginations, our taking some things to be present, themselves stand to change our power of acting, and the demonstration affirms this unequivocally, appealing quite simply to E2p7, the principle of parallelism:

So long as the human body is affected with a mode that involves the nature of an external body, the human mind will regard the same body as present (by 2p17) and consequently (by 2p7) so long as the human mind regards some external body as present, that is (by 2p17s), imagines it, the human body is affected with a mode that involves the nature of that external body. Hence, so long as the mind imagines those things that increase or aid our body's power of acting, the body is affected with modes that increase or aid its power of acting (see Post. 1), and consequently (by p11) the mind's power of thinking is increased or aided. Therefore, (by p6 or p9), the mind, as far as it can, strives to imagine those things, q.e.d. (E3p12dem)

Spinoza here maintains that simply representing an external body as present to us entails an increase (or presumably a decrease) of our power of acting consistent with that thing's impact on us. For that reason, we can increase our power of persevering in existence simply by calling to mind those things that benefit us. The imagination itself impacts our power of acting. That is, an imagination *is* properly speaking an affect, according to the definition of Part III.

As noted earlier, however, this position might seem counter-intuitive. We regularly take bodies to exist independently of the way they affect us and indeed recognize that on different occasions the same existing body can affect us in different ways. One day I might find the house I am considering buying warm and inviting, but the next day, on a second visit, I might find it sterile and cold. The house itself hasn't changed, nor, it might seem, has my idea of it. We are inclined to say, rather, that my *feeling* towards the house has

changed. On the reading of Spinoza I am suggesting, it is true that our feeling towards the house has changed, but that change of feeling *comprises* a change in our idea of the house: we feel differently insofar as we are imagining something different, insofar as we are taking something different as present to us. Thus, on this reading, Spinoza effectively reverses the standard order of explanation. For him, it is not the case that we first take things to exist and then find ourselves affected by them. Rather we take as existing the things we do because of how we are affected.

While this reversal of the order of explanation might seem counter-intuitive to contemporary philosophical sensibilities, it ought not to be so surprising from the point of view of Spinoza's system. At the end of Part 2 of the *Ethics*, Spinoza denies the distinction between will and intellect and instead asserts that every idea, insofar as it is an idea, involves an affirmation or a negation (E2p49). That is to say our ideas are not intrinsically inert. Spinoza cautions his readers against conceiving of ideas in this way in the scholium to this proposition:

I begin therefore by warning my readers, first, to distinguish accurately between an idea, or concept, of the mind, and the images of things which we imagine. And then it is necessary to distinguish between ideas and the words by which we signify things. For because many people either completely confuse these three – ideas, images and words – or do not distinguish them accurately enough, or carefully enough, they have been completely ignorant of this doctrine concerning the will ... Indeed, those who think that ideas consist in images which are formed in us from encounters with [NS:external] bodies, are convinced that those ideas of things [NS:which can make no trace in our brains, or] of which we can form no similar image [NS: in our brain] are not ideas, but only fictions which we feign from a free choice of the will. *They look on ideas, therefore, as mute pictures on a panel, and preoccupied with this prejudice, do not see that an idea, insofar as it is an idea, involves an affirmation or negation.* (E2p49s, emphasis added.)

From the discussion, it becomes clear that the ideas he is referring to are imaginations. The ideas that involve an affirmation are those of which we are aware, that is, those ideas that present some thing as present to us. Spinoza is denying the possibility of merely entertaining an idea of a thing without regarding that thing as present to us, that is, without affirming the existence of that thing. He denies that we can simply consider the content of an idea independently of an attitude we take to that content. But this denial on Spinoza's part invites a further question. What is it that moves us to affirm what we do? That is, what is it that moves us to regard as present the things we take to exist? What explains our imagining what we do?

3.

Indeed, Spinoza does owe us an answer to this question. Let us return to the scholium of E2p17. There Spinoza distinguishes two senses in which an idea is about something. Spinoza illustrates through the example of the idea of Peter had in one case by Peter and another by Paul:

We clearly understand what is the difference between the idea of, say, Peter, which constitutes the essence of Peter's mind, and the idea of Peter which is in another man, say in Paul. For the former directly explains the essence of Peter's body, and does not involve existence, except so long as Peter exists; but the latter indicates the condition of Paul's body more than Peter's nature, and therefore, while that condition of Paul's body lasts, Paul's mind will still regard Peter as present to itself, even though Peter does not exist. (E2p17s)

Paul's idea of Peter is importantly different from the idea of Peter constituting Peter's mind. The latter idea is explained by Spinoza's metaphysics and in particular his doctrine of parallelism. Peter's mind has Peter's body as its object, just in so far as Peter's mind and Peter's body are the same thing expressed under different attributes. While Peter's mind can be said to represent or be about all that occurs in Peter's body, on pain of absurdity, this representation cannot involve *awareness* of all that occurs in Peter's body. The former idea, the idea that presents Peter as existing to Paul, or Paul's *imagining* of Peter, has Peter as an object in a different sense, one that *does* intrinsically involve Paul's being *aware* of his representation of Peter. What explains this *imaginative content*?

According to Spinoza, the human mind does not perceive any external body as existing except through the ideas of the ways its own body has been causally affected by external causes (E2p26). However, for Spinoza, there is an order to nature; all things, and so all bodies and all ideas, are connected. A particular thing, a human body, say, is causally connected not only with all the things currently impacting it, but also with the various things that have made it what it now is. My body is causally connected with what is impinging on my skin and the air I am breathing in, but it is also causally connected with the food and drink I have ingested and incorporated as I've grown, the various bodies with which it has collided and which have left scars both visible and internal, as well as the bodies of my parents, and those of their parents, and all the other bodies which have causally affected them, and so on *ad infinitum* (E1p28). Following from Spinoza's parallelism, the idea constituting my mind is connected logically (for that is the sort of connection proper to ideas) with each of the ideas of the particular things whose objects are causally connected with my body. In order to determine, or fix, the imaginative content

of an idea, Spinoza thus faces a problem endemic to any causal account of representation. Paul's body is causally affected not only by Peter, but also by the intermediary entities effecting the causal interaction between Peter's body and his own body, and equally, it is causally affected by all those bodies which have causally affected Peter's body to make it as it is at the time it is causally affecting Paul. Spinoza owes us an explanation of how the imaginative content of Paul's idea of Peter is fixed to make it the idea of *Peter*, as opposed to of some other body within the causal nexus. That is, Spinoza owes us an explanation of why we are aware of the things we are, of why we affirm the existence of what we do, of why the external bodies which are presented to us as present are so presented.

Don Garrett has suggested that we might understand the affects, or passions, as manners of conceiving of ideas, and that this manner of conceiving serves to fix the imaginative intentional content of an imagination.¹² That is, according to Garrett, for Spinoza, the human mind becomes aware of one object rather than one of the infinitely many others in the causal order through the affects, and so through the affects Spinoza solves the problem of the causal account of reference. Each of our ideas consists in an array of ideas, containing, as a whole, information about how we are situated causally in the world. But we are faced with a problem of making sense of this torrent of information. How do we attend to some feature of our causal situation? How do we pick out one object as the one affecting us? The ways in which our own power to act is differentially impacted, that is, the affects, serve to focus our attention. This differential impact effectively highlights some element of the array of ideas, such that we identify and become aware of some object as existing and present to us. Insofar as we become aware of one element of our array of ideas, we fix the imaginative content of our idea, and we imagine an object, affirming its existence. On this reading, being aware of objects in the world around us essentially involves the affects – we cannot become aware of any particular thing in the world without our power to act being differentially impacted, that is, without the affects. On this reading, it should be clear, that it is no accident or equivocation that Spinoza characterizes imaginations as affects in Part II. Furthermore, on this line, our ideas of things are far from being mute pictures

¹² Garrett (MS). Garrett 2008, Nadler 2008 and LeBuffe 2010 also discuss imaginings as conscious ideas, but they are primarily interested in a different aspect of Spinoza's account of consciousness: that it admits of degrees, so that a mind can come to be more aware of things, and thereby more powerful. My concern here can be characterized as offering an account of the starting point from which we have an initial consciousness of Nature from which we can move to increase our awareness and understanding and so our power of thinking.

on a panel; our ideas of things just in being the ideas of the things they are speak volumes about our own natures, understood in Spinozistic terms as our power to persevere, and about our relations to the world around us.¹³ We imagine what we do – are presented with the external bodies present to us that we are – just insofar as our power of acting is differentially impacted.

I will conclude by considering the advantages of this reading of Spinoza's notion of imagination, and in particular the resources it affords for addressing the questions raised at the outset of the paper, but let me first raise one concern about this reading. I have been arguing that for Spinoza all of our imaginings of objects are essentially affective, for it is the affect itself that focuses in attention on a particular part of the causal order. That focus constitutes a conscious representation of an object. Is this view consistent with the definitions of the affects of love and hatred, which, as noted earlier, seem to suggest that these affects are a primitive affect combined with an affectively neutral imagining. This reading takes the affect and the imagining to be distinct and separable mental states. But there is another natural way to read these definitions. We can read Spinoza as detailing one entity, an object as conceived in a particular manner. On this reading there is but a distinction of reason between the content of the imagination and the manner of conceiving that content. It is not as if there is any sense to be made of an object conceived in no manner at all. The manner of conceiving the object is intrinsic to the conception of the object itself, intrinsic to the content of the imagination.

There might, however, appear to be a further problem with this reading. Spinoza does define the affects of joy, sadness and desire, the so-called primitive affects, separately, and it is quite natural to treat each of these affects as distinct and separable mental states, as ideas in the mind. Can joy, sadness and desire be proper ideas unto themselves on the one hand, and manners of conceiving on the other? A full answer to this question would involve delving into Spinoza's theory of ideas, a task beyond the scope of this paper. Let me note, however, that there is no reason to think that all Spinozistic ideas are of the same kind. It might well be that our imaginings can be thought of separate and distinct ideas, in virtue of their having distinct objects, but in Part II of the *Ethics* Spinoza has introduced the ideas of the common notions, ideas which can only be conceived adequately. Eugene Marshall has argued that common notions such as motion and rest and extension are conceived ade-

¹³ Radner and Della Rocca offer related accounts of Spinoza's theory of ideas, but they are both more focused on the epistemic import of that account and not the constitution of the content of an idea. See Radner 1971 and Della Rocca 2003. See also Garrett 2008 and LeBuffe 2010.

quately insofar as they are integral to any idea of a body.¹⁴ That is, these common notions seem to be structurally necessary to having any thought of a body at all. It is hard to see how, on this reading, our ideas of common notions could be taken to be distinct and separable from other (inadequate) ideas, not of the common notions. I would like to suggest, along an analogous line, that joy, sadness and desire, be thought of as manners of conceiving things, valences which weight the information we receive about the world, and which as such are structurally necessary to any affect, and so not distinguishable or separate from other (non-primitive) affects.

4.

Let me now conclude by returning to my original puzzles about Spinoza's claims about imagination. This account of imagination as intrinsically affective can help us in understanding why Spinoza shifts from sensation to imagination as the key epistemic category, as well as his claim that imagination is a paradigm of forming definite ideas through signs.

First, Spinoza recognizes that once we reject a resemblance account of sensory representation, we are only entitled to claim that our sensory experiences tell us that we have been causally impacted by the world in some way. That is, in accordance with Spinoza's most frequent usage of forms of the verb *sentire*,¹⁵ our sensations afford us an indeterminate feeling. While this feeling is referred to no determinate or particular thing, it does, given Spinoza's parallelism and his commitment to a principle of sufficient reason, reflect a change in us. And for this reason our sensations do give us some knowledge; the change must have been caused by something. It is something to know that there exists something other than us – but this knowledge is vague and indeterminate. Our sensations on their own tell us that something exists but not what exists. Thus, the knowledge afforded by sensation is minimal.

Knowing something more determinate about the world that is causally affecting us, requires that we have more definite ideas about things in the world. For Spinoza, we do not come to have these ideas of things by piecing together simple sensory ideas. This makes sense, for there is nothing internal to our sensations to guide us in ordering these ideas, in fitting them together. Rather, for him, imagination affords us ideas of particular things insofar as our

¹⁴ Marshall 2008.

¹⁵ See note 8 above for instances of this usage.

imaginings contain within them a principle for ordering experience. How so? For Spinoza, “ideas which we have of external bodies indicate the condition of our own body more than the nature of external bodies” (E2p16C2) and so “the human mind does not perceive any external body as actually existing except through the affections of its own body” (E2p26). That is, we can only access the world around us through what we are. And our essence, as per E3p6, is just our striving to persevere in existence. The way the world impacts our ability to strive to persevere, our power to act, is our measure of things, our way of ordering the world. Through differentials in our power to act, through the affects, we come to be aware of particular things – objects in the world – and part of coming to be aware of particular things is taking them to exist. Imagination is the means through which we become aware of objects as objects.¹⁶

In this way, imagination is like a sign. A sign marks where we are and so provides an anchor through which we can orient ourselves. We can return again and again to a particular place just insofar as there is a mark through which we can readily distinguish it from other places. In this way, a sign organizes our world. Imagination, in presenting the external things as present to us that it does, affirms the existence of things and so sets up landmarks in the ever-changing causal order; it stabilizes the world in which we find ourselves, allowing us to make our way in it.

Let me return briefly to consider to other issues with which I opened this paper. As I noted, Spinoza follows Descartes in moving away from a resemblance account of representation. Descartes, in the Sixth Meditation, remarks that “the proper purpose of the sensory perceptions given me by nature is simply to inform the mind of what is beneficial or harmful” to the human being (7:83; 2:57), and it certainly seems that Descartes takes it that our sensations represent these benefits and harms.¹⁷ In many ways, then, we can see Spinoza as following Descartes’s efforts to offer an alternative account of our representation of the world. Yet Descartes maintains a focus on sensation while Spinoza shifts to focus on imagination. Addressing the reasons for this shift comprehensively would be the topic of another paper, but one might think that reasons for Spinoza’s shift of focus can be found in Descartes’ own account. Indeed, Descartes himself has trouble negotiating the terrain of his new account of sensation, as reflected in the Sixth Replies to Objections. There, in

¹⁶ Note that this reading dovetails neatly with the story, explored in Della Rocca 2003, Nadler 2008, Garrett 2008 and LeBuffe 2010, of how we can increase our power of thinking or our degree of consciousness for Spinoza. For that increase in our consciousness is effected through the regulation of the affects.

¹⁷ See Simmons 1999 for a defense of this claim.

response to a worry about his privileging the reliability of the intellect over that of the senses, Descartes distinguishes three grades of sensation. While it is clear what Descartes intends by the first grade – the neurological response to stimulation of sense organs – but it is hard to understand what he intends by the second grade – the perception of colour and light – and third grade – the judgement that there is an object before me (see 7:437f; 2:295). In particular, it is ambiguous whether Descartes intends the third grade of sensation to consist in an affirmation that an object, already perceived under the second grade, exists or to constitute the perception of an object itself. The former reading would be consistent with Descartes' use of 'judgement' in the Fourth Meditation, whereas the latter would flesh out the discussion of perception in the Second Meditation. At the very least, Spinoza's refocusing on imagination can serve to disambiguate the discussion of sensation.¹⁸

Finally, it is worth highlighting that this way of understanding our knowledge of bodies is importantly different from the way the resemblance theorist of representation would demand of us. The resemblance theorist demands that, in order to have knowledge of things in the world, our ideas correspond to things as they exist independently of us. On the reading of Spinoza's account of imagination I have been proposing, a different epistemic model is in play, one which is neither a correspondence theory of knowledge nor succumbs to idealism. It is certainly the case that the world, or in Spinozistic terms, Nature, exists independently of our perception of it, and that our perceptions are a function of the causal workings of that world. In this sense, Spinoza is not an idealist. But for Spinoza the world is not best understood as built up out of particular things populating it, each with their own independent natures, which then stand in determinate causal relations to each other. Rather, Nature is one unified substance, characterized by the causal order structuring it, no matter which of its infinitely many infinite attributes under which it is conceived. We, as the finite knowers we are, do not begin by grasping this unity, but rather we are bound by the situation in which we find ourselves. And in that situation, after noting that we do not exist alone, our first task must be to situate ourselves as part of the whole. But this involves conceiving of other things to which we can relate ourselves. My suggestion is that for Spinoza imagining just is conceiving of the particular things we take to populate our world and imagination, insofar as it is essentially affective, intrinsically

18 There is more much more to be said here. On my reading of Spinoza, he is adopting the latter reading of the third grade of sensation, with imagination replacing judgement or the act of the intellect. In another paper, one might explore how imagination assumes this role of intellect, and how this emerges from his rejection of the freedom of will.

involves our relational situation in the world. Imagination is thus importantly different from sense perception as the resemblance theorist conceives it. Its aim is not to grasp particular things that already exist, but rather to model a world, approximating the one we find ourselves in. The knowledge imagination affords us is essentially an approximation,¹⁹ but one that helps us to make our way through the world.²⁰

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¹⁹ And like all approximations, they can be refined.

²⁰ This paper has benefited from comments from audiences at the Emotional Minds conference at Ludwig Maximilians Universität in Munich and at University of Toronto, as well as from Lilli Alanen and Michael Della Rocca. Work on the paper has been supported by the Social Sciences and Research Council of Canada.

Denis Kambouchner

Spinoza et le problème de l'*Abjectio*

Abstract: According to Ethics 3 (Def. 29), *Abjectio* (Self-abasement) consists in appreciating oneself, by sadness, less than would be correct (*de se minus justo sentire*). This affect is to be compared with Descartes's *bassesse*, Hobbes's *Dejection* and the Schools' *Pusillanimitas*. The term's definition, nevertheless, gives rise to many difficulties which probably justify its belated appearance in the final part of the *De Affectibus*. In particular, its mere reality seems to contravene the general principle according to which we strive, as far as possible, to imagine what increases our power of acting (3P12). As a matter of fact, this affect is here described as "extremely rare", seeing that "human nature deploys against it all the efforts it is capable of". On the basis of the texts of Part 4 which draw closer the bond between *Abjectio* and *Superbia* (Pride), can one see in the former a sheer travesty of the latter? No doubt that in its beginning, the *abasement* is a purely suffered one. The fact of *Abjectio* is therefore to be ascribed not so much to the individual's nature as to a certain social device of intimidation or inhibition, in which one can recognize the negative face of religion.

Je souhaite ici m'interroger sur la nature de cet affect que Spinoza, dans l'*Ethique*, appelle *Abjectio*: affect posant des problèmes spécifiques, qui sont restés, pour autant que je peux en juger, trop peu étudiés.

Comme tous les vocables du même genre, le mot latin *Abjectio* possède une longue histoire qui remonte au latin classique. Chez Cicéron, l'expression: *abjectio animi* se rapporte à un état d'abattement.¹ La même expression se retrouvera chez Hobbes, dans le *Léviathan* latin de 1668, où elle sert à désigner un désespoir qui persiste (*desperatio continuata*)²; pour le même état de

¹ Cicéron, *In Pisonem*, 88: «Quid debilitatio atque abjectio animi tui [...]»; cf. *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae* 1900, I 92b, 21. L'adjectif *abjectus* pour désigner l'état d'abattement est courant en latin classique: Cicéron, *Laelius*, 59, etc.

² Hobbes 1668, ch. VI.

Constant Despair, le texte anglais de 1651 parlait de *Diffidence of ourselves*.³ Ce désespoir se distingue de la *pusillanimité*, que le Léviathan latin définit de manière assez restrictive comme «le désir des choses qui ne favorisent guère nos desseins», ou comme «la crainte de celles qui n’y font guère obstacle».⁴ C’est par ailleurs le même mot, *Abjectio*, qui désigne, dans la traduction latine des *Passions de l’âme* (*Passiones animae*, 1650), parmi les passions et habitudes qui dérivent de l’admiration, celle que Descartes appelle «bassesse».⁵ Le terme est également marqué par un usage chrétien⁶, qui détermine, dans plusieurs textes français du XVIIe siècle, celui du mot *abjection*.⁷

Pour ce qui concerne l’usage spinoziste, le terme qui aurait rendu «bassesse» ou *Abjectio* en néerlandais paraît absent du *Court Traité*. Le Descartes des *Passions de l’âme* – avec qui tout le début de la Seconde partie de cet écrit entretient un dialogue serré – avait parlé de «bassesse ou humilité vicieuse»: c’est cette dernière expression seule que retient ici Spinoza en parlant de la *Strafbare Nedrigheid* (II, 8, 6), laquelle consiste en ce qu’un homme «s’attribue une imperfection qui ne lui appartient pas».⁸ Dans un propos qui reste proche de celui de Descartes, cette humilité vicieuse est opposée à la «véritable humilité» qui va de pair avec la noblesse ou générosité (*Edelmoedigheid*), et qui consiste (II, 8, 4) en ce que «quelqu’un connaît son imperfection, mais sans s’arrêter au mépris de soi».⁹

Du *Court Traité* à l’*Éthique*, l’écart sera au moins double: (a) dans l’*Éthique*, l’humilité, «tristesse qu’accompagne l’idée de notre faiblesse» (III, 55, scol.)¹⁰, ou encore «tristesse qui naît de ce qu’un homme contemple son impuissance

3 Hobbes 1889, 43.

4 Hobbes 1889, 44. Voir dans les *Elements of Law*, I, IX, 20, la même disposition consiste à douter «de disposer d’une puissance suffisante pour parvenir ouvertement à sa fin», ou, dans la course qu’est la vie, à «perdre du terrain à cause de petits obstacles» (*ibid.*, § 21).

5 Descartes *Passiones animae*, art. 54, 159, 160, 164.

6 Chez les auteurs chrétiens, le mot est devenu synonyme d’humilité ou d’abaissement volontaire (p. ex. Grégoire le Grand, *In Evang. homeliae*, 6, 1), mais aussi de dédain ou de mépris (cf. Tertullien, *De Patientia*, 7).

7 Cf. François de Sales, *Introduction à la vie dévote* (1609), III, 1 (1969, 128): «Sainte Élisabeth, toute grande princesse qu’elle était, aimait surtout l’abjection de soi-même»; et Pascal: «Avec combien peu d’orgueil un chrétien se croit-il uni à Dieu! avec combien peu d’abjection s’égale-t-il aux vers de la terre!» (Pascal 1991, fr. 390).

8 «*De Strafbare Negridheidis, als iemand an zig toepast eenige onvolmaaktheid die aan hem niet behoort*»: Spinoza 1986, 60. On notera une sorte d’inversion de la définition aristotélicienne de la pusillanimité, *mikropsuchia* (Aristote, *Eth. Nic.* IV, 9, 1125a19–20: «Le pusillanime, tout en étant digne de grands biens, se prive lui-même de ce dont il est digne»).

9 «*De Negridheidis, als iemand syne onvolmaaktheid, zonder gemerkt te hebben op de verachting syns zelfs, kend*», *ibid.*

10 Spinoza 1925, II, 182, 30.

ou faiblesse» (Déf. 26 des affects), sera dite toujours mauvaise. (b) Mais aussi bien, Spinoza ajoutera à la définition de cette humilité celle de l'*Abjectio*, qui consiste, écrira-t-il (Déf. 29), à «faire de soi par tristesse *moins d'état qu'il n'est juste*», *de se prae tristitia minus justo sentire*. Elle constitue un affect distinct de la *Pusillanimitas* (Déf. 41), dont l'objet est, comme chez Hobbes, beaucoup plus déterminé: est pusillanime «celui dont le désir est contrarié par la peur (*Timor*) d'un danger auquel ses égaux ont le courage de s'exposer». La pusillanimité, ou lâcheté, n'est donc (Explication de la déf. 41) «rien d'autre que la crainte (*Metus*) d'un mal que la plupart des hommes n'ont pas coutume de craindre».¹¹

Il est aisé de vérifier que le vocable *Abjectio* ne possède, non plus que l'adjectif *abjectus*, aucun usage spinoziste en dehors de l'*Ethique*¹². Une question simple sera de savoir quelle(s) traduction(s) il conviendra de donner de ce mot dans les langues modernes. Une autre, plus immédiate, est de savoir ce que veut dire la Définition 29. Trois points font ici difficulté, qui conduiront à un problème plus général, celui de savoir comment la réalité de cet affect peut être dite consonner avec les principes les plus généraux de l'explication spinoziste de la vie affective. On se demandera en effet 1) ce que signifie au juste l'expression: *de se sentire* ; 2) ce que signifie en l'espèce *minus justo* ; 3) comment il faut entendre *prae tristitia*.

1 De se sentire

Cette expression apparaît d'abord comme une stricte reprise de la traduction latine des *Passions de l'âme*, notamment celle de l'article 151: lorsque l'estime et le mépris ne sont pas seulement des habitudes ou inclinations de l'âme, mais de vraies passions, et que ces passions se rapportent à nous-mêmes, le mouvement des esprits animaux dans ces passions est, dit Descartes,

si manifeste qu'il change même la mine, les gestes, la démarche et généralement toutes les actions de ceux qui conçoivent une meilleure ou plus mauvaise opinion d'eux-mêmes qu'à l'ordinaire.¹³

11 Ceci revient à retenir de la double définition de Hobbes le second aspect seulement (la crainte), et à déterminer la «petitesse» par référence aux affects des autres hommes. Le fond de la définition est classique, cf. Thomas d'Aquin, *Sum. Theol.*, II, II, q. 133, a. 2, *ad resp.*: du côté de l'appétit, la cause de la pusillanimité est «la crainte d'être insuffisant dans les choses qu'on estime faussement dépasser sa capacité» («*timor deficiendi in his quae falso aestimat excedere suam facultatem*»).

12 Cf. Giancotti Boscherini 1971, *ad loc.*

13 Éd. Adam-Tannery, t. XI, p. 445.

Pour la fin de la phrase, la traduction latine donne: «eorum qui sublimius vel secius de se ipsis sentiunt». La question est toutefois: faut-il distinguer strictement entre ce *de se sentire*, qui renverrait à une *opinion* ou idée de soi-même et de sa propre perfection ou imperfection (puissance ou impuissance, valeur ou mérite), et un *se sentire* qui renverrait davantage à un sentiment intérieur?

Dans les *Passiones Animae*, on trouve les deux expressions; par exemple, la définition de la bassesse ou humilité vicieuse comme consistant «en ce qu'on se sent faible et peu résolu» est rendue par «se imbecillum aut parum constantem sentire». ¹⁴ Mais si le *se sentire* renvoie à un sentiment intérieur, et le *de se sentire* plutôt à un jugement, opinion ou représentation (instamment manifestée à l'extérieur, comme le laissent entendre les locutions françaises: «faire cas», «faire état»), les deux ne sont pas à dissocier. Là où l'article 154 dit en français, à propos des généreux: «ceux qui ont *cette connaissance et ce sentiment d'eux-mêmes* (n.s.) se persuadent facilement que chacun des autres hommes les peut aussi avoir de soi» ¹⁵, le latin dira «qui hoc *de se norunt & sentiunt*, sibi facile persuadent, singulos alios homines idem *de se ipsis sentire* (n.s.)». Il est certain que Spinoza a voulu réduire plus radicalement encore que Descartes la dualité de l'opinion et du sentiment; mais cela ne fait que rendre plus aiguë la question de savoir comment on doit décrire cet état.

2 Minus justo

L'expression: *minus justo sentire* rattache étroitement l'*Abjectio* – comme c'était déjà, formellement parlant, le cas chez Descartes – au groupe des affects de l'estime (*Existimatio*), du mépris (*Despectus*) et de l'orgueil (*Superbia*). On peut parler ici d'une sorte de carré:

- l'estime consiste à faire de quelqu'un, par amour, plus d'état qu'il n'est juste (*de aliquo plus justo sentire*);
- le mépris, à faire de quelqu'un, par haine, moins d'état qu'il n'est juste (*de aliquo minus justo sentire*);
- l'orgueil, à faire de soi, par amour de soi, plus d'état qu'il n'est juste (*de se plus justo sentire*);
- et l'*Abjectio* donc – sinon par haine de soi, du moins par tristesse – moins d'état (*de se minus justo sentire*).

Toutefois, soit par des principes soit par des exemples, les trois premiers cas restent plus faciles à appréhender que le dernier:

¹⁴ Art. 159; voir aussi art. 186 et 194.

¹⁵ AT XI, 446.

- «Faire de soi ou d'autrui plus d'état qu'il n'est juste», c'est s'attribuer à soi-même ou attribuer à autrui des pouvoirs ou des qualités qui relèvent de la pure imagination, ou du moins dont un examen sérieux de ses faits et gestes montre qu'ils sont loin d'être réunis («Il y a orgueil, disait le *Court Traité*, II, 8, 5, quand quelqu'un s'attribue une perfection qu'on ne peut trouver en lui, *die niet in hem te vinden is*»).
- «Faire d'autrui moins d'état qu'il n'est juste» signifie ne pas tenir compte de certaines choses qu'il a bien faites, et ne pas tenir compte d'expressions ultérieures ou virtuelles de sa puissance d'agir. Au contraire, la postulation ou hypothèse d'un changement de chacun vers le meilleur fondait Descartes à dire des généreux qu'ils «ne méprisent jamais personne» (art. 154) et qu'ils «estiment tous les hommes» (art. 156).
- Mais faire de soi *moins* d'état qu'il n'est juste? Certes, cela consistera à s'attribuer à soi-même une «puissance d'agir moindre» que celle qu'on exerce ou peut exercer, et à se considérer incapable de choses dont on est ou sera capable; mais qu'est-ce qui donnera la mesure de cette capacité?

La réponse de Spinoza figure juste avant la définition de la bassesse, dans l'explication de la définition de l'orgueil (Déf. 28 des affects), où il est indiqué, (a) qu'un homme peut se penser à tort méprisé par les autres, et s'attribuer sur ce fondement une faiblesse qui n'est pas la sienne; (b) qu'on peut être injuste avec soi-même en s'attribuant pour le futur, qui est incertain, une incapacité qui ne vaut que pour le présent.

Nous aurons lieu de revenir sur ces deux vues. Telles quelles, pourtant, elles ne semblent pas de nature à lever entièrement une difficulté qui tient à ce que Spinoza écrivait dans les lignes qui précèdent, à savoir que «celui qui imagine ne pas pouvoir faire une chose n'est, aussi longtemps qu'il l'imagine, pas déterminé à la faire, et donc ne le peut pas».¹⁶

Il n'est bien sûr nullement question que celui qui imagine ne pas pouvoir faire quelque chose, ou qui en général imagine sa propre impuissance, se connaisse en cela lui-même adéquatement. La proposition 57 de la Partie IV soulignera le rapport de l'*Abjectio* avec la «plus grande ignorance de soi» (*Maxima superbia, vel abjectio, maximam animi impotentiam indicat*). Et néanmoins, dans une structure qui s'apparente à une performance à l'envers (peut-on forger le mot d'*imperformance?*), cette affirmation de sa propre impuissance ne

¹⁶ «Quicquid homo imaginatur se non posse, id necessario imaginatur, et hac imaginatione ita disponitur, ut id agere revera non possit, quod se non posse imaginatur». Spinoza 1925, II, 198, 3–6.

peut manquer de toute valeur de vérité. Le fait n'est d'ailleurs pas seulement qu'un homme peut se tromper sur sa propre puissance d'agir, en tant qu'il n'en aura pas une connaissance adéquate. Pour autant que la connaissance adéquate en général (constituant le troisième genre de connaissance) est chose à quoi seuls quelques-uns accèdent, le fait est que presque tous – tous les hommes qui ne vivent que selon «l'ordre commun de la nature»¹⁷ – vivent dans l'erreur sur leur propre puissance. Cette erreur prendra bien sûr plutôt la forme d'une surestimation, ce qui fait de l'orgueil la passion ou le vice le plus ordinaire des hommes. Mais si seule la connaissance adéquate doit être connaissance de notre puissance d'agir *à son maximum*, et si même – dans la mesure où notre puissance d'agir est en tout premier lieu puissance de connaître – elle *constitue* seule ce maximum, ce fait ne désigne-t-il pas dans la *sous-estimation* de leur puissance d'agir, donc dans une forme d'*Abjectio*, la condition universelle des mêmes hommes qui vivent selon «l'ordre commun de la nature»?

Par ailleurs, au sein de cette connaissance confuse et erronée que presque tous les hommes ont de leur puissance d'agir, faut-il comprendre que l'homme en proie à l'*Abjectio* ignore *entièrement* quelle perfection ou capacité il devrait se reconnaître, ou bien cette perfection ou capacité lui est malgré tout confusément présente à l'esprit? Dans le premier cas (ignorance complète), qu'est-ce qui distinguera l'*Abjectio* de l'humilité? Et dans le second, sur quel mode cette perfection ou capacité sera-t-elle perçue? Autrement dit, comment faut-il concevoir en coordonnées spinozistes une structure d'inhibition?

3 Prae tristitia

Nous avons dit que l'*Abjectio* formait avec l'estime, le mépris et l'orgueil *une sorte de carré*, mais ce carré n'est pas parfait. Il faut compter ici avec une condition particulière sur laquelle insiste la même Explication de la définition 28: à l'orgueil, qui consiste à faire «par amour de soi» plus d'état qu'il n'est juste, on ne peut, écrit Spinoza, opposer aucun affect exactement contraire. C'est que la haine de soi ne peut être le principe d'aucune action ni passion, et qu'elle est métaphysiquement impossible.¹⁸ Ce n'est donc pas «par haine de soi» que l'on peut faire de soi moins d'état qu'il n'est juste, mais seulement «par tristesse».

¹⁷ Selon l'expression spinoziste, *Éthique* II, prop. 29, cor. et scol.

¹⁸ Cf. Spinoza, *Éthique*, III, prop. 4: «Nulla res, nisi a causa externa, potest destrui»; et 5: «Res eatenus contrariae sunt naturae, hoc est, eatenus in eodem subjecto esse nequeunt, quatenus una alteram potest destruere».

Comment toutefois peut-on être conduit, «par tristesse», à faire de soi moins d'état qu'il n'est juste? La tristesse est le sentiment (ou l'idée, ou si l'on veut le jugement) d'une diminution de sa propre puissance d'agir ou d'un empêchement à cette puissance. Toutefois, comme il est expliqué tout au long de la Troisième partie, «nous tendons à nous attrister le moins possible». Nous tendons, dans toute la mesure du possible, à imaginer ce qui augmente notre puissance d'agir (III, 12), et à imaginer cette puissance d'agir aussi grande que possible, ce qui fait que l'orgueil, lorsque rien ne vient le brider, s'apparente à «une espèce de délire» (III, 26, scol.). Bref, la définition du *conatus* en III, prop. 6 paraît bien entraîner dans *l'Ethique*, à travers les propositions 12, 13, 25 et 26, l'assomption d'un autre principe, qu'on peut nommer celui de la *maximisation de la bonne opinion (de l'appréciation) de soi*.

A ce compte, la question – qui portera aussi bien sur l'humilité, mais que rend plus aiguë, avec *l'Abjectio*, la clause du *minus justo* – sera: qu'est-ce qui peut nous pousser à nous attrister à notre propre sujet, *davantage* que ne semblent nous y déterminer de manière immédiate soit les causes extérieures (puisque dans l'explication de l'art. 28, le mépris de la part des égaux est seulement *imaginé*), soit l'état de notre corps? Empiriquement parlant, on peut fort bien concevoir qu'une certaine circonstance extérieure, impliquant peut-être une action de notre part, produise en nous une véritable dévastation. Est-ce bien pourtant de cela qu'il s'agit ici? Et sinon, comment concevoir que cet état ne soit pas foncièrement contraire au *conatus*, et cela, même s'il ne relève pas d'un *contre-conatus* inconcevable, qui prendrait la forme de la haine de soi?¹⁹

II

Dans le texte de *l'Ethique*, le poids des difficultés que nous venons de dénombrer semble marqué par deux sortes de singularités.

- 1) Alors même que *l'Abjectio* sera plusieurs fois évoquée dans la Quatrième Partie (prop. 55, 56, 57 scolie), elle ne fait l'objet d'aucune espèce de présentation ni même de mention dans le corps de la Troisième. À la diffé-

¹⁹ Le problème est déjà marqué dans Thomas d'Aquin qui, commentant *l'Ethique à Nicomaque*, écrivait déjà: «Et dicit, quod pusillanimus, cum sit dignus bonis, privat seipsum illis quibus dignus est, dum scilicet non conatur ad operandum vel consequendum ea quae sibi competenter» (*In Aristotelis libros Ethicorum ad Nichomachum*, IV, 11, 1); voir également *Summa Theologiae*, II, II, q. 133, art. 1, ad resp.: «pusillanimus deficit a proportione suae potentiae, dum recusat in id tendere quod est suae potentiae commensuratum».

rence de l'orgueil (qui apparaît en III, 26, scolie), elle fait partie des rares affects à n'apparaître que dans les définitions finales (def. 29), et si l'on considère la liste de ces affects, sans doute s'agira-t-il parmi eux du cas le plus remarquable.²⁰

2) On lit dans l'explication de la définition 29:

Au reste, ces affects, j'entends l'humilité et l'*Abjectio* [non seulement donc l'*Abjectio*, mais aussi l'humilité, entre lesquelles la distinction apparaît ainsi assez relative], sont rarissimes. Car la nature humaine, considérée en soi, déploie contre eux tous les efforts qu'elle peut: cf. les prop. 13 et 54 de cette partie.²¹

Que signifie précisément cette dernière notation? On pourrait être tenté de penser qu'elle désigne pour cet affect une sorte d'irréalité ou d'inauthenticité. Le fait serait qu'au fond de soi, chacun répugne à faire de soi moins d'état qu'il n'est juste, et que toute marque d'une telle attitude participera d'un genre de comédie ou de travestissement.

Cette ligne d'interprétation ne sera pas ici sans appuis textuels. Déjà à propos de l'humilité, l'explication de la définition 29 met l'accent, quelques lignes plus haut, sur l'apparence extérieure:

Nous appelons humble [par une opposition fréquente mais sans rigueur aux manifestations de l'orgueil] celui qui rougit plus souvent, confesse ses vices et parle des vertus des autres, s'efface devant tous et enfin marche tête baissée en négligeant tout appareil.²²

Mais en réalité, la nature humaine déployant contre cet affect tous les efforts qu'elle peut, «ceux dont on croit qu'ils sont *maxime abjecti et humiles* sont en général *maxime ambitiosi et invidi*, ambitieux et envieux au plus haut degré».

La proximité paradoxale des deux affects apparemment contraires, *Abjectio* et *Superbia*, est évidemment déjà cartésienne. A l'article 159 des *Passions de l'âme*, qui traite de l'humilité vicieuse ou bassesse, et à l'article 160, qui en poursuit le propos, on trouve en effet soulignée (comme déjà dans certaines

²⁰ Les affects figurant dans les Définitions finales et non dans le corps de la Troisième partie sont: a) le groupe *Abjectio*, *Amor sui*, *Philautia*; b) la *Propensio* (def. 8) et l'*Aversio* (def. 9); c) la *Misericordia* (def. 24), l'*Irrisio* (def. 11), la *Modestia* (def. 43), la *Crudelitas seu Saevitia* (def. 38).

²¹ «Caeterum hi affectus, nempe Humilitas et Abjectio, rarissimi sunt. Nam natura humana, in se considerata, contra eosdem, quantum potest, nititur (vide Prop. 13 & 54 hujus)»: Spinoza 1925, II, 198, 34–199, 3.

²² «Illum humilem vocamus, qui sepius erubescit, qui sua vitia fatetur, et aliorum virtutes narrat, qui omnibus cedit, et qui denique submisso capite ambulat, et se ornare negligit.» Spinoza 1925, II, 198, 32–34.

formules de Montaigne²³) la solidarité de cette passion ou habitude avec l'orgueil – cette solidarité même répondant sur un mode plus contrasté à celle de la vraie générosité et de l'humilité vertueuse: «Il arrive souvent», écrivait Descartes, «que ceux qui ont l'esprit le plus bas sont les plus arrogants et superbes, en même façon que les plus généreux sont les plus modestes et les plus humbles».²⁴ Et il poursuivait: «Ceux qui ont l'esprit faible et abject ne sont conduits que par la fortune, et la prospérité ne les enfle pas moins que l'adversité les rend humbles.»²⁵

Dans l'*Ethique*, une proximité du même ordre sera confirmée par le long scolie de IV, 57 («Est tamen abjectus superbo proximus [...]») et justifiée comme suit: la tristesse de celui qui se rabaisse (*abjectus*) sera allégée par la contemplation des vices des autres, si bien que nul n'est plus enclin à l'envie que ceux qui se rabaisent. Mais rabaisser les autres hommes, c'est aussi ce que cherche l'orgueilleux, puisque telle est la condition de sa jouissance de lui-même (cf. III, prop. 55, scolie). De fait, les *abjecti*, à la fin, ne louent que leur propre manière d'être, à savoir l'*Abjectio* elle-même, et en tirent gloire (*eaque gloriantur*); mais cela néanmoins de manière à paraître encore se rabaisser (*sed ita, ut tamen abjecti videantur*).²⁶ C'est ce que le chapitre XXII de l'Appendice de la partie IV appellera «une fausse espèce de piété et de religion».²⁷

Le paradoxe est en somme le suivant: celui qui se rabaisse tend à se croire supérieur aux autres dans son abaissement même. Il pense que les autres, qui ne sauraient au fond valoir mieux que lui, ont tort de ne pas se rabaisser au même point que lui. En se rabaisant lui-même, il leur montre l'exemple, et ce rabaissement de soi est le contraire de ce qu'il prétend être – paradoxe à propos duquel Spinoza estime utile de souligner à nouveau la nécessité géométrique dont il relève: «tout cela suit de cet affect aussi nécessairement que, de la nature du triangle, il suit que ses trois angles sont égaux à deux droits».²⁸

23 Montaigne *Essais*, II, 17: «On peut être humble de gloire», Montaigne 1999, 663c; et *Essais*, II, 37: «il est certaine façon d'humilité subtile qui naît de la présomption», Montaigne 1999, 763a. Dans nos armées, «c'est au commandant de suivre, courtiser et plier, à lui seul d'obéir; tout le reste est libre et dissolu. Il me plaît de voir combien il y a de lâcheté et de pusillanimité en l'ambition, par combien d'abjection et de servitude il lui faut arriver à son but.»: *Essais* III, 12, Montaigne 1999, 1042b.

24 AT XI, 450.

25 *Ibid.* Cf. déjà à *Élisabeth*, 6 octobre 1645, AT IV, 307: „La vanité qui fait qu'on a meilleure opinion de soi qu'on ne doit, [est] un vice qui n'appartient qu'aux âmes faibles et basses.“

26 Spinoza 1925, II, 252, 26–27.

27 *Abjectioni falsa pietatis, et religionis species inest*: Spinoza 1925, II, 272, 10.

28 *Ibid.*, l. 27–29.

La question est toutefois: l'*Abjectio* est-elle donc purement et simplement un détour ou un masque de l'orgueil, empruntant les voies tortueuses d'une compétition dans le rabaissement de soi? Est-elle seulement, autrement dit, une culture presque enthousiaste de l'humilité, enveloppant au fond l'idée de sa propre excellence en cela même? Cette interprétation nous rapproche du fait spinoziste; elle ne prend pourtant pas en compte la totalité des conditions qui sont ici marquées.

Dans le *Court Traité* déjà, Spinoza avait commencé par écarter de l'analyse de l'humilité vicieuse (*Strafbare Nedrigheid*) ses formes purement hypocrites:

Il y a *humilité vicieuse* quand quelqu'un s'attribue une imperfection qui ne lui appartient pas. Je ne parle pas ici des hypocrites qui, pour tromper les autres, s'abaissent sans y croire [sc.: *sans croire ce qu'ils disent*], mais de ceux qui croient que les imperfections qu'ils s'attribuent existent en eux.²⁹

Sur le même point, l'*Ethique* ne laissera aucun doute: l'*Abjectio* implique une véritable tristesse, autrement dit la véritable perception d'une faiblesse, et ce n'est qu'à partir de cette tristesse que les *Abjecti* peuvent rechercher une joie maligne en rabaissant les autres hommes ou en leur enjoignant de les imiter.

Ne nous trouvons-nous donc pas confrontés à un affect à deux visages, avec, d'un côté, tristesse qui en l'occurrence s'amplifie elle-même en se donnant des motifs qu'elle ne devrait pas se donner, et de l'autre, une recherche perverse de l'avantage sur les autres hommes – perverse car elle va chercher la puissance dans la déclaration de l'impuissance, et donc la supériorité dans l'infériorité?

Le problème de traduction de ce vocable, qui se pose dans diverses langues, est directement fonction de ce problème d'interprétation.

En français, une chose est de traduire *Abjectio* par «bassesse», comme y inciterait la relation avec les *Passions de l'âme*, autre chose de traduire par «abattement»³⁰, ce qui aurait plutôt du rapport avec les définitions hobbesiennes. A ce dernier titre, on songera à la *Desperatio Continuata* du *Léviathan* latin, mais aussi, dans la version anglaise du même chapitre, au *Griefe, from*

²⁹ De *Strafbare Nedrigheid* is, als iemand an zig toepast eenige onvolmaaktheid die aan hem niet behoort. Ik en spreek niet van de geveynsde, die om andere te bedriegen, zonder te meenen haar verneederen; maar van zulke, die de onvolmaaktheden, die zy hie toepassen, ook zodanig meenen te zyn: *Korte Verhandeling*, II, 8, 6; Spinoza 1986, 60.

³⁰ *Bassesse* est retenu par B. Pautrat dans les premières éditions de sa traduction (Spinoza 1988; rééd., coll. Points); sa nouvelle version publiée en 2010, dit *Abjection*. *Abattement* est utilisé par Macherey, 1999, dans son *Introduction à l'Éthique de Spinoza*. Les autres traductions françaises de l'*Ethique* donnent: *Mésestime de soi* (Appuhn), *Dépréciation de soi* (Caillouis), *Mépris de soi* (Misrahi), et même *Effacement* (Guérinot).

opinion of want of power, <which> is called Dejection of mind («Dolor natus a propriae impotentiae opinione, demissio animi dicitur», dit le latin); celle-ci étant précédée chez Hobbes de la *Dejection des Elements of Law* (I, IX, 2): «The passion contrary to Glory, proceeding from apprehension of our own infirmity, is called Humility by those by whom it is approved; by the rest, Dejection and poorness » – «bassesse et abjection» dans la traduction classique du baron d'Holbach.

En allemand, on hésitera de même entre *Kleinmut* et *Niedrigkeit*. En anglais, la traduction la plus classique, *Self-abasement*, recouvre bien les deux moments, mais elle convient précisément en ce qu'elle laisse subsister l'ambiguïté, une chose étant de se rabaisser à ses propres yeux et dans son propre sentiment, autre chose de se rabaisser devant autrui en attendant de cet abaissement même une forme de reconnaissance.

En tous les cas, il ne semble pas que l'on puisse réduire cette dualité. Celle-ci figurait déjà chez Descartes, avec la distinction entre ce qu'il faut nommer au moins deux *moments* : d'une part, le sentiment de sa propre infirmité, *imbecillitas*, et inconstance³¹, et d'autre part, la perversion de la relation à autrui. Le texte le plus remarquable est ici l'art. 194 sur l'ingratitude:

Ce vice n'appartient qu'aux hommes brutaux et arrogants, qui pensent que toutes choses leur sont dues; ou aux faibles et abjects, qui, *sentant leur infirmité et leur besoin, recherchent basement le secours des autres*, et après qu'ils l'ont reçu, ils les haïssent; parce que *n'ayant pas la volonté de leur rendre la pareille, ou désespérant de le pouvoir* (n.s.), et s'imaginant que tout le monde est mercenaire comme eux, et qu'on ne fait aucun bien qu'avec espérance d'en être récompensé, ils pensent les avoir trompés.³²

Il est vrai qu'à propos de la pusillanimité, Thomas d'Aquin écrivait déjà, avec un accent différent:

La pusillanimité peut d'une certaine façon naître de l'orgueil, à savoir lorsqu'on s'appuie à l'excès sur son propre sentiment, qui fait juger qu'on est incapable à l'égard d'actions pour lesquelles on a tout ce qu'il faut. [...] Rien n'empêche en effet qu'on se rabaisse relativement à certaines choses et qu'on s'élève à l'excès relativement à d'autres.³³

³¹ Le *Discours de la Méthode* parlait d'ailleurs déjà d'esprits «faibles et chancelants» (3^e partie, AT VI, 25, 16).

³² AT XI, 474.

³³ *Sum. Theol.*, II, II, q. 133, art. 1, sol. 3: «Pusillanimitas aliquo modo ex superbia potest oriri, dum scilicet aliquis nimis proprio sensui innititur, quo reputat se insufficientem ad ea respectu quorum sufficientiam habet. [...] Nihil enim prohibet quod se quantum ad aliqua deiciat, et quantum ad alia se in sublime extollat.»

III

Soient maintenant admis ces deux visages de l'*Abjectio*, l'un privé, l'autre public; si le second, dans sa pragmatique propre, représente une forme de sursaut du *conatus*, la question concernant le premier conserve son insistance: comment se fait-il que, sans cause extérieure ni corporelle désignée, nous nous chargions d'imperfections qui ne sont pas les nôtres, et tombions – selon une expression qui figure dans le *Court Traité* mais que l'*Ethique* économise entièrement – dans le *mépris de nous-même*, *Despectus sui*? Au reste, quelle sera précisément la relation entre le moment privé, intime de l'*Abjectio*, et son moment public, le second? Il faut ici conjoindre plusieurs observations:

1) Si nous n'avions affaire qu'à des choses, ou à des êtres dépourvus de raison, il nous serait impossible de nous apprécier nous-mêmes moins qu'il n'est juste. De même que l'orgueil a partie liée avec la possibilité de raconter et de vanter ses propres exploits³⁴, de même, l'*Abjectio*, avant peut-être de déterminer tout un discours, doit être essentiellement liée à la parole ou à des signes émis par autrui, ou du moins à leur imagination. Il faudra à cet égard la rapprocher de la honte, *Pudor*, définie (déf. 31) comme une «tristesse qu'accompagne l'idée d'une action dont nous imaginons que les autres la blâment». La différence sera que l'*Abjectio* n'a pas de rapport avec la condamnation d'une action déterminée, déjà ou en train d'être accomplie, mais avec le déni *par une autre voix* d'une certaine capacité *en général*. Dans l'explication de la définition 28, Spinoza parle du reste d'une crainte excessive de la honte, «nimius pudoris metus possumus deinde dicere aliquem de se minus justo sentire, cum videmus, ipsum ex nimio pudoris metu, ea non audere, quae alii ipsi aequales audent».³⁵ L'*Abjectio*, ce serait en somme la honte (toujours ressentie par rapport à d'autres), non de ce que l'on a fait mais de ce qu'on peut faire, en général.

2) L'*Abjectus* a donc affaire en lui-même à une parole qui lui dit: «*tu ne peux rien faire de bien*». Il s'agit d'une parole d'inhibition. Or il convient de s'interroger à la fois sur l'émetteur réel ou imaginé de ce langage et sur son destinataire. D'après l'explication de la définition 28, il est clair qu'on peut imaginer sa propre infirmité par rapport à des égaux, notamment quand ce sont les égaux qui sont imaginés disant: «*tu ne peux pas*». Mais, d'autant qu'il n'est pas question ici que le «*tu ne peux pas*» soit *effectivement* prononcé par les égaux (et cette énonciation donnerait lieu, peut-on penser, à un affect spécifique qui ne reçoit pas ici comme tel de dénomination, pas plus que

34 Spinoza, *Ethique*, III, 55, scol.; Spinoza 1925, II, 183, 4–5.

35 Spinoza 1925, II, 198, 18–19.

l'affect spécifique qui portera à prononcer cette phrase), il faut faire place à la possibilité pour l'*Abjectio* de dériver non de la parole des égaux mais d'une parole plus autorisée et plus générale. Dans ce cas, l'*Abjectus* prendra pour lui ce qui sera dit de tous ; et en cela, l'*Abjectio* aura partie liée, comme l'orgueil, moyennant inversion de signe, à l'*imagination* de sa propre singularité, et avec elle à une méconception de sa propre nature et de sa propre puissance, qui ne peut pas ne pas avoir elle-même partie liée avec la fiction du libre arbitre. Une telle fiction peut d'ailleurs être maintenue jusque dans la négation de son objet, à savoir dans un langage de l'impuissance humaine et du serf-arbitre: il suffit pour cela qu'il soit question d'une liberté perdue.

Ici paraît être bien sûr la grande différence entre Spinoza et Descartes: Descartes pose l'*Abjectio* comme une faiblesse de l'esprit qui est au fond une faiblesse de la volonté:

Elle consiste principalement en ce qu'on se sent faible ou peu résolu, et que, comme si on n'avait pas l'usage entier de son libre arbitre, on ne se peut empêcher de faire des choses dont on sait qu'on se repentira par après.³⁶

Cette faiblesse restera telle quelle sans explication précise. Chez Spinoza, l'*Abjectio*, qui impliquera certes un haut coefficient de *fluctuatio animi*, s'expliquera d'une part par la distance du premier genre de connaissance au troisième ou d'abord au second, et d'autre part, par la présence à l'esprit d'une voix intimidante et négatrice, qui ne dit pas seulement: «tu ne peux pas», mais «tu ne peux pas faire ce que tu dois».

A cet égard, il ne faut pas enfermer le *minus justo* de l'*Abjectio* dans une mesure inexacte de la puissance d'agir de Pierre ou de Paul; en réalité, ce *minus justo* signe une inadéquation globale, celle d'une manière de parler de la puissance d'agir et des perfections des individus avec la manière qui convient à la vraie philosophie. Ainsi (Explic. de la déf. 28), il est purement faux que l'homme ne puisse rien concevoir de certain, et ne puisse rien concevoir ou faire qui ne soit vicieux.

3) Si l'*Abjectus* cherche à conquérir par des voies vicieuses un ascendant et un pouvoir sur autrui, c'est d'abord en tant qu'il est lui-même le sujet d'une intimidation. Pas plus que pour les autres affects de ce groupe, il n'y a de l'*Abjectio* une genèse purement empirique (sous le régime de l'*expérience vague*). L'origine de l'*Abjectio* est dans le ouï-dire, *auditus*, en tant qu'il est d'emblée expérience d'une autorité. Et l'ambition des *Abjecti*, à cet égard, n'est jamais qu'un effort pour renverser une affection de sens contraire.

³⁶ Descartes, *Passions de l'âme*, art. 159; AT IX, 450.

A partir de là, nous pouvons tenter de résoudre le problème de la compatibilité intrinsèque de l'*Abjectio* avec le *conatus*. Il faut en fait prendre au sérieux ce que dit l'explication de la définition 29: la nature humaine résiste à l'*Abjectio* de toutes ses forces. Mais que signifie cette formule? Sans doute que l'on se trompe, ou que l'on mécomprend la définition spinoziste, en enfermant l'*Abjectio* dans une figure réflexive, et même en privilégiant dans l'*Abjectus* une forme d'action ou du moins de comportement. L'*Abjectio* devra s'entendre autrement, à savoir, non en premier lieu comme rabaissement de soi, mais comme rabaissement tout court, subi plutôt que performé, comme un *être-rabaissé*, un *se-trouver-rabaissé*, non pas donc comme un *Self-abasement*, mais comme un *Abasement* tout court, qui ne se réduit pas à la forme générale de la tristesse, mais doit se définir plutôt comme *la tristesse induite par une structure d'intimidation*. La minoration de sa propre puissance d'agir ne peut ici s'entendre qu'en relation avec une transcendance mal conçue, dont l'image incorporée induit une fausse connaissance de soi. Aussi bien sa durée se mesurera-t-elle à la persistance (aux «traces profondes», aurait dit Malebranche) de certaines paroles dans l'esprit, paroles que leur statut particulier interdit de placer parmi les simples causes extérieures.

Ce qui permettra d'éclairer deux sortes de données: d'une part, l'*Abjectio* est en effet d'abord dans ces conditions, si l'on peut dire, le plus foncièrement passif de tous les affects, et celui de tous les affects que le *conatus* supporte le moins. Elle est la forme ou l'effet intérieur d'un pur asservissement, auquel on s'efforcera d'échapper, soit (le plus souvent) par une négation orgueilleuse, soit (parfois) par la force des idées vraies, mais aussi bien (dans un certain régime de la vie civile) par une sorte de surenchère qui reviendra, pour l'individu, à s'approprier cette tristesse et à en faire un objet de jouissance.

C'est dire aussi, d'autre part, que les difficultés qui s'attachent à sa présentation dans l'*Éthique* sont moins foncièrement d'ordre métaphysique que d'ordre politique: elles tiennent à la discrétion qu'il est capital de conserver à l'égard de la *mauvaise religion*, autrement dit de la religion comme puissance d'asservissement. Mais la difficulté reste aussi d'espèce métaphysique, si l'opération ou, à plus forte raison, l'institution de la mauvaise religion, productrice de l'*Abjectio*, doit représenter au sein de la nature entière la moins réductible des négativités.

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Ursula Renz

Changing one's own Feelings: Spinoza and Shaftesbury on Philosophy as Therapy

Abstract: In my paper, I suggest comparing Spinoza's and Shaftesbury's accounts in regard to their views on how philosophical reflection can change our emotions. The first part discusses three aspects of their concepts of emotion that support the idea of therapeutic effects provided by philosophical reflection: 1) the naturalness of emotions, 2) cognitivism and 3) the activity and passivity of emotions.

The second part examines how both philosophers conceive of the effects philosophical reflection is thought to have on our emotions. Starting with some remarks on contemporary views on how self-knowledge may be constitutive for our mental life, I argue that neither Spinoza's nor Shaftesbury's account relies on constitutivist assumptions. On the contrary, although they reject the idea of a direct influence of rational thinking on the emotions, they both develop convincing accounts that allow for an indirect influence of cognitive processes on our emotional dispositions.

In the last few years, there has been an increasing interest in the idea that philosophy is to be conceived of as some kind of therapy. To clarify this idea, philosophers have either investigated Hellenistic ethics,¹ the ideas of the later Wittgenstein,² or Freud's psychoanalysis.³ But the idea that philosophy is a kind of therapy is also widespread in early modern philosophy. In this paper, I will focus on Spinoza and Shaftesbury who are both deeply concerned with the emotions and who, also, ascribe philosophy a therapeutic effect.⁴

1 Cf. Gill 1985, Voelke 1993, and in particular Hadot 1995 who is most influential for this reading of Hellenistic philosophy.

2 Cf. e.g. Fischer 2004.

3 Philosophical readings of Freud are defended in particular by Richard Rorty and Stanley Cavell, cf. Rorty 1988 and Cavell 1994, for a reading of Cavell cf. Hampe 2006.

4 Therapeutical conceptions of philosophy are quite common in early modern philosophy. One of the most ambitious thinker in this respect is surely Ehrenfried Walther von Tschirnhaus who, in his *Medicina Mentis*, promotes philosophy not only as a method for acquiring a better understanding of how things are, but also as a means of moderating one's own passions, of conserving one's health, as well as, finally, of educating one's own children wisely. Cf. Tschirnhaus 1963, 42 (first published in 1695).

At first glance, one might be puzzled by this choice. Why, one might thus ask, do I compare two philosophers who do not seem to have anything in common except for their stoic heritage and their interest in human emotions? It is true, there are more differences than commonalities between Spinoza and Shaftesbury. They differ in their method, their style of writing, and in their scientific interests: Spinoza, dealing with Cartesian physics and writing *more geometrico*, Shaftesbury, concerned with aesthetic issues and producing texts such as the hymn of Zeus. However, when it comes to the question of a therapeutic understanding of philosophy a comparison is quite instructive.

As already mentioned, they both ascribe therapeutic effects to philosophy. More interestingly, they do not regard these as mere side effects. In Spinoza's *Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect* methodological discussions explicitly consider the good provided by true knowledge, as some kind of remedy.⁵ Shaftesbury's therapeutic aspirations, on the other hand, are reflected in the very form of his writings. In the *Soliloquy*, he explicitly suggests that his approach is a "Practice, and Art of Surgery", in which the doctor and the patient are the same person.⁶ It is therefore to discuss their understanding of philosophy as some kind of therapy that I juxtapose Spinoza's and Shaftesbury's approaches.

However, I am not concerned with the rhetorical use of the notion "therapy" itself, but rather in the psychological and epistemological presuppositions that support the idea of therapeutic effects produced by philosophical self-reflection. How do we have to conceive of emotions in order to allow for the idea that philosophical reflection can change them? What kind of knowledge of oneself is required for successful therapeutic self-reflection? Do we have to explain the natural origins of our emotions, or is the insight into their meaning all that matters? And how, finally, is the therapeutic efficacy of philosophical reflection explained? It is against the background of these questions that I will compare Spinoza's and Shaftesbury's views on the emotions and on philosophical self-knowledge.

1 The Concept of Emotion

Let me start with a rather sketchy comparison between Spinoza's and Shaftesbury's concept of emotion. I would like to emphasize three points:

⁵ Spinoza 1985, I, 10.

⁶ Shaftesbury 1981, II/2, 42–44.

a) *Naturalness*. Spinoza and Shaftesbury, both describe human emotions as natural phenomena.⁷ The interesting question is, however, what precisely they have in mind. Neither of them maintains a reductionist view according to which mental phenomena can be reduced to bodily states.⁸ The emphasis which they both put on the natural origin of human emotions is rather a question of seeing man as a part of nature. Primarily they take a stance against the assumption of any super-natural, transcendent causation.

But there are important differences to be made. Spinoza's naturalism involves the rejection of any notion of creation, and I take it that also his claim that emotions are natural entities has to be understood as precluding any teleological consideration. Instead, they are merely regarded as effects of certain efficient causes. As the most important efficient cause he points to the *conatus*, which I would interpret as the aimless tendency of beings to persevere in a given state.⁹ Shaftesbury, in contrast, conceived of nature as a harmonious systematic order that could result only from divine design.¹⁰ In consequence, he seeks to explain our emotions in terms of a natural teleology according to which emotions express the relation of individuals to their environment.¹¹ His characterization of affections as natural thus stresses the idea of man being in harmony with the order of nature as well as with all mankind, and what he refers to as "unnatural affections" are emotions that are not directed to any public or private good.

Notwithstanding these conceptual differences, the claim that emotions are natural phenomena is in both approaches an important background for the legitimacy of the idea that philosophy produces therapeutic effects. In particular, Spinoza and Shaftesbury both reject the notion that passions are the offspring of our sinful nature. This, in turn, results in several important conse-

⁷ This is quite obvious in the case of Spinoza who, in the preface of book three of the *Ethics*, criticizes former approaches for treating the affects as if they were "things which are outside nature", Spinoza 1985, 491. Shaftesbury's stance in this respect is less explicitly expressed, but see his *Inquiry Concerning Virtue or Merit*, where he considers affects in relation to the "Interest" or "Good" or "End" of every creature "to which every thing in his constitution must *naturally* refer", cf. Shaftesbury 1981ff., II, 2, 44. It can be assumed that Shaftesbury, similarly to Spinoza, conceives of the emotions as parts of nature, although there are obvious differences in how nature is characterized.

⁸ The option of maintaining a physicalist reductionism also existed in the seventeenth century, see for instance Gassendi or Henricus Regius, who both, though on different grounds, develop materialist views on the mental.

⁹ See Renz 2008, 316–321 and Renz 2010a, 246–250 for a critical discussion of different interpretations of the concept of *conatus*.

¹⁰ Cf. Gill 2008, 11–12, and Müller 2010.

¹¹ Cf. also Schmitter 2010, 2.

quences regarding the emotions as well the function of philosophy. First, they both assume that emotions can be moderated or even altered, but not eliminated by philosophical reflection. Furthermore, they both assume that religious practices can be replaced in philosophy by the activity of contemplation. What we feel towards things depends to some degree on how we think of things.

b) *Cognitivism*.¹² For Spinoza as well as for Shaftesbury, emotions include a cognitive aspect; they both consider them as states that involve representation, and, hence provide some basic information. This is not very surprising, for it derives, at least partially, from their Stoic heritage. It is however interesting to see how they further develop this idea. Let me start with the commonality. Spinoza and Shaftesbury both assume that emotions can be evaluated from an epistemological perspective, and this presupposes not merely that emotions involve representations, but, moreover, that they can be judged in respect to their truth and justification, or in historical terms in respect to their adequacy.

One might object that this epistemological approach is rather problematic, for many emotions such as love, devotion or disgust are neutral in respect to the question of truth, whereas others are even essentially based on ignorance. Hope, for instance, is by definition an emotion that relies on ignorance about some future state of the world.¹³ I think this objection is valid insofar as it concerns truth, but not insofar as it concerns justification. To be sure, many emotions do not presuppose the truth of the assumptions or ideas involved, whereas for others like hope it is even a necessary condition that they rely on uncertain belief which cannot constitute knowledge. But we can still clearly distinguish between more or less rational, more or less justifiable instances of hope, even though hope is indeed an emotion that presupposes ignorance. Hence, the denial that emotions are typically related to knowledge does not preclude that it makes sense to evaluate our emotional life epistemologically. But this is indeed essential if philosophy is thought to have a therapeutic effect. If there was no systematic connection between the degree of adequacy of our beliefs and the emotional quality of our feelings, epistemic improvement could not result in more happiness.

However, apart from this general common ground, there are also fundamental differences between Spinoza's and Shaftesbury's cognitivism. First, they talk about different forms of knowledge or cognition that constitute our emotions. To use contemporary terminology, one could say that Spinoza sug-

¹² See Renz 2010b, for a discussion of why cognitivism in respect to the emotions is important for therapeutic notions of philosophy.

¹³ See Wild 2008 for critical objections towards any kind of affective epistemology.

gests some kind of judgment theory. According to his definition of affect, emotions necessarily involve ideas,¹⁴ and every idea contains some moment of endorsement.¹⁵ Shaftesbury's approach, in contrast, is rather a kind of perception theory. The experience of emotions is due to a kind of sensitive capacity, and it is "the Forms and Images of Things" which are perceived.¹⁶ Feelings arise from the perception of certain qualities or relations in the world, such as proportion or order, and it is therefore no surprise that Shaftesbury portrays the emotional mind as a spectator or auditor of the order of nature and of human characters.¹⁷ And this is indeed an important prerequisite for his views on the role of aesthetics in moral and emotional education.

Second, they differ on the specific contents of emotions. In Spinoza, emotions provide information about the increasing or diminishing of our individual power. For Shaftesbury, in contrast, emotional experiences register the systematic order or disorder in the mind. This amounts to a completely different view on the relation between emotions and morality. In Spinoza, the nature of emotions implies that egoism is not only the origin, but also the only rational ground for moral claims. For Shaftesbury, in contrast, feeling creatures do not primarily pursue their own happiness and well-being, but the order of the system on which their happiness and well-being depends. Emotions thus reveal a sense of nature as a whole, of mankind, and even of the whole of our individual mind.¹⁸

c) *Activity and passivity.* In his definition of affect, Spinoza distinguishes between two kinds of emotion: actions and passions, a distinction he later associates with that between bondage and freedom.¹⁹ Humans are considered

¹⁴ Cf. 3def3, Spinoza 1985, 493.

¹⁵ This endorsement is not due to rational judgment, but consists originally in the striving activity of the *conatus* which takes the form of affirming ideas in our mental activities. Cf. also Della Rocca 2003.

¹⁶ "As in the sensible kind, the Species or Images of Bodys, Colours and Sounds, are perpetually moving before our Eyes, and acting on our Senses [...], so in the moral and intellectual kind, the Forms and Images of Things are no less active and incumbent on the Mind." Shaftesbury 1981ff., II/2, 68. I think that Shaftesbury's position comes close to the one maintained by Roberts who conceives of the emotions as concern based construals, cf. Roberts 1988, 184.

¹⁷ "The Mind, which is Spectator or Auditor of other Minds cannot be without its Eye and Ear; so as to discern Proportion distinguish Sound, and scan each Sentiment or Thought that comes before it [...]", Shaftesbury 1981ff., II/2, 66–68.

¹⁸ See in particular Shaftesbury's consideration of the nature and extension of natural affection in the unpublished *Philosophical Regimen*, where he defines natural affection as follows: "To have natural affection is to affect according to nature or the design and will of nature." Cf. Rand 1992, 3.

¹⁹ Cf. 3def3 and the preface to part 4. Spinoza 1985, 493 and 543.

slaves when they are subject to passions; whereas the free man is characterized as someone who experiences only actions. This may partly be due to the influence of the Stoic theory of emotions that distinguishes passions categorically from the good emotions of the wise.²⁰

Strikingly, however, most of Spinoza's psychology, as it is developed in part three of the *Ethics*, deals with passive emotions. It seems as if our ordinary emotional life consists of passions only. For Shaftesbury, in contrast, already "the Sense of Right and Wrong" which is understood as natural affection and described as "*an original one of earliest Rise in the Soul or affectionate part*" expresses our freedom.²¹ Thereby, he of course did not mean to imply that emotions are controlled by our will. On the contrary, like Spinoza, Shaftesbury denies that emotions can be changed, unless "contrary Affection, by frequent check and control" operates on them.²² The point is rather that natural affection operates on the basis of our imagination, and for Shaftesbury imagination is not, as for Spinoza, a purely mechanistic process. On the contrary, imagination essentially involves an element of original anticipation; it is, in other words, the capacity of "anticipating Fancy".²³ We thus become aware of the aesthetic and moral quality of things by imagining them in relation to the whole of a system, a relation we perceive as harmonious or disharmonious.²⁴

Clearly, this difference has a considerable influence on the conception of therapy. For Spinoza, therapeutic reflection must be guided by reason, even if it makes use of the imagination. As regards the goal of philosophical therapy, Spinoza puts a strong emphasis on the activity of the mind. Finally, he assumes that freedom is only seldom attained and if so, only after a long and difficult process. Shaftesbury's views are quite different. First, the goal of therapy is not to "rule" or "moderate" the emotions by reason, but to reestablish the original harmony in our mind and in relation to nature. This implies that natural affections do not have to be cured as such. Secondly, reflection is rather an aesthetic than a rational process. In reflection we visualize our mental states in a way that at the same time cultivates the order among them, with the effect that certain distortions of our affective life disappear.

²⁰ Cf. also Buddensiek 2008, 27 and 90f.

²¹ Shaftesbury 1981ff., II/2, 92.

²² Shaftesbury 1981ff., II/2, 92.

²³ Cf. Shaftesbury 1981ff., II/2, 92. That anticipating involves activity rather than passivity is also emphasized by Baum 2001, 198ff.; Kringler 2010, 130; Schrader 1984, 15f.; and Uehlein 1976, 142f.

²⁴ Cf. also Shaftesbury 1981ff., I/2, 258ff.

To summarize, we can say that Spinoza and Shaftesbury both conceptualize human emotionality in a way that is consistent with the assumption that emotions can, in principle, be changed by reflective processes. Yet, they develop quite different concepts of emotion that suggest different methods of philosophical therapy. In the next section therefore, I would like to have a closer look at their ideas about how self-reflection and, hence, philosophy is thought to have an effect on our emotions.

2 Philosophical self-reflection

In contemporary philosophy, the term self-knowledge is mostly used to address the problem of our epistemic access to our own mental states. In ordinary life, in contrast, we make a different use of the notion of self-knowledge. Whereas in the philosophy of mind, the term 'self-knowledge' designates the immediate relation we have to our occurring mental states, in ordinary life it refers to our knowledge of ourselves as persons as well as of those mental dispositions or personal traits which make up our character.

One could of course distinguish terminologically between these two phenomena and use the term 'self-knowledge' exclusively to refer to our immediate awareness of our mental states and apply, instead, the phrase 'knowledge of oneself as a person' to designate the self-knowledge we speak of in ordinary life. But while such a distinction prevents terminological confusion, it does not solve the theoretical problems one is confronted with when discussing the influence of self-reflection on our emotional states and attitudes. It can be assumed, on the one hand, that in therapeutic self-reflection we aim at something more demanding than mere awareness of our actual mental states. We wonder for instance, whether some difficulty which repeatedly affects us is caused by some emotional disposition hitherto unknown. On the other hand, unless emotions are assumed to be completely independent from any influence of human thought, one has to admit that improvement in our understanding of our personality can have an influence on how we feel, and this implies that also the content of our awareness is altered. One can thus surmise that the very idea of therapeutic reflection relies on the assumption of some interdependency between the conception of our own personality or our knowledge of ourselves and the quality of those occurrent mental states that constitute the subject-matter of immediate self-awareness.

At this point, it is illuminating to have a look at a particular position in the contemporary debate about self-knowledge. Inspired by Wittgenstein, it has recently been suggested that we conceive of first-person-authority not pri-

marily in terms of *knowledge*, but rather of *constitution*, therefore this position is also called “constitutivism”.²⁵ It is essential for constitutivism that it not only denies that self-knowledge is based on observation, but that it instead rejects the idea of self-knowledge being an epistemic relation at all, since this would presuppose that our mental states are ontologically independent from us and our way of thinking.²⁶

There is something right and important in this view. It seems, for instance, quite plausible that in reflecting on belief, we do not simply contemplate our actual convictions, but rather bring them about. As Richard Moran has argued, self-knowledge of what one actually believes is not a theoretical, but a deliberative question.²⁷ We do not wonder whether or not we actually believe *p*, but deliberate on the grounds that may be considered as evidence for *p* or as a reason to believe *p*. Furthermore, Moran has also convincingly shown that similarly we can take a deliberative stance towards at least some of our emotions. When we reflect on an instance of gratitude we usually do not wonder about the character of our feeling towards a person, but deliberate instead about the reasons for feeling grateful.

There are, however, other emotions that seem to be more ambiguous in this respect, e.g. envy, jealousy, or resentment. Of course, when we reflect about our resentment towards another person, we often also reflect on the grounds for feeling resentful.²⁸ But resentment, jealousy or envy, are also emotions we may discover with some surprise. Furthermore, unlike in the case of actual beliefs, we often cannot overcome these emotions with the rational insight that there is no good ground for them. It can be assumed that this is one of the rationales for why these emotions are often conceived of as passions. Thus, deliberating on the grounds for our emotions may have an impact on how we actually feel, but this is not a necessary and predictable result. We can thus conclude that we are not obliged to embrace a full-blown constitutive

25 This label is used in particular by Bilgrami 1998, 209ff.; Gertler 2011 speaks of a ‘self-constitution’ account.

26 See for instance Wright 1998, Bilgrami 1998 and Bar-On 2004, 122. The criticism that self-knowledge is mistakenly thought of in terms of epistemic access is also shared by Moran 2001, see below. It has to be emphasized however that Moran does not explicitly embrace constitutivism, and so far as I can see, it is not clear whether he really is committed to it, as is suggested in Gertlers overview 2011.

27 Moran 2001, 59.

28 Moran 2001, 85ff., also makes the case for resentment. I am however not sure whether Moran would oppose my view, for his interest is not to describe what we do when we reflect on our emotions, but rather what he would conceive of as a transparency relation that holds not just for beliefs, but for all mental attitudes. I agree with this point.

view, even though there is good reason to assume a constitutive moment in the relation to at least some of our mental states.

Keeping this in mind, I would now like to come back to Spinoza and Shaftesbury and their views on how philosophical reflection may have therapeutic effects. In particular, I would like to inquire whether there is some conceptual space in their accounts for the assumption of some moment of self-constitution.

Let us start with Spinoza. At first glance, one might think that the answer is simple. It is a common place that Spinoza rejects any kind of voluntarism; instead he embraces a strong determinism according to which all our ideas, and hence all our mental states and dispositions, including all instances of knowledge and rational belief, are completely determined by psychological mechanisms. This seems to suggest that the *Ethics* does not allow for the assumption of any influence of self-reflection on our actual mental states, and that instead, the naturalistic explanation of the external causes of the emotions is all that matters.

A closer view indicates however that Spinoza's position is more sophisticated. It is true that he does not engage in deliberative reflection about the grounds for our emotions. On the contrary, in the preface of the Third book of the *Ethics* he explicitly rejects any kind of rationalizing view of our emotional life. Emotions are a-rational phenomena which are to be explained in terms of their efficient causes. This does not preclude that we can distinguish between emotions which involve adequate knowledge and others which include nearly inadequate ideas, but it undermines the idea that emotions can be changed by the insight into our grounds for having them. Instead of thinking about the grounds for our feelings, we should therefore rather try to understand why we can have emotions which lack any rational or empirical basis. More effective, in other words, than any rationalizing about the emotions is the investigation of the psychological mechanisms that cause those inadequate ideas underlying our emotions.

But although Spinoza rejects the idea of rational reflection on the grounds of our feelings, there is still some conceptual space in his account for the claim that philosophical reflection can change our emotions. He assumes for instance that having adequate ideas amounts to a better life, since it enhances our *potentia agendi*.²⁹ Furthermore, if we know the psychological mechanisms behind our emotions, we can make use of this knowledge and either try to acquire a better understanding of the particular causes of certain emotions, or try to ignore those ideas which cause negative emotions. Finally, the *Ethics*

²⁹ Cf. in particular 3p58 and 3p59. Spinoza 1985, 529.

also develops the option of meditating on our emotions in terms of their first cause, a perspective that necessarily leads to more peace and happiness.³⁰

We can conclude that the therapeutic effect Spinoza ascribes to philosophical reflection is mainly to be explained in terms of the effects of knowledge in general, as well as the strategic use we make of our causal knowledge about psychology. And although this option to make therapeutic use of psychological knowledge relies on the possibility of an indirect influence of philosophical reflection on emotion, it does not require that our actual emotional states be directly constituted by it.³¹

Let us now turn to Shaftesbury. At first glance, one might expect that there is more room for self-constitution in his account than in Spinoza's. For Shaftesbury, the way human beings feel always concerns taking an attitude towards certain things. This can best be seen by the fact that Shaftesbury equates the natural affection of rational creatures with what he calls "the Sense of Right and Wrong", a capacity which is in turn characterized as the "first Principle in our Constitution and Make."³² This sense does not however rely on abstract rational reflection, nor is it to be conceived of in sensualistic terms; it is rather a matter of paying attention to one's emotional responses to certain things. Thus, in a passage bearing the marginal note "Reflex Affection", Shaftesbury says:

In a Creature capable of forming General Notions of Things, not only the outward Beings which offer themselves to the Sense, are the Objects of the Affections; but the very Action themselves, and the Affections of Pity, Kindness and Gratitude, and their Contraries, being brought into the Mind by Reflection, become Objects. So that, by means of this reflected Sense, there arises another kind of Affection towards the Affection themselves, which have been already felt, and are now become the Subject of a new Liking or Disliking.³³

This passage is illuminating in many respects. Shaftesbury claims here that human emotions, unlike those of merely sensible subjects which lack the

30 For an overview of the remedies for the affects cf. 5p20s. Spinoza 1985, 605.

31 One might wonder how this indirect influence of reflection is to be understood. I cannot discuss this problem here, since this relies on many claims Spinoza makes in his philosophy of mind. To put it in a nutshell, however, one can say that the therapeutic efficacy essentially relies on Spinoza's assumption of some kind of holism according to which any knowledge acquired in reflection determines our future mental states. See also Renz 2010a, 270–78 and 311ff.

32 Shaftesbury 1981ff., II/2, 92.

33 Shaftesbury 1981ff., II/2, 66. Unfortunately, these marginal notes which often introduce key words of Shaftesbury's terminology are missing in Lawrence E. Klein's edition of the *Characteristics*. I thank Angelica Baum who drew my attention to this passage. Her reconstruction of Shaftesbury's theory of emotions in 2001 is much inspired by it.

capacity of forming general notions of things, often have a reflexive structure.³⁴ They are not just about desired objects, but also exhibit the moral quality of the actions and passions actually represented in the mind. In addition, it is decisive that this reflection is itself an emotional state, for this suggests that it is as a result of its affective quality that reflection may have an impact on our emotions. Since, as Shaftesbury later explicitly claims, it is only the “frequent check and control” of “contrary Affection” that may change the direction of our natural temper.³⁵ This indicates that even though Shaftesbury allows for the idea of some kind of self-constitution, he does not think of it in terms of a direct influence of deliberative reflection on the emotions. But what notion of philosophical therapy does his view on reflex affection suggest?

To answer this question, first and foremost his approach must be considered in a broader perspective. In contrast to other philosophers referred to as Moral Sense theorists, Shaftesbury's primary interest is neither to develop a system of moral virtues nor to account for the origins of moral motivation.³⁶ Instead, his intent is to explore the possibility of education in moral issues, including the kind of self-education that takes place in philosophical reflection. His account is thus not a theory of moral value, but of moral education; and it is in the latter context that the concept of reflex affection is to be understood. The view that human beings are able to have emotions entailing a reflexive structure is a conceptual premise for the claim that contemplation of one's own as well as other people's emotions may contribute to the formation of moral attitudes. And this in turn is the reason for the assumption that art or literature, as well as therapeutic self-reflection, can have an influence on our virtues.

The passage cited does not however merely account for the possibility of the formation of moral attitudes. It also implies the influence of representations on our occurring feelings. The reflection on our affections results in another affection which is described as “a new Liking or Disliking”. How is this to be understood?

It is important, first, to note that this new liking or disliking is not brought about by deliberative reflection. In reflex affection we do not examine the grounds for our emotions, but consider the order or disorder in the relations

³⁴ Cf. also Baum/Renz 2008, 364f., and in particular Baum 2001, 169ff., for a closer view of Shaftesbury's notion of “sensible rational Creatures”.

³⁵ Shaftesbury 1981ff., II/2, 92.

³⁶ Shaftesbury is often described as the founder of Moral Sense theory, and he did indeed coin the notion ‘moral sense’. It can still be doubted whether the label ‘Moral Sense theory’ appropriately characterizes his account. See also Uehlein/Baum/Mudroch 2004, 65 for a discussion of this topic.

between a subject and its environments, as well as between certain emotions and the system of a whole mind. This requires that we take a distant perspective on ourselves, and not a deliberative stance. Reflex affection is thus essentially a matter of quasi aesthetic contemplation, and it is therefore not surprising that it results in an aesthetic mental state, namely liking or disliking.

Another point must be emphasized. Shaftesbury obviously assumes that reflex affection is an event that is ontologically distinct from the reflected emotion; otherwise it could consist in a new “Liking or Disliking”. This point is quite important for a clear understanding of Shaftesbury’s view on the therapeutic effects of philosophical reflection, for it indicates that this effect is not to be conceived of in terms of direct constitution. One therefore has to be careful here not to take Shaftesbury’s terminology of constitution as an expression of a commitment to some kind of constitutivist view of self-knowledge. It is for quite different reasons that he ascribes to reflection a therapeutic effect than one might expect against the background of constitutivism. Shaftesbury assumes, on the one hand, that acquiring self-knowledge is a process of taking a distanced stance towards oneself. In the *Soliloquy*, he even interprets the Delphic inscription as demanding some kind of self-division:

RECOGNIZE YOUR-SELF: which was as much as to say, *Divide your-self, or Be Two*.³⁷

In the *Inquiry concerning Virtue and Merit*, on the other hand, the therapeutic effect of self-reflection is explained in terms of the emotional impact of reflex affection. Shaftesbury obviously assumes that the affective quality of reflex affection can exert some influence on our own mental life.³⁸

One might question whether these two explanations for the therapeutic efficacy of self-reflection are compatible. Is it not inconsistent to conceive of the quest for self-knowledge in terms of self-division and to claim at the same time that moral reflection must consist of an emotional process? It would go beyond the scope of this paper to discuss this problem in detail. But I would like to point to two aspects already that might help to defend Shaftesbury. It has to be mentioned first that both explanations make use of the assumption of ontological distinctness between the reflected object and self-reflection. At least as far as this structural feature of self-reflection is concerned, there is consistency in Shaftesbury’s views. Secondly, I would like to recall the aesthetic framework of Shaftesbury’s approach. If reflection is understood in terms of aesthetic contemplation, then it seems quite natural to assume that

³⁷ Shaftesbury 1981ff., I/1, 62.

³⁸ Cf. in particular the passage already cited above on page XXX, Shaftesbury 1981ff., II/2, 92.

we can look at ourselves as if we were some kind of distant object, while the things we thereby discover may affect us in a deeply emotional way.

3 Conclusion

In this paper, I have suggested comparing Spinoza's and Shaftesbury's accounts in regard to their views on how philosophical reflection can change our emotions. It has been shown that, while their theories of the emotions lead in different directions, they both provide a concept of emotion that allows for emotional changes brought about by cognitive processes. In the second part of the study, I reconstructed Spinoza's and Shaftesbury's quite different answers to the question of why philosophy may have a therapeutic effect. Starting with some remarks about contemporary views on how self-knowledge may be constitutive for our mental life, I argued that neither Spinoza's nor Shaftesbury's account relies on constitutivist presumptions. On the contrary, although they reject the idea of a direct influence of rational thinking on the emotions, they both develop convincing propositions that allow for an indirect influence of cognitive processes on our emotional dispositions. Yet, there are still many differences between their views.

When considering the history of philosophy, it thus becomes clear that there is more than just one conceptual model to account for the presumed therapeutic effects of self-reflection. This is not to say that there are no conceptual limits. Some theories of emotions as well as some conceptions of self-knowledge are indeed inconsistent with the claim that reflection, or any other kind of cognitive process, may have an impact on feeling. And if those views turn out to be true, philosophy might have to renounce its therapeutic ambition. But even though these limits exist, the plausibility of the assumption that reflection can have therapeutic effects is not dependent on one singular theoretical framework.

There is obviously more than one way the ancient notion of philosophy as a kind of therapy may find its way into modernity, and this is instructive and beneficial.³⁹

³⁹ I want to thank Angelica Baum. I have benefited a lot from the cooperation with her on our common article on Shaftesbury, and it is ultimately due to her that I discovered how much inspiration Shaftesbury's philosophy provides.

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III. Transformation and critique of the mechanistic paradigm

Sabrina Ebbersmeyer

Leibniz on the Passions and the Dynamical Dimension of the Human Mind

Abstract: Although Leibniz never wrote a separate treatise on the passions, he was deeply concerned with the appetent dimension of the human mind. This paper explores Leibniz's conception of the passions against the background of his criticism of the Cartesian account of the interaction of body and mind. Leibniz's own solution to the problem he found in Descartes led him to develop a different understanding of the human mind in which the various inclinations of the mind become more prominent. By comparing the passions with instincts and rational inclinations the problematic status of the passions among all the various inclinations of the mind becomes apparent. In the end, to reconcile the passions with reason would mean to reconcile the mind's tendencies for present pleasures with its desires for long lasting happiness. According to Leibniz, this can be achieved by being more attentive to one's own thoughts.

1 Introduction*

Leibniz never wrote a separate treatise on the passions as Descartes had done, nor did he devote so much diligence and attention to the description and interpretations of the various affects as did Spinoza in his *Ethics*.¹ However, although this appraisal might account for the neglect of Leibniz in current research on early modern theories of emotions,² it does not present adequately Leibniz's contribution to the understanding of the affective nature of the human mind. As a matter of fact, according to Leibniz, having appetent states

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1 Leibniz wrote a fragmentary work entitled *De affectibus* in the year 1679 (A VI. 4, 1410–1441), but he never finished this work, which consists mostly of excerpts and commentaries on the Latin version of Descartes's *Passions de l'âme*. For its relevance concerning the development of the notion of the 'individual substance', see Schepers 2003 and Di Bella 2006.

2 For instance, Leibniz is not mentioned in the classical work of James 1997, but see Boros 2011.

is one of the main features of substances as such besides having representational states.³ Thus, the striving forces of substances lie at the core of his metaphysics. In addition, Leibniz's occasional reflections on the passions in particular contribute to the already complex picture of early modern thought on the passions and add some new aspects which seem to me worth noting, and which could help to develop a fuller understanding of early modern considerations of the emotional aspect of the human mind.

In the following paper I attempt to outline Leibniz's conception of the passions, against the background of his criticism on the Cartesian account of the interaction of body and mind. Leibniz's own solution to the problem he found in Descartes led him to develop a different understanding of the human mind in which the various inclinations of the mind become more prominent. Indeed, Leibniz's theory of mind can reasonably be characterized as a theory of the dynamic forces of the mind.⁴ Within this dynamic the passions play a specific role, which makes it necessary to distinguish them not only from rational inclinations but also from instincts, and this may provide evidence for the specific problems this kind of inclinations generates.

As Leibniz did not write a separate treatise on the passions in order to reconstruct his notion of the passions and the role they play in the human mind, we must rely on the various remarks he makes on the subject, and which are scattered throughout his writings. As these are numerous and even difficult to overview, I decided to direct my attention here to the later period of Leibniz's thinking and will confine myself for the present to his later writings, while only occasionally referring to letters and earlier works. This procedure seems to be appropriate insofar as the problem of the inner dynamics of the mind is presented sufficiently in the writing of this period.

2 Point of departure: Descartes and Leibniz on body and mind

As is well known, Leibniz was a fervent critic of materialism, and in particular of the idea that matter thinks or that matter alone is sufficient to produce any

³ See, *Principes de la nature et de la grace fondés en raison* § 2; *Monadologie* § 15. – However, the term 'perception' has gained much more scholarly attention than the term 'appetition' (but see Kulstad 1990, Poser 1990 and Phemister 2005, 247–251).

⁴ See Jalabert 1946.

sort of perception at all.⁵ But he was also a critic of Cartesian substance dualism, and especially of its implications concerning the interaction of body and mind, which becomes apparent notably in the case of the passions. Thus, before looking at Leibniz's criticism and his own solution, it is helpful to recall the basic assumptions of the position he was criticising.⁶

According to Descartes, the passions are movements of the soul caused by bodily alteration.⁷ Body and soul belong to two completely different substances, the human body belongs to the material world, whose main attribute is extension (including size, figure and movement), whereas the human mind has nothing in common with extension, its substance is *res cogitans*, called so after the main attribute: thinking (including various states of the mind as sensing, willing, etc.). The human body – like that of the animals – is understood as a special sort of machine, operating according to the laws of mechanics. All bodily functions can be explained by movements of the various parts of the body, nourished by a certain heat in the heart. Not only breathing and the movements of the limbs, but also the physiological alterations accompanying sensation, memory and the passions can be fully explained by mechanical laws. In human beings this body-machine is united with an un-extended mind in such a way that whenever the mind is active, the body is passive and vice versa. The mind is active only while intentionally willing something.⁸ All other states of the mind, like feeling bodily pain, hunger or sense perceptions and emotions, are passive states of the mind:

From all this it follows that one can generally call passions all the thoughts (*pensées*) that are excited in the soul in this way without the concurrence of its will, and by consequence, without any action coming from it, but only from the impressions in the brain.

⁵ See, for instance, Leibniz, *Nouveaux Essais* (=NE) I, 1; IV, 3; *Monadology* 17. See also Kulstad 1991.

⁶ In the following, I use the terms 'soul' and 'mind' interchangeably, as I am only talking about the human mind, which is for Descartes the same as the human soul. In the *Meditations* Descartes prefers the term 'mind' (*mens*), while in his *Passions de l'âme* he uses 'soul' (*l'âme*). Leibniz distinguishes three levels of substances or monads corresponding to their respective faculties: 'entelechy', 'soul' (*l'âme*), and – if capable of reflecting – 'spirit' (*l'esprit*). I use the term 'mind' to refer to the human soul including its ability for reflecting.

⁷ The following account is, due to its purpose, rather general, it cannot do justice to Descartes's more complex reflections regarding the mind-body-union, as they are found primarily in his correspondence and his replies to the objections to his *Meditations*. There is extensive literature concerning this subject, see, for instance, Garber 1983 and 2001, Cottingham 1985, Rorty 1986, Alanen 1996, Rodis-Lewis 1998, Perler 2011.

⁸ Descartes, *Passions de l'âme* (=PA), 17: «Celles que je nomme ses actions sont toutes nos volontez [...]». AT XI, 342.

For everything that is not an action is a passion. But one ordinarily reserves this word for the thoughts that are caused by some particular agitation of the spirits.⁹

In all these cases the soul only receives certain information concerning either the state of the external world, or the state of its own body, or of the state of the soul itself. And it is this last state that is called passion in a proper sense:

After having considered in what respects the passions of the soul differ from all other thoughts, it seems to me that we may define them generally as those perceptions, sensations or emotions of the soul which we refer particularly to it, and which are caused, maintained and strengthened by some movement of the spirits.¹⁰

During an emotional state, the influence of the body upon the soul and vice versa becomes evident. The interaction takes place in the brain and more precisely in the pineal gland.¹¹ At this special place in the brain the soul is able to act intentionally on the body by changing the direction of the movement of the animal spirits (tiny material parts of the blood). This change causes alterations in the flow of the spirits through the body, which then cause, for example, the contraction of the muscles of the leg. On the other hand, a bodily caused movement of the animal spirits in the pineal gland is able to evoke certain passions in the soul.¹²

In the Cartesian perspective, the inner dynamic of the mind is explained through the respective activity and passivity of the will and the bodily caused passions. The will is determined by reason and a rational evaluation of the various good and bad effects that would arise from a certain decision. The passions are guided by the apparent and sensual good which they tend to exaggerate. Inner conflicts of the soul, traditionally regarded as conflicts between the lower and the higher parts of the soul are for Descartes nothing other than the conflicts between soul and body:

All the conflicts usually supposed to occur between the lower part of the soul, which we call 'sensitive', and the higher or 'rational' part of the soul – or between the natural

⁹ Descartes to Elisabeth, 6 October 1645, AT IV, 308; tr. Shapiro 2007, 118.

¹⁰ PA 27; AT XI 349, tr. Descartes 1985, 338–9.

¹¹ In the following, I confine myself to describing the standard reading of Descartes, which accords with Leibniz's interpretation. There has been, however, some criticism of the so called *interaction* thesis. Dominik Perler, for instance, has claimed for a more elaborate reading of Descartes arguing for the so called *correlation* thesis – e.g. that there is no direct physical influence between body and mind but only a correlation between states of the body and states of the mind. See Perler 1996, 123–160 (§ 10–11).

¹² For more detail see PA, 31–36.

appetites and the will – consist simply in the opposition between the movements which the body (by means of its spirits) and the soul (by means of its will) tend to produce at the same time in the gland.¹³

Let us now turn to Leibniz's position. Although Leibniz shared with Descartes the belief that the mind is something different from matter and considered therefore the distinction between mind and body to be true, still he disagreed with Descartes about the definition of the substances and consequently about the definition of mind and matter. Leibniz raised several serious objections to Descartes's account, and to some of them he devoted considerable attention.¹⁴ But the problem that interests us here is that of the interaction of body and soul. Repeatedly, Leibniz criticises Descartes and his followers for maintaining that the soul is able to change the direction of the animal spirits: according to Leibniz, not only the *quantity* of motion but also the *direction* of motion always remains the same in the material world.¹⁵ Furthermore, in order to be capable of acting on the body the soul would need some tool, but it has no such means to act on the body. Therefore, there can be no physical communication between body and soul. In a strict or metaphysical sense there is no interaction at all between the material world and the world of the mind. What then does the relation between mind and body appear to be from Leibniz's point of view?

As is well known, Leibniz introduces the theory of the so called pre-established harmony as the metaphysical foundation for his solution to the mind-body problem.¹⁶ According to this theory, body and soul harmonize perfectly, but they do not act physically upon each other. While every movement in the body follows the rules of mechanics, that is, of efficient causes, the mind follows final causes: seeking what is (or seems to be) good and avoiding evil. Of course, following common sense and everyday language we might say that "the will acts on the body" and vice versa. But this is only – to use Leibniz's expression – an improper way of speaking. In the same way as, for example,

¹³ PA 47; AT XI, 364; tr. Descartes 1985, 346–7.

¹⁴ Leibniz considered the notion of matter as extension false (as, according to Leibniz, 'extension' is not an essential attribute of substance) and the notion of mind as thinking (in the sense of 'being conscious of') as too narrow. From this fundamental disagreement follow several objections. For example, in the Cartesian ontological framework it becomes implausible to attribute sensation or passions in a proper sense to animals, as they are regarded as only bodily machines without any sort of soul. According to Leibniz, animals have sentiments insofar as they remember previous perceptions (see *Monadology* 26). For more detail see Perler 2009.

¹⁵ Cf. *Monadology* 80.

¹⁶ For an overview of this subject cf. Garber and Wilson 1998, esp. 845–849.

we talk about the sun ‘rising’ in the morning while the astronomer knows about the true movement of the earth.

To illustrate his own theory Leibniz uses the famous example of two wooden clocks (which represent the two substances), which are supposed to work exactly in the same way. For this effect we can give three more or less reasonable accounts: the first is that of the Cartesians and holds that the two clocks harmonize because of a natural influence. This theory has to be dismissed, as how matter and mind should interact is incomprehensible. The second is the explanation given by the so called Occasionalists: the two clocks are brought into line each time by the clock-maker. This theory cannot be true either, as it is not convincing that God should intervene each and every time in such a natural and usual matter.¹⁷ The third theory is that developed by Leibniz: the two clocks are so perfectly made by the clock-maker, that right from the beginning they always work in an exactly parallel way. Thus, there is “always an exact correspondence between the body and the soul”.¹⁸

However, this parallelism or correspondence is not a complete explanation of the relationship between body and mind. Once we have understood that on the one hand the material world is causally closed within itself following everywhere (to the tiniest parts of matter) mechanical laws, and that on the other hand the intellectual world of the mind is equally causally closed, following the ‘catenation’ from one perception to another according to the final causes, we may then ask how we are to understand this “correspondence” between body and mind. I relate this question not to the cause or the origin of this relation (which lies, of course, in God), but to its *nature*. To cite his own words, Leibniz replaces the theory of the *influence* (that the mind has some direct and physical influence on the body) by the theory of *representation* or *expression*.¹⁹ Before examining more closely what he means by representation or expression, we should take into account Leibniz’s emphasis on the coexistence of mind and body. According to him, there is no created mind or

¹⁷ Leibniz, *Second éclaircissement du système de la communication des substances*, G IV, 499. – It goes without saying that Leibniz oversimplified the criticized position. For a more accurate description of Occasionalism in the seventeenth century see Perler and Rudolph 2000, esp. chapter 7.

¹⁸ NE II.1.15: «[...] puisque je crois qu’il y a tousjours une exacte correspondance entre le corps et l’ame [...]». A VI. 6, 116. The English translation is taken from Leibniz 1981.

¹⁹ Leibniz, *L’addition à l’explication du système nouveau*: «[...] sa [=l’ame] nature est d’exprimer le corps, ce que je mets à la place des influences du corps.» G IV, 583. As Carlin and Kulstad 2007 have already pointed out, Leibniz uses the terms ‘expression’ and ‘representation’ interchangeably. For a more detailed account of the term ‘expression’ in Leibniz’ work, see Kulstad 1977 and 2006.

soul without a body.²⁰ What really exist are embodied minds.²¹ Even while thinking in a most abstract way, the thoughts we have are accompanied by physiological alterations of the body.²² The idea of completely disembodied minds seems to Leibniz absurd, mind and body would be incomplete one without the other.²³

When we are aware of the presumed coexistence of body and soul, it becomes clearer what Leibniz means by saying that the nature of the soul is to represent or to express what happens in the organic body.²⁴ In a famous letter to Arnauld (9 October 1687) Leibniz explains how we have to understand the proposition 'A expresses B'. He states: "one thing expresses another (in my language) when there is a constant and regulated relation between what can be said of the one and of the other."²⁵ The example he gives is that of a map in which every point represents a certain point of a geological formation. Applied to the body and the mind this means: if the body hurts, the mind immediately expresses this physical alteration in its own way, as a perception of pain. Thus, the mind can be understood as a complex map of the various states of the body. However, the mind includes not only sense perceptions but all sorts of representations – unconscious perceptions as well as abstract

20 At present I will not engage in the discussion about the ontological status of the body in Leibniz thought in general which is, of course, a complicated question. For discussions of opposite positions held in this controversy see Rutherford 1990 and Garber 2009.

21 NE *préface*: «C'est que je crois avec la plupart des anciens que tous les génies, toutes les ames, toutes les substances simples créés sont toujours jointes à un corps, et qu'il n'y a jamais des ames qui en soient entièrement séparées.» A VI. 6, 58. NE III.6.11: «[...] c'est qu'il faut à mon avis que tous les Esprits créés ayent des corps, [...]», A VI. 6, 306. NE III.11.23: «[...] j'ai des raisons pour juger qu'il n'y a point d'esprits créés, entierement separés des corps;». A VI. 6, 353.

22 Leibniz, *L'addition à l'explication du système nouveau*: «Mais il paroist encore que le corps se ressent aussi de nos pensées les plus abstraites employent tousjours quelques signes qui touchent l'imagination, outre l'attention qui bande les fibres du cerveau G IV, 574.

23 Leibniz, *L'addition à l'explication du système nouveau*: «Et tout cela fait voir, comment on peut dire d'un costé que l'ame et le corps sont independans l'un de l'autre, et de l'autre costé que l'un est incomplet sans l'autre, puisque naturellement l'un n'est jamais sans l'autre.» G IV, 573.

24 Leibniz, *L'addition à l'explication du système nouveau*: «[...] je croy que c'est la nature même, que Dieu luy a donnée, de se représenter en vertu de ses propres loix, ce que se passe dans les organes.» G IV, 519; «[...] l'ame doit exprimer le corps» G IV, 580; « sa [= l'ame] nature est d'exprimer son corps,» G IV, 580.

25 Leibniz to Arnauld (9 October 1687): «Une chose exprime une autre (dans mon langage) lorsqu'il y a un rapport constant et réglé entre ce qui se peut dire de l'une et de l'autre.» A II. 2, 240.

thoughts – which are subsumed under the general term *perception*.²⁶ All the various sorts of perceptions share the basic characteristic that they are “representation in the simple of the compound, or of that which is outside.”²⁷

But this is not all. According to Leibniz, the mind is never at rest. Its perceptions are not stable or fixed, but follow one another according to the “law of the appetites”, that is according to the causes of good and bad.²⁸ Therefore, every perception is immediately accompanied by a desire (*appetition*). These desires arise (*naissent*)²⁹ from perceptions and lead to new ones. They are guided by the “first principle of morals”: to “follow joy and to avoid sadness”, a principle engraved in our soul “as consequences of our conservation and our own true good.” (A VI. 6, 88–9). Thus, as the mind expresses all the various and constantly changing states of the body it not only contains all these various perceptions but also their corresponding inclinations. Therefore, perceptions and inclinations are the fundamental ingredients of the mind.³⁰ Before exploring in more detail what kind of inclinations precisely the passions constitute, it seems advisable first to establish a general idea of the dynamical dimension of the mind and of the different kinds of inclinations.

3 The dynamics of the mind

What sorts of inclinations do we find in the mind?³¹ As perceptions can be either distinct or confused, so appetites or inclinations follow either the order

26 For the role of the term ‘perception’ in Leibniz’s thought see McRae 1976; for Leibniz’s representational theory of the mind see Simons 2001.

27 *Principes de la nature et de la grace fondés en raison*, 3: «[...] ses perceptions (c’est à dire, les representations du composé, ou de ce qui est dehors, dans le simple)». G VI, 598.

28 *Principes de la nature et de la grace fondés en raison*, 3: «Et les perceptions dans la Monade naissent les unes des autres par les loix des Appetits ou des *causes finales du bien et du mal* qui consiste dans les perceptions remarquables, réglées ou déréglées, comme les changemens des corps et les phenomenes au dehors naissent les uns des autres par les loix des *causes efficientes*, c’est-à-dire, des mouvements.» G VI, 599.

29 G III, 509. In my opinion, the relation between appetite and inclination is not to be understood as causal in the strict sense, but more likely as that between two immediately corresponding features. I agree with some interpreters, for instance Jalabert 1946, 455, who understands appetite and perception not as two completely separate features, but as two complementary aspects which characterize the monad.

30 See, *Principes de la nature et de la grace fondés en raison* 2; *Monadologie* 15.

31 Leibniz’s use of the terms concerning the forces of the soul is not uniform. In different contexts he utilizes various concepts to name the forces of the soul: *appetitions*, *desirs*, *impulsions*, *inclinations*, *instincts*, *passions*, *penchans*, *sentimens*, *tendences*, *volitions*.

of confused perceptions or of distinct ones. Given that each mind always has an infinite number of perceptions, it also has, correspondingly, in infinite number of inclinations. Leibniz devotes considerable attention to the various sorts and degrees of inclinations we find in a given mental state. In the *Nouveaux Essais* Leibniz distinguishes in general three kinds of inclinations:³² (1) insensible inclinations, (2) sensible inclinations which are also called confused inclinations, and (3) distinct inclinations.³³

(1) Insensible inclinations are related to the so called *petites perceptions*. These perceptions are so small that we are not aware of them, but they nevertheless have some impact on the human mind. To illustrate the effects of *petites perceptions* Leibniz refers to the famous example of the roaring noise of the sea originating from uncountable little movements of the waves which are not discernable separately, but each of which contributes to the perceived noise. These small perceptions form certain inclinations which, although unperceived, produce alterations within the soul that one is not aware of.³⁴ They put the mind in a state of indiscernible disquiet (*l'inquietude*) and act like “little springs trying to unwind”. For example, turning “left or right at the end of a lane” without conscious deliberation is not due to mere indifference, but due to these *determinations insensibles* (A VI, 6, 166). In the given example one may be moved by a subconscious memory of an obstacle in one way or by the unconsciously reflected fact that the sun shines brighter here or there. If these insensible inclinations become stronger or if we direct our attention to them, they become sensible.

(2) The group of sensible inclinations is the most complicated one. It contains different sorts: they can occur as mere disquiet, they can be accompanied by desire or fear (that is they can be object directed), and they can be accompanied by pleasure and pain, as in the case of the passions (A VI. 6, 192). Besides the passions, instincts and habits belong to this group. We know toward which object sensible or confused inclinations tend to, but we do not know how they originated. For example, I may feel a disinclination to get up early in the morning, I have to pass an exam, but I cannot give a complete account for this

Partly, these are generic concepts; partly they refer to certain forces. In the following I will use mainly ‘inclination’.

32 Commentators disagree on the exact number of the various types of inclinations. Kulstad, for instance, while investigating only the inclinations we are aware of, distinguishes four types: 1. “mere disquiet”, 2. “mere desire or fear”, 2. “desire or fear accompanied by pleasure and suffering”, and 4. “rational inclinations”, see Kulstad, 1990, 149.

33 However, there exists a certain kind of continuity between these three kinds, see for more detail Ebbersmeyer 2011, 265–66.

34 NE, préface, A VI. 6, 54.

disinclination: it may be partly because I am not prepared, partly because I have slept badly, partly because I feel suddenly the urgent desire to visit a sick friend. Sensible inclinations are related to confused perceptions whose reasonableness we can not always spot, but which nevertheless are strongly felt and have therefore a major impact on our actions.

(3) Simultaneously with insensible and confused inclinations one is capable of having distinct inclinations, following the ordered representations of reason. These inclinations derive from reflection. Leibniz describes them as follows:

Finally there are distinct inclinations which reason gives us: we have a sense both of their strength and of their constitution. Pleasures of this kind, which occur in the knowledge and production of order and harmony, are the most valuable.³⁵

It is worth noting that according to Leibniz reason is not detached from any sort of striving force, but is immediately associated with inclinations.³⁶ Each perception, even the most abstract thought, is connected to some sort of inclination. The inclinations derived from reflection have certain attributes. First, they are distinct, in the sense that one can give an account of the reasons which lead to them,³⁷ that is to say, the formation of distinct inclinations is comprehensible. We can illustrate this with the above mentioned example: I may reflect on the necessity of passing an exam in order to get a certain job. From this reflection derives the inclination to pass the exam. Thus, the rational contemplation corresponds to a distinct inclination. Furthermore, distinct inclinations deriving from reflection differ from the other sorts of inclinations in so far as they consider the future. They not only evaluate the present, but take into account duration and future events.³⁸ When following rational inclinations, one aims at happiness in the long run. When ruled by confused inclinations, one does not aim at happiness, that is, “a lasting pleasure”, but at a

35 NE II.21.46: «[...] enfin il y a des inclinations distincts, que la raison nous donne, dont nous sentons et la force et la formation; et les plaisirs de cette nature qui se trouvent dans la connoissance et la production de l'ordre de l'harmonie sont les plus estimables.» A VI. 6, 194–5.

36 This marks a difference from Hume, for whom “reason is perfectly inert, and can never either prevent or produce any action or affection.” Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature* 3.1.1. Hume 1978, 458.

37 It does not matter whether or not the reasons for some distinct inclinations are ‘true’ or ‘false’. In both cases reflection leads to an inclination, see. G III 401f.

38 NE I.2.3: «[...] c’est la raison qui porte à l’avenir et à la durée.» A VI. 6, 90.

present pleasure.³⁹ The distinct inclination (*l'inclination distincte*) or distinct desire (*l'appetit distinct*) is also called will (*la volonté, voluntas*).⁴⁰

The mind is full of these various perceptions, distinct and confused ones, which incline the mind to certain desires and actions.⁴¹ The will, or rather the present volition, is “the result of all the inclinations” we have:⁴² All these various inclinations form together – “almost as in mechanics” – a “composite direction” (*direction composée*). Thus, if we count all the forces of all tendencies together (adding and subtracting) we get the dominant tendency of the mind, which is the present volition. To illustrate this conception of the human mind Leibniz compares the soul with a force:

Nevertheless, as very often there are divers courses to choose from, one might, instead of the balance, compare the soul with a force which puts forth effort on various sides simultaneously, but which acts only at the spot where action is easiest or there is least resistance.⁴³

Now it becomes apparent why Leibniz occasionally calls the mind a spiritual automaton: like any other automaton, the soul is moved by various forces according to the general rules of dynamics, for instance, “from every tendency follows an action, if not prevented”⁴⁴, or the “execution of our desire is suspended or prevented when it is not strong enough to arouse us”, or “when the desire is strong enough in itself to arouse us if nothing hinders it, it can be blocked by contrary inclinations”.⁴⁵

This conception of the three kinds of moving inclinations has serious consequences for the understanding of the human mind and for the role of rational inclinations – that is the will – in particular. Although all these different inclinations take place in the soul and depend on the soul itself, everything

39 NE II.21.51: «[...] et j'ai remarqué ici plus d'une fois, qu'à moins que l'appetit soit guidé par la raison, il tend au plaisir présent, et non pas au bonheur, c'est à dire au plaisir durable, quoique il tende à le faire durer [...]». A VI. 6, 199–200.

40 See G III, 510; 622 and G VII, 330.

41 Leibniz, *Theodicy* (=Th) I.64; G VI, 137.

42 Th I.43: «[...] ; mais quand on parle de la plus grande inclination de la volonté, on parle du résultat de toutes les inclinations;» G VI, 127. NE II.21.39: «Plusieurs perceptions et inclinations concourent à la volition parfaite, qui est le resultat de leur conflit.» A VI. 6, 192.

43 Th III.325: «Cependant, comme bien souvent il y a plusieurs partis à reprendre, on pourroit au lieu de la balance comparer l'ame avec une force, qui fait effort en même temps de plusieurs côtés, mais qui n'agit que là où elle trouve le plus de facilité ou le moins de résistance.» G VI, 309. English translation in Leibniz 1951, 322.

44 NE II.21.5: «[...] puisque de toute tendance suit l'action lorsqu'elle n'est point empêchée.» A VI. 6, 172.

45 NE II.21.47; A VI. 6, 195.

does not depend on the will, nor does the understanding always know everything that happens in the mind. The actual volition is not necessarily identical with what one inclines to by distinct reflection. One always follows the ‘result of all inclinations’ and not necessarily what one would judge the best by reason.

From these considerations one might get the impression that Leibniz dismissed the idea of our rational self-determination. As we will see, this is not the case. Although Leibniz acknowledges the constant and sometimes overpowering effect of confused inclinations on our willing and acting, he still shares the basic assumption of the rationalists, that we are in the possession of the means to master these inclinations. But before we discuss this point in more detail, let us turn to Leibniz’s understanding of the passions.

4 The problematic status of the passions

What are the passions according to Leibniz? Why are they so problematic for the self-determination of the human mind? To answer the first question, I will briefly look at the origin of the passions before turning to their main attributes. To answer the second question, it will be necessary to distinguish the passions not only from rational inclinations but also from instincts.

Let us start by addressing the first question. According to Leibniz, the passions arise from *petites perceptions* (A VI. 6, 115–116). But whereas *petites perceptions* lead us to a state of mere diffuse disquiet, during a passionate state we know *what* we want.⁴⁶ The passions refer to an object. As they derive from “corporeal representations”,⁴⁷ that is, from a “confused perception”,⁴⁸ we cannot give an account of their origin and of the reasons which led to their formation. This does not exclude, however, that we may form a distinct concept of the passions. Indeed, we can give a nominal definition of e.g. “fear”,⁴⁹ yet

⁴⁶ NE II.20.6: «[...] au lieu que dans les inclinations et les passions nous savons au moins ce que nous demandons» A VI. 6, 166.

⁴⁷ Th I.66: «[...] les passions qui naissent des representations corporelles [...]»; G VI, 139.

⁴⁸ Th III.319: «Mais les passions, qui viennent de la perception confuse d’un bien apparent, [...]»; G VI, 305.

⁴⁹ Leibniz, *Meditationes de Cognitione, Veritate et Ideis*: „At distincta notio est qualem de auro habent Docimastae, per notas scilicet et examina sufficientia ad rem ab aliis omnibus corporibus similibus discernendam: tales habere solemus circa notiones pluribus sensibus communes, ut numeri, magnitudinis, figurae, *item circa multos affectus animi, ut spem, metum*, verbo circa omnia quorum habemus Definitionem nominalem, quae nihil aliud est, quam enumeratio notarum sufficientium.“ A VI. 4A, 586–587 (emphasis added).

we do not feel fear because and insofar as we can form such a concept, but because we have confused perceptions derived from an opinion or from a sentiment which causes the passion.

What are the main attributes of the passions? In the *Nouveaux essais* Leibniz gives a definition of the passions that runs as follows:

But I would rather say that the passions are not contentments or displeasures or opinions, but tendencies – or rather modifications of tendency – which arise from opinion or sentiment and are accompanied by pleasure or displeasure.⁵⁰

Let us take a closer look to this statement. First of all, Leibniz says what the passions *are not*: They *are not* contentment or displeasure. This is directed against Locke. In his *Essays concerning human understanding* (1690) Locke states that we just have to observe how pleasure and pain operate in us to form the ideas of the various passions.⁵¹ Leibniz dismisses this account of the passions. Although he does not give a reason for his rejection, we may assume that the reduction of passions to an inner state of feeling (either pleasure or pain) does not capture the main property of the passions. The passions *are also not* to be understood as opinions. This statement is directed against the Stoics who wrongly understood the passions as judgments, more precisely as judgments based on opinion and not on true insight.⁵² Although both definitions fail to capture the main characteristic of the passions, they are not completely untrue and qualify the definition of the passions, as we shall see below.

What then *are* the passions? The positive definition of the passions contains three elements. First and above all, the passions are characterized as “tendencies” (*tendences*) or rather “modifications of tendency”. What is most essential regarding the passions is that they direct our perceptions, thoughts and actions along a certain route. The Latin equivalent of tendency is *conatus*, a term which was already of some importance in the philosophy of Hobbes and Spinoza.⁵³ As there are various almost uncountable tendencies in the

50 NE II.21.9: «Mais j’aime mieux de dire que les passions ne sont ny des contentemens, ou des déplaisirs, ny des opinions, mais des tendences ou plustost des modifications de la tendence, qui viennent de l’opinion ou du sentiment, et qui sont accompagnées de plaisir ou de déplaisir.» A VI. 6, 167 (tr. altered).

51 Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* II.20.3: “Pleasure and pain, and that which causes them, good and evil, are the hingeon which our passions turn. And if we reflect on ourselves, and observe how these, under various considerations operate in us – [...] – we may hence form to ourselves the ideas of our passion.” Locke 1995, 161.

52 For Leibniz’s critique of Stoicism see Rutherford 2003.

53 Cf. NE II.21.5; A VI. 6, 172. Leibniz seems to have taken the term *conatus* from Hobbes, see Bernstein 1980.

mind, this statement requires some specification. Leibniz describes two features: (a) Inclinations that are called the passions derive either from opinion or from sentiment and (b) they are accompanied by pleasure and pain.

(a) As inclinations that derive from opinion or sentiment, the passions contain a cognitive component. Perceptions based on opinion and sentiment, provide certain information concerning the perceived object, but unlike rational thought, opinions and sentiments are prone to errors. Frequently, we are mistaken about the true value of a passionately aspired good. In this respect, the passions are dissimilar to distinct tendencies or inclinations that derive from rational thought. Furthermore, passions derived from sentiments are related more to the present state and consequently strive rather for a present pleasure than for future happiness. Consequently, the epistemic reliability of the passions based on opinion or sentiment is rather weak.

(b) Finally, the passions are “accompanied by pleasure and pain”. This is a formulation frequently used by Aristotle to characterize the passions.⁵⁴ Although the passions cannot be reduced to the feeling of pleasure and pain – as they are characterized first of all as tendencies, and as they contain a cognitive component even if weak –, still the feelings of pleasure and pain indicate that the passions are related to the basic instincts of living substances and have therefore a special relevance for them.⁵⁵

The main characteristics of the passions have thus been outlined: they are certain tendencies that direct our perceptions, thoughts and actions along a certain route. These tendencies derive from sentiment or opinion and contain therefore a cognitive component, but are error-prone. Finally, they are accompanied by pleasure and pain, which reveals their importance for living beings.

Given this understanding of the passions, we may turn to the question of why the passions appear to be so problematic for the self-determination of human beings. At first glance, the answer seems simple: based on perceptions whose cognitive content is not always reliable the passions are opposed to rational inclinations that derive from reflection. Indeed, the inner conflict of the soul, which Descartes had understood as the conflict between mind and body, is for Leibniz nothing else than the conflict between different inclinations that originate in confused and distinct thoughts – between passion and reason:

⁵⁴ See e.g. Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, 1378a 20–22 and *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1105b23. – For the notion of pleasure in Leibniz’s thought, see Calabi 1993.

⁵⁵ For the relation between the feeling of pleasure and the basic instincts of life see Aristotle *Nicomachean Ethics* 1104b35; 1153b26–27, to this point in more detail see Ebbersmeyer 2010, 239–40.

Regarding the assumed struggle between body and soul, it is nothing other than the diversity of inclinations that originate in distinct or confused thought, that is, from reason or from instincts and passions.⁵⁶

But the opposition of distinct and confused inclinations is not as simple as that. Apart from the passions, instincts and habits are also listed among the confused inclinations. They all have in common that they arise from confused perceptions, that is, from corporeal representations.⁵⁷ In this regard, all confused inclinations are opposed to reason, which provides us with distinct thoughts and consequently with distinct inclinations. But at this point the similarity between passions and instinct ends, because the relation between reason and instinct is, according to Leibniz, different from that between reason and passion. Although Leibniz once refers to the instinct as “a durable and innate passion” and to passion as “a passing and sudden instinct”⁵⁸ this statement can not conceal the great difference between the passions and instincts in Leibniz’s thought. As this difference is helpful in understanding why precisely the passions are so problematic for the self-determination of the mind, it seems advisable to have a closer look at the understanding of the instincts in Leibniz.

Following the common use of language, Leibniz defines instincts as “inclinations which an animal has – with no conception of the reason for it – towards something which is suitable to it.”⁵⁹ Not only animals have instincts, so do human beings. They are engraved into our nature “as a consequence of our conservation and our true goods”,⁶⁰ like the instinct “to follow pleasure and avoid pain”.⁶¹ Moreover, human beings have certain instincts animals lack, like the instinct of humanity (*l’instinct de l’humanité*). Human beings can act either by instinct or by reason. Acting by instinct implies following what is

56 Leibniz, *L’addition à l’explication du système nouveau*: «Pour ce qui est des combats qu’on suppose entre le corps et l’ame, ce n’est autre chose que la diversité des penchans nés des pensées distinctes ou des pensées confuses, c’est à dire des raisons ou des instincts et passions;» G IV, 576.

57 Th I.66; G VI, 138–9.

58 «[...] l’instinct estant pour ainsi dire une passion durable et née avec nous, et la passion estant comme un instinct passager et survenu». G IV, 576.

59 NE III.11.8: «Il semble que tout le monde entend par l’instinct, une inclination d’un animal à ce qui lui est convenable, sans qu’il en conçoive pour cela la raison.» A VI, 6, 351.

60 NE I.2.2: «Et c’est ainsi que ces loix sont gravées dans l’ame, savoir comme les conséquences de nostre conservation et de nos vrais biens.» A VI, 6, 89. In this context Leibniz applies the term instinct not only to practical matters but also to theoretical thought, as we apply “the inner principles of the science and of rational thought” as by a “natural instinct”.

61 NE I.2.9: «[...] outre les instincts comme celui qui fait suivre la joye et fuir la tristesse». A VI, 6, 92.

pleasurable, acting by reason implies following what is justified by reason. We *feel* (*on sent*) an instinct, but we cannot account for it in a given situation. However, in principle, each instinctive action may be explained reasonably later upon reflection.⁶² Consequently, instincts do not oppose reason; quite the opposite seems to be the case: they assist reason insofar as they lead us “straight away and without reasoning, to part of what reason commands.”⁶³ Like reason, the instincts are innate. Together with natural light (*la lumiere naturelle*), they belong to the class of innate truths (*les verités innées*) (NE I.2.10; A VI. 6, 94). They differ, however, insofar as they cannot be known “in a luminous way” (NE I.2.1; A VI. 6, 89). But in general, we can rely on our instincts.⁶⁴

This does not mean, however, that our instincts may not sometimes lead us astray. For example, it could be that the instinctive reaction – that is running away – caused by the sight of a snake right before one’s eyes was wrong, when it turns out that the snake was not dangerous at all. But this instinctive reaction does not create any moral problems, as long as it does not prevent us from reflecting about and evaluating the new information – for example about the harmlessness of the snake. By learning about its harmlessness one overcomes the impulse to run away. The instinctive reaction may become morally problematic, if one keeps on being terrified by the harmless snake.

Thus, *having* confused inclinations is not in itself blameful, since it is rather a property of our nature than a defect of our judgment, and since it helps us in urgent situations to react more quickly and efficiently than through time consuming reflection. But to *follow* confused inclinations becomes blameworthy, when we *could* have more distinct insight, but prefer not to explore it.⁶⁵ In general, this is not the case with instincts, as discussed above, but this seems to be the case with the passions, when one would have the chance to reflect but when the capacity of thinking is hindered over a certain period of time.

Leibniz illustrates this point by emphasising that under the influence of a strong passion the course of thought and acting is not directed by reason but

62 NE I.2.4: «C’est ainsi que nous sommes portés aux actes d’humanité, par instinct parce que cela nous plaist, et par raison parce que cela est juste. Il y a donc en nous des verités d’instinct, qui sont des principes innés, qu’on sent et qu’on approuve, quand même on n’en a point la preuve, qu’on obtient pourtant lors qu’on rend raison de cet instinct.» A VI. 6, 91.

63 NE I.2.9: «[Dieu a donné à l’homme des instincts qui portent] d’abord et sans raisonnement à quelque chose de ce que la raison ordonne.» A VI. 6, 92.

64 There are, however, some problems with this view: for instance, it remains unclear how to differentiate instincts from habits or passions (see NE I.2.20; A VI. 6, 98). How can we be sure whether an instinct, a passion or a wrong habit motivates us?

65 NE II.29.4; A VI. 6, 256.

by the more urgent desires related to the passionate state. For instance, one feels the urgent desire to eat a chocolate bar located right before one's eyes. There is no need to act quickly, one has time to reflect, and one may indeed reflect, but the reflections are not directed by an appropriate evaluation of the pros and cons of eating the chocolate bar. Instead, one allows the sensual perception to guide the course of thought by considering, for instance, all the benefits of eating chocolate and by neglecting all the concerns about health problems. To put it in a general way: while under the influence of a confused inclination derived from a confused perception of an apparent good,⁶⁶ one does not evaluate in an appropriate way whether or not this good might be accompanied by a greater evil. Accordingly, "one's mind is indeed not free when it is possessed by a great passion, for then one cannot will as one should, i.e. with proper deliberation."⁶⁷

The problem with the passion is not that they *prevent* us from thinking, but that they *govern* our thinking by holding our rational capacities in their grip. Once a passion governs the course of thought, one has relinquished the power of rational self-command. But this is a judgment from a third person's perspective. For someone under the influence of a strong passion, the chain of thought and desire appears rational and consistent, as one follows what appears (but often is not) the most important good. Now it becomes clear why Leibniz frequently uses the term 'passion' in a 'negative' sense, indicating one of the main sources of wrong judgement and bad or unreasonable behaviour.⁶⁸ Unlike instincts, which often do assist reason and help us to react more quickly, the passions dominate our capacity to think and deprive us of the means to notice it. This marks precisely the problematic status of the passions among all the various inclinations of the mind: they subject reason to their own limited purpose.

Given this understanding of the passions, it is not at all astonishing that Leibniz compares the passionate state even to the state of a slave.⁶⁹ But to admit that reason *can* be enslaved by the passions does not necessarily imply that reason *always is* and *ought* to be the slave of the passions, as was later maintained by Hume.⁷⁰ Although Leibniz acknowledges that the mind is

⁶⁶ Th III.319: «[...] les passions, qui viennent de la perception confuse d'un bien apparent».

⁶⁷ NE II.21.8. A VI. 6, 175.

⁶⁸ See e.g. NE I.2.11; A VI. 6, 94–5. NE IV.16.4; A VI. 6, 461–2.

⁶⁹ Th III.289: «Et nous pouvons dire que nous sommes exempts d'esclavage en tant que nous agissons avec une connaissance distincte; mais que nous sommes asservis aux passions en tant que nos perceptions sont confuses. [...] Et ce que les liens et la contrainte font en un esclave se fait en nous par les passions, dont la violence est douce, mais n'en est pas moins pernicieuse.» G VI, 288–9.

⁷⁰ David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature* 2.3.3.

strongly shaped by various kinds of unconscious and subconscious strivings, yet he shares the optimism of Descartes and of Spinoza that we can become the ‘master of ourselves’:

This ascendancy of inclinations, however, does not prevent man from being master in his own domain, provided that he knows how to make use of his power.⁷¹

We can direct ourselves, Leibniz maintains, but not by “a simple command of the will” (Th III. 328). As the passions are tendencies, they have to be overcome by other tendencies stronger than themselves – and this is not easily done. As mentioned above, the passions are accompanied by pleasure and pain. Thus, their respective good and bad aspects are felt vividly and intensively, which makes it difficult to resist a passion or even to see the point in trying to do so. By contrast, the rules of prudence are usually void of any perception or any sentiment, void of vitality. Consequently, their corresponding inclinations are feeble and easily to overcome:

Thus, if we prefer the worse it is because we *sense* the good it contains but we do not *sense* the evil it contains or the good which exists on the opposite side.⁷²

Thus, to become the master of oneself one has to cultivate the taste for reason and to re-invest intellectual enterprises with vitality by linking them with the feelings of pleasure and pain.⁷³

5 Conclusion

Leibniz transformed the understanding of the human mind in a specific way by focusing on its dynamic forces. Every mind contains infinite perceptions and therefore infinite tendencies and inclinations which act and react upon each other. According to Leibniz, the mind is more likely to be understood as a spiritual automaton. All inclinations, sensible and insensible, confused and distinct ones, contain various forces which together constitute a composite

71 Th III.326: «Cependant cette prévalence des inclinations n’empêche point que l’homme ne soit le maître chez lui, pourvu qu’il sache user de son pouvoir.» G VI, 309. English translation in Leibniz 1951, 322.

72 NE II.21.35: «Ainsi si nous préférons le pire, c’est que nous *sentons* le bien qu’il renferme, sans *sentir* ny le mal qu’il ya, ny le bien qui est dans le parti contraire.» A VI. 6, 186. (tr. altered, emphasis added).

73 This argument is elaborated in more detail in Sabrina Ebbersmeyer “*Blind Thought and Lively Sentiment: Leibniz on the Power of the Emotions over Beliefs*” (in preparation).

direction that is a present volition. The final volition is not identical to what we distinctly perceive and strive for. Consequently, the mind can never become fully transparent to itself.⁷⁴

However, the traditional view of opposing the passions to reason is strongly retained in Leibniz's thought. But it is not grounded in the classical opposition of two different parts of the soul, nor in that of mind and body, as in Descartes. Rather, passions as confused inclinations are opposed to distinct inclinations. The passions are something different from instincts, which seem to guide us, though unconsciously, to what reason would prescribe, and they are something different from rational inclinations, based on the true insight of good and evil, pleasure and pain. Derived from unconscious and sub-conscious perceptions of the present state of one's own body, the passions incline to what seems to be the best in a given situation without reflecting on future events. To reconcile the passions with reason would mean to reconcile the mind's tendencies for present pleasures with its desires for long lasting happiness. But the latter are not always felt in an appropriate way. Thus, in order to balance the passions one has to be more attentive to one's own thoughts. According to Leibniz, this is to be achieved not by feeling *less* but by thinking *more*.

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74 Th I.64: «Tout ce qui arrive à l'âme dépend d'elle, mais il ne dépend pas toujours de sa volonté; ce serait trop. Il n'est pas même toujours connu de son entendement ou aperçu distinctement.» G VI, 137.

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Leibniz on Hope

Abstract: G. W. Leibniz famously proclaimed that this is the best of all possible worlds. One of the properties of the best world is its increasing perfection. He gave a prominent role in his discussion of emotions to hope, which is related to intellectual activity such as curiosity and courage, which in turn is essential for the practice of science and the promotion of the common good. Leibniz regarded hope as a process in which minute perceptions in the mind, that is, unconscious promises or signs of a future pleasure, or joy, of the mind may accumulate to an expectation that we become aware of, the passion of hope. Related to a moral instinct of striving for joy and avoiding sorrow, hope motivates us to promote perfection, which produces joy in us and eventually leads to happiness.

Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646–1716) famously proclaimed that this is the best of all possible worlds. He never thought, however, that it would be defined as a static collection of substances in a perfect pre-established harmony. At all times the monads are undergoing a dynamic change. Furthermore, he thought (although his opinions on the topic varied at different times¹) that the world as a whole could increase in perfection. Given this dynamic essence of the best of all possible worlds, it is no wonder that Leibniz gave an important role in his discussion of emotions to hope which, along with joy and love, he regards as a basic constituent of intellectual and moral advancement. Hope supports our approaching perfection which, according to Leibniz, is the goal of human action. In this paper I will first discuss Leibniz's general theory of emotions and then the characteristics of hope, its relation to joy and the place of hope and joy in Leibniz's perfectionism.

Disquiet and Passions

My point of departure is Leibniz's *Nouveaux essais sur l'entendement humain* or *New Essays on Human Understanding*, book II, chapter xx, where he shows how emotions arise and how they affect our deliberation. The work, written in

¹ See Phemister 2006.

1704, is a critique in dialogue form of John Locke's *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690).²

In E II, xx Locke relates good and evil with pleasure and pain (§ 2) and argues that passions are modes of pleasure and pain. For Locke, pleasure and pain are simple ideas of sensation and reflection and they are known by experience. Pleasure activates and motivates men's actions and can be found in objects and thoughts (§ 3). Pain has an opposing effect – we try to avoid it the best we can although it is often produced by the same ideas and objects as pleasure (§ 4).

Leibniz can agree with the basic subjective character of pleasure and pain, although his conceptual framework is different. For him, pleasure and pain are notable perceptions which affect us. But they are not simple ideas, as they are built from aggregates or condensations of minute and confused perceptions.³ A single unconscious, minute perception does not have much effect on its own but a larger whole of minute perceptions may become notable and capture our attention.

According to Locke, men are driven to actions by the present uneasiness they feel which is caused by the absence of some certain good they draw their delight from.⁴ Positive emotion such as love or joy is a delight of the mind whereas hate or sorrow is described as uneasiness. Uneasiness to Locke is equivalent to desire in the sense that if man has no desire for a certain good, he or she does not feel uneasiness. In this case one feels mere *velleity* or wish which is an almost indifferent state. Also, if the desired good is impossible to obtain, the uneasiness is “cured”. Uneasiness is for Locke the leading motive for men's actions and constitutes their passions (E II, xx, § 3–6).

In his answer in NE, II, xx, § 6 Leibniz again relies on his doctrine of minute perceptions which constitute desire. Against Locke's uneasiness Leibniz offers his own disquiet (*inquiétude*) which is more of a disposition to suffer

2 I use the following abbreviations: E refers to Locke's *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (Locke 1975), NE to Leibniz's *New Essays on Human Understanding* (Leibniz 1981 (RB; page numbers of RB are identical to A VI, 6 or Leibniz 1923-)), CSM to Descartes 1984, GP to Leibniz 1880 and AG to Leibniz 1989.

3 Leibniz's term for these minute perceptions is *petit perception*, little perception. He introduced this doctrine in his 1684 work *Meditations on Knowledge, Truth and Ideas*. The concept of minute or little perceptions of which we are not aware can be traced back to Thomas Aquinas, but Leibniz seems to be the first to apply it systematically. See Kulstad & Carlin 2008, sec. 5.

4 Later in the *Essay* Locke argues that in us there are many uneasinesses always soliciting and ready to determine the will, but the greatest and most pressing wins (E II, xxi, § 47; E, 263).

rather than the suffering itself which Locke discusses.⁵ The nuance in meaning proves to be of great importance when Leibniz argues that *inquiétude* fits fairly well with “the nature of the thing itself”, but uneasiness (signifying suffering which is understood as displeasure) does not. This is because desire is not the suffering itself, but a disposition to suffering. In other words, a desire has to be evident to be a real suffering. It has to be attended.

If you take “uneasiness” or disquiet to be a genuine displeasure, then I do not agree that is all that spurs us on. What usually drives us are those minute insensible perceptions which could be called sufferings that we cannot become aware of, if the notion of suffering did not involve awareness (NE II, xxi, § 36; RB, 188).

The insensible perceptions or “little urges” are usually not noted at all, which Leibniz finds a good thing – in the opposite situation we would constantly feel restless. He also argues that the unconscious nature of most of our dispositions enable us to act quickly when needed, because our mind is not troubled by the multiplicity of distinct perceptions (NE, II, xx, § 6). However, the minute perceptions can combine and make themselves known within the whole, forming a clear, but confused perception of pleasure, pain and the like.⁶ As examples Leibniz mentions the roar of the sea which is formed by the sound of each wave put together (NE, Preface; RB, 54) and Socrates in Plato’s *Phaedo* who eventually becomes aware that his foot is itching (II, xx, § 6; RB, 165).

Whereas for Locke pleasure or pain is a state, Leibniz thinks that they are formed eventually as processes where the minute perceptions cumulate and finally form a notable pleasure or pain which is attended and which might lead the will into action.

[...] Nature has given us the spurs of desire in the form of the rudiments or elements of suffering, semi-suffering one might say, or...of minute sufferings of which we cannot be aware. This lets us enjoy the benefit of discomfort without enduring its inconveniences; whereas our continual victory over these semi-sufferings [...] provides us with many semi-pleasures; and the continuation and accumulation of these [...] eventually becomes a whole, genuine pleasure (NE II, xx, § 6; RB, 165).

⁵ Leibniz’s choice of the term is related to Pierre Coste’s French translation of Locke’s *Essay*. Coste translates uneasiness as *inquiétude* which is not a strictly literal translation, signifying a state where man is not quite at ease, lacking tranquillity of the soul. Later in II, xx, § 6 Leibniz defines disquiet as “imperceptible little urges which keep us constantly in suspense.”

⁶ Clear, but confused perception is defined in *Meditations* as follows: “[clear cognition] is confused when I cannot enumerate one by one marks sufficient for differentiating a thing from others, even though the thing does indeed have such marks and requisites into which its notion can be resolved” (GP IV, 422; AG, 24).

Against Locke Leibniz argues that we do not feel uneasiness all the time – our perceptions of suffering are mostly minute semi-sufferings and only when they accumulate and form a clear, but confused perception or genuine suffering, we became aware of them. At the end of § 6 Leibniz employs the metaphor of a clock, where a continual balance (in German, *Unruhe*, that is, disquiet) exists. The clock can be taken as a model of our bodies which can never be at ease. Each tiny change affects the other parts of the body and forces it to restore its former balance. Thus there is a perpetual conflict which makes up the constant disquiet of the clock/body.⁷

The semi-sufferings which eventually form genuine suffering can be overcome. When we gain victory over these minute sufferings, each in turn, we get semi-pleasures which eventually form a genuine pleasure when the number or effect of semi-pleasures exceeds the number or effect of semi-sufferings. Thus Leibniz regards pleasure or pain as a sum of inclinations aligned in a certain direction. When the direction is to the good, we get pleasure and when the direction is to the evil, we get pain. They are also related to the clarity of perceptions – the more clear perceptions we have, the more pleasure we can get and the more confused perceptions we have, the more suffering will ensue. Pleasure and pain come in degrees and there is no complete change.⁸

This account of tiny aids, imperceptible little escapes and releases of thwarted endeavour [*tendance*], which finally generate notable pleasure, also provides a somewhat more distinct knowledge of our inevitably confused ideas of pleasure and of pain; just as the sensation of warmth or of light results from many tiny motions [...] (NE II, xx, § 6, RB,165)

For Locke, passions are modes of pleasure and pain and are constituted by uneasiness or delight. Pain or uneasiness is the ultimate motivator, but passion gives our actions and thoughts a direction, the goal to strive towards.⁹ Locke thinks that the notion of unconscious pleasure and pain is simply absurd (E II, i, § 1) and does not regard desires and volitions as opposed forces like Descartes does (*Passions of the soul* I, § 17; CSM I, 335). Because uneasiness usually takes the form of a passion, the will is determined by it. The only way

⁷ Leibniz often speaks of the body as an automata or a machine. See, for example. Leibniz's comments on note L to Bayle's *Dictionnaire*, article *Rorarius* (GP IV, 533–54), written around the same time as NE, and *Monadology*, § 64.

⁸ This is very typical of Leibniz's world-view. He frequently says that nature makes no leaps – change is gradual and always consists of several intermediary steps. For the continuum in nature, see Leibniz's letter to *Nouvelles de la république des lettres*, July, 1687 (reply to Malebranche), GP III, 51–55.

⁹ Bradfield 2002, 86. As we will see a little later, this description fits Leibniz's theory of passions also despite major differences in Locke's and Leibniz's epistemology.

for the will to be active is its ability to suspend or postpone action to examine evidence for or against some action.¹⁰

Leibniz explains different passions in different ways in points 7–17 of NE, II, xx, although the basic components are in all cases the minute perceptions. While Locke's uneasiness is at worst a pressing, violent and conscious striving for some known absent good, Leibniz's spurs of desire are just some general restlessness: "These impulses are like so many little springs trying to unwind and so driving our machine along" (NE II, xx, § 6; RB, 166). However, disquiet is an essential part of all passions: "Disquiet occurs not merely in uncomfortable passions such as aversion, fear, anger, envy, shame, but also in their opposites, love, hope, calmness, generosity and pride" (NE II, xxi, § 39; RB, 192). It is always related to pleasure or pain or perfection or imperfection:

I believe that fundamentally pleasure is a sense of perfection, and pain a sense of imperfection, each being notable enough for one to become aware of it. For the minute insensible perceptions of some perfection or imperfection, which I have spoken of several times and which are as it were components of pleasure and of pain, constitute inclinations and propensities but not outright passions. So there are insensible inclinations of which we are not aware (NE II, xxi, § 41; RB, 194).

Let us distinguish between two kinds of impulses, disquiet and passions. Their difference is related to their object. Minute perceptions are related to pleasure or pain and they form disquiet consisting of semi-pleasures or semi-sufferings which is a general disposition, restlessness without a clear object. These components of pleasure and pain are related to perfection and imperfection much the same way as in Spinoza's philosophy (I will return to this theme later). The disquiet may find an object and become a known inclination or passion related to that object.¹¹ This is when mere disquiet transforms itself into a passion with a clear object.

In itself this scheme is similar to Locke's view of uneasiness and passions, but epistemologically the change is from unconscious cognition to conscious cognition. The question is one of degree, not of kind. When disquiet becomes strong or pressing enough, one becomes aware of it and it becomes a passion. *In Meditations on Knowledge, Truth and Ideas* Leibniz argues that affections of the mind are clear and distinct notions:

10 This doctrine, added to later editions of the *Essay*, was influenced by Malebranche (Vienne 1991), but is regarded as problematic in the context of Locke's philosophy both by Leibniz (NE II, xxi, § 47) and many contemporary commentators (see Lowe 2005, 135, and Magri 2000, 64).

11 According to Leibniz, with passions and inclinations, we at least know what we want (II, xx, § 6; RB, 166).

A distinct concept, however, is the kind of notion which assayers have of gold: one, namely, which enables them to distinguish gold from all other bodies by sufficient marks and observations. We usually have such concepts about objects common to many senses, such as number, magnitude and figure, and also about many affections of the mind such as hope and fear; in a word, about all concepts of which we have a nominal definition which is nothing but the enumeration of sufficient marks (GP IV, 423; AG, 24).

Thus Leibniz classifies passions, such as hope and fear, as clear and distinct cognition which can be recognized and distinguished from other states of the mind. Furthermore, being clear and distinct cognition, it can be apperceived by the human mind. In this way they are very different from inclinations formed by disquiet which are at most clear but confused perceptions, like colours or flavours (G IV, 426). Disquiet does affect our deliberation, but it does not lead us directly into action.

Hope

Although Leibniz mentions hope as an example of a passion or affection in *Meditations*, his remarks on the emotion are scarce. In a memoir *De affectibus* from 1679 Leibniz follows the Scholastic definition of hope as a “good opinion of the future” (A VI, 4, 1416). While this definition is in line with his later views, he discusses it more fully and adds some qualifications in NE, II, xx.

In E II, xx, § 9–10 Locke argues that the soul is content when it thinks of a probable future enjoyment of a pleasant thing, that is, pleasure. This emotion is hope which is connected to delight. Fear is the opposite. It rises in the form of uneasiness when we think of future evil. Locke’s view of hope and fear are consistent with his views of joy and sorrow. Hope is a state of delight which follows from beliefs concerning future pleasures. If the belief is strong enough (there is high probability of attaining the good), it leads us to action.

Theophilus, Leibniz’s representative in NE is at first neutral, but soon brings out a very strong disagreement. True to his general account of joy and sorrow, disquiet is not only related to displeasure but also to pleasure. Thus he argues that there is disquiet both in fear and hope. When the representative of Locke, Philalethes, presents a definition of hope as the contentment of the soul which thinks ‘of a probable future enjoyment of a thing, which is apt to delight’ (E, 231), Theophilus says:

If disquiet signifies displeasure, I grant that it always accompanies fear; but taking it for that undetectable spur which urges us on, it is also relevant of hope. The Stoics took the passions to be beliefs: thus for them hope was the belief in a future good, and fear the belief in a future evil. But I would rather say that the passions are not contentment or

displeasures or beliefs, but endeavours – or rather modifications of endeavour [*tendence*] – which arise from beliefs or opinions and are accompanied by pleasure or displeasures (NE II, xx, § 9, RB. p. 167).

Leibniz takes hope (and passions in general) to be related to desire (*tendence*; Remnant and Bennett translate it as endeavour¹²), which arises from beliefs or opinions rather than as beliefs as the Stoics (and Locke with them) thought.¹³ At this point it is useful to look at § 10. There Leibniz says: “Despair, viewed as passion, will be a kind of strong endeavour which is utterly thwarted, resulting in violent conflict and much displeasure” (RB, 167). If this is applied to its opposite, one might say that hope is an endeavour, a general desire which brings about pleasure. In Leibniz’s words, it is an “undetected spur which urges us on” (RB, 167).

Applying the scheme from an earlier section, we get the following picture: the minute promises or signs of a future pleasure (semi-pleasures) may accumulate to that of an expectation which motivates us to strive for the good represented by it. The disquiet receives a direction or a goal and turns from disquiet into a passion. In this way Leibniz can show that Locke’s uneasiness is not necessarily a bad thing – the disquiet can be constitutive of positive passions and can drive us to advance perfection and our own happiness.

Thus we can distinguish between different degrees of hope. The signs of hope which are singular semi-pleasures give us promises of the future good, forming a positive disquiet of hope, but when semi-pleasures accumulate and converge in an apperceived expectation of some future good, leading us to a certain object, a clear and distinct idea or a passion of hope arises, invokes the will and leads to action. In this way hope can be understood as a disposition which has as an object some future good.

With his theory of disquiet Leibniz can combine the traditional view that hope includes a belief or an opinion concerning a future good with his dynamical world-view. Hope is a spur which is built up from minute little perceptions

¹² Translating *tendence* as endeavour is problematic as Remnant and Bennett note in Leibniz 1996, lxi. The reason for this is that Leibniz uses the word in the meaning of tendency or inclination of the mind, but also in the sense of *conatus*, a general desire or striving. I use both endeavour (referring to general striving) and desires or inclinations (referring to singular dispositions in the human soul). In addition, Leibniz distinguishes between ‘appetitions’ and ‘volitions’ as we will see a little later.

¹³ Leibniz is probably referring here to Chrysippus who introduced the idea that an emotion is an evaluative belief (*doxa*) or judgement (*krisis*) that there is good or bad at hand, accompanied by the judgement that it is right or proper to react emotionally. The first judgement identifies a contingent object as good or bad, and the second is an assent to a hormetic thought which is typically associated with seeing an object in this light. Knuuttila 2004, 53.

and urges us on. Whereas in Locke's model men fight the constant uneasiness they feel and this restless state is seldom overcome by delight, in Leibniz's system the positive disquiet of hope can keep us alert, motivate our efforts at developing ourselves and give us mental rewards. When it grows strong enough, it can turn into a proper emotion of hope.

From the present-day perspective Leibniz's conception of hope seems feasible, provided one accepts the perfectionist, God-centred framework to which it is unavoidably connected. His conception of hope is also original with respect to his contemporaries. For example, in II, § 58 of his *Passions of the Soul*, Descartes argues that hope is the possibility to acquire a good and when hope is extreme, it changes to confidence (CSM I, 375). Locke clearly shares this view along with Malebranche (*The Search After Truth* V, 10, Malebranche 1997, 394). These philosophers follow the influential Stoic conception of passions as beliefs. Another common view is the Cartesian doctrine that we are always aware of everything we perceive at each moment. The Leibnizian disquiet, being a process which is founded mostly on unconscious little perceptions is clearly something different.

Although Leibniz has similar views on the relation of action and perfection with Spinoza, as we will shortly see, the latter relates the affect of hope to anticipation and defines it as an inconstant joy which has arisen from the image of a future or past thing whose outcome we doubt. When the doubt involved in the affect is removed, hope becomes confidence and fear, in turn, despair (*Ethics* 3p18, Schol. 1; Spinoza 1994, 164–165). The difference from Leibniz is clear – the anticipation is still an inconstant, uncertain state rather than a gradual process with encouraging signs.

Perhaps closest to Leibniz's views is Hobbes who thought hope to be an appetite for a future pleasure which requires an expectation that it can be reached (*The Elements of Law, Part I: Human Nature*; Hobbes 1994, 52–53). However, for Leibniz future pleasure is related to perfection and this view is very different from Hobbes' view according to which the will is determined by the last desire or aversion in deliberation (Hobbes 1994, 71).

Hope and Joy

Hope is essentially related to joy which is the most important emotion for Leibniz. Between hope and joy there seems to be a very close union, a kind of symbiosis. In a short youthful dialogue *Persuading a Sceptic* (1679–1681) Leibniz emphasizes the continuity of hope and its close relation to joy:

After moderate joy the most beautiful and useful emotion is hope, or rather that uniform and durable joy, which is nothing but well grounded hope, since other joys are fleeting whereas the joy of hope is continuous. I have noticed that only hope sustains courage as well as curiosity: as long as it is reduced by annoyances, old age, illness, bothering reflections about misery and the alleged vanity of human things – *adieu* our noble enterprises, *à Dieu* our beautiful researchers.¹⁴

Here hope is presented as constitutive of joy which Leibniz describes as well-grounded hope. Joy coming from hope is continuous while joy coming from sensual pleasures such as food and drink is fleeting. This is because hope is related to intellectual activity such as curiosity and courage which again is essential for the practice of science and promoting the common good. This activity, again, is related to metaphysical perfection.

According to Leibniz, when our suffering is eventually overcome by pleasure, our whole disposition changes from sadness to joy which Leibniz defines as the pleasure of the mind or a sentiment of increase in perfection. Joy is an intellectual feeling and when we receive it, we move from being passive to being active, from imperfection to perfection. This change can be eventual or sudden, depending on the situation. For example, if I have lost the key to my apartment, I feel sadness. When I suddenly find it again, my mood changes quickly from sadness to joy. An example of a long-term process would be a deep depression where one eventually moves from sadness and passivity to joy and activity.

Whereas joy and hope are regarded as passions of the soul, they are special kinds of passions leading to the good – following Descartes one might say that they are intellectual passions which lead us to action and perfection.¹⁵ Like hope, joy can be understood as either a positive disquiet or a passion. It can be a passion which has a clear object such as some event which can bring us joy, say, an act of charity. On the other hand, we may receive joy from less clear reasons – we can feel joyful even when we do not have a clear reason for it.¹⁶

¹⁴ *Conversation between Father Emery the Hermit and the Marquis of Pianese, Minister of State of Savoy, which has yielded a Remarkable Change in this Minister's Life*, in Leibniz 2006, 192.

¹⁵ For Descartes, intellectual joy and sadness are not passions, properly speaking, for they come into the soul by the action of the soul itself and not by the action of the body (*Passions of the soul* II, 147–148, CSM I, 381–382).

¹⁶ “[Joy] appears to me to signify a state in which pleasure predominates in us; for during the deepest sorrow and amidst sharpest anguish one can have some pleasure, e.g., from drinking or from hearing music, although displeasure dominates; and similarly in the midst of the most acute agony the mind can be joyful, as happened with martyrs” (NE II, xx, § 7; RB, 166. See also *De publica felicitate*, Leibniz 1948, 613).

Leibniz's argument is close to Spinoza's which was that when our power to maintain self-preservation increases, we would feel joy (pleasure) and when it decreases we would feel sadness (pain). In his definition of joy [*laetitia*] Spinoza argues that moving from inadequate ideas (smaller perfection) to adequate ideas (greater perfection) increases our power and consequently our joy; therefore we should increase our knowledge of God or nature (*Ethics* III, P11, Scholium; Spinoza 1994, 161). The joy comes in degrees – the more adequate ideas we have, the more perfect we will become and the more we will understand God or nature. Leibniz's argument is, again, very similar.¹⁷ He says that joy makes men alert, active and hopeful of further success (NE II, xx, § 8) and therefore it leads us to action and perfection. The more active the substance, the more it receives joy and pleasure and the more there is hope for future pleasures. Passion or suffering in an ideal case can be turned eventually to action and pleasure:

[...] if we take 'action' to be an endeavor towards perfection, and 'passion' to be the opposite, then genuine substances are active only when their perceptions ... are becoming better developed and more distinct, just as they are passive only when their perceptions are becoming more confused. Consequently, in substances which are capable of pleasure and pain every action is a move towards pleasure, every passion a move towards pain (NE II, xxi, § 72; RB, 210).

Hope as a rational appetite

Finally, I would like to return to the dynamical character of Leibniz's conception of hope and discuss some implications of it for Leibniz's ethics. We have seen that for Leibniz passions are not beliefs as in the Stoics, but rather are conscious desires which arise from them. Whereas the Stoics saw passions as false judgements or disturbances of the mind which prevent happiness, Leibniz regards them as both negative and positive endeavours. The Stoic term for hope is appetite (*epithumia*) which is defined by Pseudo-Andronicus as follows: "Appetite is an irrational reaching out, or pursuit of an expected good" (Knuuttila 2004, 51–52). For Leibniz, hope is more like a rational striving for a lasting pleasure or happiness.¹⁸

¹⁷ There is one major difference, however, which is related to their different metaphysics. According to Leibniz, action within the pre-established harmony signifies that one substance affects another and passion that a substance is affected by another substance (See *Monadology*, § 49–51 and *Principles of Nature and Grace*, § 3).

¹⁸ However, as Rutherford shows, Leibniz's conception of hope can be compared to the Stoic rational desire (*boulêsis*) which is a good emotional state (Rutherford 2003, 81).

As moral progress is a central aspect of Leibnizian ethics, it is no wonder he did not like Stoic ethics, although he comes fairly close to their views in many ways. As Donald Rutherford has pointed out, Leibniz's main argument against the Neostoic currents in Descartes and Spinoza is based on the fact that the Stoic ethics consists of patience without hope. The gist of the argument is directed to the theological framework – when there is no divine justice but mere destiny (*fatum Stoicum*), there is no hope that virtue will be rewarded and the present state may seem unbearable (Rutherford 2003, 64–67). Whereas Leibniz regards happiness as a continual systematic process, he thinks that in Stoicism a lasting happiness is not possible, as there is no guarantee that destiny allows it to last. When one has hope or a reasonable expectation of happiness as a result of a virtuous life, one is motivated to act virtuously.¹⁹

As we saw, the rational striving for pleasure in Leibniz's system is founded on the “undetectable spur which urges us on”. The corresponding endeavour to this appetite in the soul is will.

Volition is the effort or endeavour [*conatus*] to move towards what one finds good and away from what one finds bad, the endeavour arising immediately out of one's awareness of those things. This definition has as a corollary the famous axiom that from will and power together, action follows; since any endeavour results in action unless it is prevented (NE II, xxi, § 5; RB, 72).

Our will is always directed to the good we are aware of and corresponds to primitive active force and substantial form in Leibnizian metaphysics.²⁰ The disquiet, when it is related to pleasure leads eventually to action when a person becomes aware of it.²¹ In this sense the “intellectual” disquiet (consisting of semi-pleasures) which is related to intellectual passions is a rational striving

19 The same kind of criticism applies to ancient Stoicism which Leibniz describes in his fifth letter to Clarke (§ 13): “The Stoical fate will have a man be quiet because he must have patience whether he will or not, since it is impossible to resist the course of things. But ‘tis agreed that there is a *fatum Christianum*, a certain destiny of everything, regulated by the foreknowledge and providence of God” (GP VII, 391; Leibniz 1969, 697).

20 “It is true that active power is sometimes understood in a fuller sense, in which it comprises not just a mere faculty but also an endeavour; and that is how I take it in my theorizing about dynamics” (NE II, xxi, § 1; RB, 169).

21 Pauline Phemister offers a somewhat similar reading with the difference that she discusses in terms of appetites and distinguishes between noticeable appetites such as the desire for food and true volitions which are rational or distinct appetites. It seems to me that this view can be understood as being in agreement with the picture I have presented (Phemister 2005, 248).

for perfection. We might call this kind of striving ‘appetition’, following Leibniz’s argument in NE, II, xxi, § 5:

There are other efforts, arising from insensible perceptions, which we are not aware of; I prefer to call these “appetitions” rather than volitions, for one describes as “voluntary” only actions one can be aware of and can reflect upon whether they arise from some consideration of good and bad; though there are also appetitions of which one can be aware (RB, 173).

The difference between disquiet and volition is thus that, whereas the former are usually unconscious, the latter is something we are aware of. Hope as an intellectual disquiet can be considered as a rational appetite in the sense that it leads us eventually to joy or pleasure of the mind. It can grow in us and when it finds an object, fix our will to it and lead to a passion which mediated by the will leads to action. One has to note, however, that there is a constant conflict between different kinds of impulses in the human mind and there is a threat that our positive inclinations are endangered by more confused desires which draw the will to wrong goals. Leibniz describes the situation in NE, II, xxi, § 39:

Various perceptions and inclinations combine to produce a complete volition: it is the result of the conflict amongst them. There are some, imperceptible in themselves, which add up to a disquiet which impels us without our seeing why. There are some which join forces to carry us towards or away from some object, in which case there is desire or fear, also accompanied by disquiet but not always one amounting to pleasure or displeasure. Finally, there are some impulses which are accompanied by actual pleasure or suffering” (NE xxi, § 39; RB, 192).

There are still some components in Leibniz’s moral psychology which need to be taken into account. He argues that there is within us an innate principle of pursuing joy and avoiding sorrow which is known by instinct. This principle is a disposition to do good and to love other human beings. The principle is not a truth of reason in the sense that it can be reached by finite analysis since it is based on inner experience and confused cognition. The material provided by the principle is thus very different from other innate ideas like the idea of God (NE I, 1, § 1) which are clear and distinct ideas. In itself it could be compared with animal instincts, since animals strive for the good that is suitable for them (NE III, xi, § 8). In what follows I will refer to the innate principle as moral instinct.

Whereas the will concerns only endeavours we are aware of, the moral instinct offers us only confused, minute perceptions of pleasure and pain. Thus it can be seen as constitutive of disquiet and explains why we in general strive towards pleasure or joy and hope instead of suffering or pain. As we saw,

pleasure is a feeling of perfection and in this way the moral instinct guides us to strive for perfection. However, if our perceptions of pleasure and pain are confused cognition, it is difficult to see how they can affect our will which concerns things we are aware of (in Leibniz's words, "[endeavour] arising immediately out of one's awareness of those things")? Is the accumulation of minute perceptions enough to explain this leap from (mostly unconscious) appetitions to apperceived volitions? I think an answer can be found in Leibniz's letter to Queen Sophie Charlotte, written two years before NE (also called *On What Is Independent Of Sense And Of Matter*, GP VI, 499–508):

[...] In order to conceive numbers and even shapes distinctly and to build sciences from them, we must reach something which sense cannot furnish but which the understanding adds to it. Since therefore our soul compares the numbers and the shapes of colours, for example, with the number and shapes discovered by touch, there must be an *internal sense* where the perceptions of these different external senses are found united. This is called the *imagination*, which comprises at once the *concepts of particular senses*, which are *clear but confused*, and the *concepts of the common sense*, which are *clear and distinct*" (GP VI, 501; Leibniz 1969, 548).

When we explain the feeling of perfection which is the essence of hope and joy, we must look at the internal sense or imagination. As we remember from the description of clear and distinct ideas in *Meditation*, they (including hope and fear) are objects common to many senses. Leibniz argues that besides sensible and imaginable (numbers and shapes, for example), there is that which is only intelligible, since it is the object of understanding alone (GP VI, 501). The distinction leads to a further classification into three levels of concepts:

- 1) sensible only (objects produced by each sense in particular)
- 2) at once sensible and intelligible (appertain to common sense)
- 3) intelligible only (belong to the understanding)

To the first category one can classify the clear, but confused perceptions of sounds, colours, flavours and the like.²² The second level of concepts consists of the concepts of the internal sense, which are common in the perceptions of the external senses. Concepts, which are intelligible only are beyond our imagination and are related to our reason. When we consider metaphysical perfection, it is clearly sensible in the sense that it is felt as something, that is, pleasure of the mind. It is a sentiment which is a feeling rather than an object of the understanding; it brings about a harmonious feeling. However, it

²² In NE IV, vi, § 7 Leibniz argues that these kinds of perceptions should be called images rather than qualities or ideas. RB, 404.

can be argued that perfection must be more than mere feeling since it motivates us morally. Thus feeling perfection is not only sensible, but also intelligible. It is related to our innate ideas, especially the clear and distinct idea of God and his perfections. Perceiving perfection corresponds with the innate ideas and can affect our volitions.²³ Leibniz wrote to Bayle:

The most abstract thoughts need some imagination: and when we consider what confused thoughts (which invariably accompany the most distinct that we can have) are (such as those of colours, odours, tastes, of heat, of cold etc.) we realize that they always involve the infinite, and not only what happens in our body but also, by means of it, what happens elsewhere.²⁴

The increase in universal perfection produces pleasure and decreases pain. When the intellect finds that an appetite promises future pleasure, the moral instinct is directed to it or “recommends” it. Similarly, when we feel pain our moral instinct “tells” us in the form of mental pain that the deed we are about to do is to be avoided. For example, if I find that my act of charity produces pleasure in my mind, this affects my future volitions and can bring about a virtuous habit to help my fellow men which promote the universal process of perfection. The process is in line with Leibniz’s general definition of substance as including only perception and appetite, the latter striving for “better” perceptions, that is, more clear and distinct perceptions, avoiding confused and obscure perceptions.

The goal of moral action is happiness which is founded on continual or enduring joy.²⁵ Hope is needed to ground this joy by sustaining courage and curiosity as we saw in the previous section. When we act in a virtuous manner, our reward is joy which is at its strongest when its source is universal perfection. This perception gives rise to love in us and when we promote the common good, the object of our love is the Monarch of the Kingdom of grace, that is,

23 In NE I, ii, § 10 Theophilus argues: ‘I take it, sir, that you fundamentally agree with me about these natural instincts for what is upright and good; although you will perhaps say, as you did about the instincts which lead [us] towards joy and happiness, that these impressions are not innate truths. But I have already replied that every feeling is the perception of an innate truth, though very often a confused one as are the experiences of the outer senses. Thus innate truths can be distinguished from the natural light (which contains only what is distinctly knowable) as a genus should be distinguished from its species, since innate truths comprise instincts as well as the natural light’ (RB, 94).

24 Reply to the comments in the second edition of M. Bayle’s *Critical Dictionary*, in the article *Rorarius*, concerning the system of pre-established harmony (1702, G IV, 563–564; Leibniz 1998, 250).

25 *laetitia*; see Leibniz’s letter to Wolff 18. 5. 1715; AG, 233.

God.²⁶ Similarly, we feel mental pain when we perceive disharmony or a decrease in universal perfection. The good we have done is reflected in the world as increasing perfection and this can be considered as a positive sign or promise which gives us hope and motivates us to act virtuously. Perfection is perceived clearly, but confusedly as a harmonious feeling or beauty which Leibniz defines as perceiving variety within unity.²⁷ The source for this feeling is God who has all the perfections.²⁸

In the Leibnizian framework the perception of perfection creates joy or pleasure of the mind in us and strengthens our hope which provides a continuous objective for our joy. Joy, again, increases our activity, power and freedom – in other words, well-being, both mental and physical. Eventually, the process of continuing and increasing joy can bring us lasting pleasure or happiness (see NE II, xxi, § 51). Likewise, acting according to wrong goals can weaken our hope and lead us to despair which brings pain and jeopardizes our happiness.

By developing one's use of reason the moral agent can replace one's negative passions by positive passions or bad habits by good habits which lead us to virtue.²⁹ Like Aristotle, Leibniz recommends a thorough moral education for men to become virtuous (NE, II, xxi, § 35). Hope for a future good arises out of our daily little victories, successes of semi-pleasures against semi-sufferings. Like joy, hope has to be cultivated; otherwise it may change into despair which destroys our hope. When we strive for the good systematically, we can gather hope which leads us to action and happiness. Hope can thus be considered as a rational appetite in human life.

26 In a very Augustinian manner Leibniz argues in *Principles of Nature and Grace, Based on Reason*, § 18: "...for the love of God also fulfills our hopes and leads us down the road of supreme happiness" (GP VI, 606; AG, 213).

27 "Consonances please, since agreement is easily observable in them [...] Agreement is sought in variety, and the more easily it is observed there, the more it pleases; and in this consists the feeling of perfection" (AG, 233). See also GP VII, 290.

28 "Knowledge of reasons perfects us because it teaches us universal and eternal truths, which are manifested in the perfect Being [...] One need not shun at all pleasures which are born of intelligence or of reasons, as one penetrates the reason of the reason of perfections, that is to say as one sees them flow from their source, which is the absolutely perfect Being [...] God, who has done everything perfectly, cannot fail to arrange everything thus, to elevate created being to the perfection of which they are capable through union with him, which can subsist only through the spirit" (*Felicity*, Leibniz 1988, 83–84).

29 On the process of self-perfection, see Roinila 2006.

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Christia Mercer

Knowledge and Suffering in Early Modern Philosophy: G.W. Leibniz and Anne Conway

Abstract: The passions of Christ constitute a centerpiece of the Christian narrative, which itself forms the backdrop for much of early modern thought. This paper focuses on Christ's suffering as the point at which passions, reason, and cognition collide. It explores the components of that collision and examines how Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646–1716) and Anne Finch Conway (1631–79) respond to them. Late medieval and early modern art frames the discussion. Works of sculpture, like the *Roettgen Pietà*, and paintings, like Matthias Grünewald's *Isenheim Altarpiece*, suggest that cognitive benefits result from recognizing suffering as part of the order of things. The paper summarizes the thought of Conway and Leibniz in this context. It describes their rationalism and their commitment to a radical ecumenicalism, according to which partial knowledge of the divine is available to everyone, regardless of religion. It then focuses on the moral and cognitive benefits of suffering. For Conway, such benefits come from suffering itself. For Leibniz, they follow from what is learned in the transition from a state of suffering to one of non-suffering. In the end, Leibniz and Conway believe that suffering contributes to moral development and that it assists in the acquisition of knowledge of important truths.

A volume on “emotional minds” in the early modern period would be incomplete without a discussion of the passions of Christ. His passions constitute a centerpiece of the Christian narrative, which itself forms the backdrop for much of early modern thought. As Sabrina Ebbersmeyer makes clear in our Introduction, the papers of this volume consider the boundary between human passions and reason, the relation between passions and cognition, and the means by which passions might help in pursuing the truth.¹ The suffering of Christ is the point at which the passions, reason, and cognition collide. This

¹ See Ebbersmeyer's Introduction. As far as I can tell, there has been no systematic study by historians of philosophy of the place of Christ's passions in the wider context of early modern views of the passions. For example, neither *The Cambridge History of Seventeenth-Century Philosophy* nor the new *Oxford Handbook of Philosophy in Early Modern Europe* contains a discussion of the topic. See, Garber/Ayers 1998; Wilson/Clarke 2011. Jolley's paper “The Relation between Theology and Philosophy” in Garber/Ayers 1998 ignores the topic.

paper explores the components of that collision and examines how Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646–1716) and Anne Finch Conway (1631–79) respond to them.

1 Knowledge and Suffering: The Passions of Christ

The most relevant part of the Christian story goes like this. Jesus of Nazareth was tortured in significant ways after his condemnation. Among other things, he was whipped and forced to wear a crown of thorns while carrying a cross, an instrument of his own death. These tortures are both physical and psychological. In the last moments of his life, he felt forsaken by God, his father. It is very gruesome stuff.

Its gruesomeness produced some difficult philosophical problems. For example, the scholastics were concerned to explain how Jesus, as God, could suffer. If Christ suffered physical pain, then his divinity appears uncertain. If he did not, then his sacrifice for humanity seems diminished. Many philosophers sought to find a way to accommodate the real pain of Christ's suffering within his divinity. Scholastics debated the proper way to do this. As Dominik Perler notes, by the late 13th century, the physical pain of Christ was taken to be a sensory *passio* distinct from other sorts of passions. Philosophers like John Buridan and John Duns Scotus offered an account of the passion tied closely to their theories about the will.² In this paper, I ignore these worries. The focus here is the relations among passions, reason, and cognition.³

Recent medievalists have argued that a “revolution of feeling” occurred in the 12th–13th centuries when devotional literature began to focus on “the Passion.” As J.A.W. Bennett puts it: “one of the greatest revolutions in feeling that Europe has ever witnessed” occurred during that period: the rise of compassionate devotion to the suffering of Christ.⁴ According to Sarah McNamer in a

² See Perler 2011, 127–143. Also find there references to Perler's earlier studies on related topics.

³ For the classic study of the passions in the early modern period, see James 1997. Also see, Shapiro 2003. James explains: “Passions, then, are generally understood to be thoughts or states of the soul which represent things as good or evil for us, and are therefore seen as objects of inclination or aversion.... [They] have intrinsic physical manifestations which bridge emotion and action and are written on the body in facial expressions, blushings, trembling, and postures” (4). In this paper, the focus is primarily on physical and psychological suffering.

⁴ Bennett 1982, 32.

recent study, between the 12th and 16th centuries, Europe saw an increase in the richness and variety of “affective meditations” on the passions.⁵ These meditations “ask their readers to imagine themselves present at scenes of Christ’s suffering and to perform compassion for that suffering victim in a private drama of the heart.” Not only was the meditator supposed to feel compassion for Christ, she was supposed to learn something. These writings “were not crafted primarily to be admired – even by God – as aesthetic artifacts. They had serious, practical work to do: to teach their readers, through iterative affective performance, how to feel.”⁶

The image of the suffering Christ persisted through the Reformation, and forms the backdrop to early modern discussions of the passions. Late medieval and early modern artworks will help frame this discussion. The *Isenheim Altarpiece* of 1512–13 by Matthias Grünewald is particularly helpful. Its *Crucifixion* (figure 1) is harrowing. The roughhewn wood of the cross bends under the weight of the dead body, whose skin tone is a putrid greenish grey. *Rigor mortis* has set in so the fingers are frozen in torment; the legs, arms and torso are covered with cuts and oozing blood. The witnesses to the death react in radically different ways. The Madonna seems ready to swoon from the intensity of her grief while John the Evangelist, also grieving, comforts her. The plainness of the colors in their robes – vivid white and a rich, dark red – echo the simplicity of their emotions and contrast sharply with the complexity of the Magdalene’s garb and tormented prayer. More than the other lamenters, she is wracked with emotion. Reason prevails on the right side of the painting where John the Baptist holds the Bible in one hand and points to Christ with the other, accompanying “He must increase, but I must decrease” (John 3:30). This response to Christ’s death is not one of passion, but of reason. John the Baptist exhibits unemotional understanding: the passions of the left side of the *Crucifixion* “must” happen and are therefore part of the order of things. The *Isenheim Altarpiece* contains several other panels including a *Resurrection*. The contrast between the heavy death of the crucifixion and the weightless illumination of the *Resurrection* is striking (figure 2). Many of the same colors appear in both: bright white, darkish red, burnt orange, and light green. In the *Crucifixion* these colors enfold the lamenting observers; in the *Resurrection* they cocoon the joy of immortality. The altarpiece suggests an overarching order within which suffering occurs. By meditating on the stark contrast between

5 McNamer 2010, 1. For other important studies that treat the increase of interest in the physicality of Christ in medieval Europe, see Bynum 1987 and Beckwith 1993.

6 McNamer 2010, 2. Since Bynum 1987, scholars have increasingly discussed the gendered aspect of such meditations. For a summary, see McNamer 2010, 3–9.

the suffering and the joy, the viewer is asked to learn something important about that order.⁷

Grünewald's altarpiece contains two very different responses to the death of Christ: one passionate, the other rational. We find these opposing reactions vividly captured in other late medieval and early modern representations of the Madonna's lamentation. As affective meditations increased in popularity between the 13th and 16th centuries, the popularity of the *pietà* (pity) as a subject of painting and sculpture unsurprisingly increased as well.

The *Roettgen Pietà*, ca.1325, by an unknown German artist, represents the moment of despair when Mary recognizes the depth of her loss (figure 3).⁸ The work's sculpted instability captures the deep passion of the moment. Mary sits on what appears to be a thrown that itself rests on heavy slabs. Like the slabs, the weight of her lower body seems solid enough. But the deeply carved and asymmetrical rhythms of her robe combine with the terrifying similarity between the exploding wounds of Christ's body and the rosettes of the base to undermine any sense of stability. The odd center of gravity of the upper half of the work increases this visual strain. Not only would the Madonna's weight and strength not sustain this dead body, the awkward angle of Jesus' head magnifies the tension and drama of this central part of the sculpture. The rigidity of the son's limbs conflict both with the head's arc and with the naturalness of Mary's arms. Given the horror of her son's recent death, the intensity of her pain is fully present. With her unfocused eyes, open mouth, and head bent to echo his unnatural tilt, she crumples into her thrown in despair. This pain is entirely of the moment and seems to demand that the viewer share in her grief. The response here does not cross the boundary into cognition. Rather, the *Roettgen Pietà* encourages the viewer to share in this present passion.

A French *pietà* (figure 4) of the 15th century contains the different responses to Christ's death that we found in the *Isenheim Altarpiece*. Of the four lamenters, only the Magdalene is gripped with emotion while the other three figures, including the Madonna, have found their way to a rational state of contemplation. By the end of the 15th century in Italy, the *pietà* had often moved beyond passions to what seems a wholly rational meditation. In Pietro Perugino's *Pietà* of 1490, rational contemplation has replaced suffering.

⁷ For an account of early modern accounts of grief and the background to them, see James 1997 who notes that emotions were often divided into pairs and that one pair is sadness (*dolor*) and joy (*delectatio*). See 6–7.

⁸ Scholars argue that the *Roettgen Pietà* is one of the first of its kind. For an interesting discussion of the work and its relation to other late medieval German representations of Mary, see Satzinger and Ziegeler 1993, "Marienklagen und Pietà" pp. 241–76.

Although the signs of Christ's wounds have not been totally removed, he is offered to the viewer as an object to contemplate (figure 5). Consistent with the narrative offered by John the Baptist in the *Isenheim Altarpiece*, Christ's passions have become part of the order of things. The painting's subdued colors and perfect linear perspective express quiet introspection. By placing the Madonna's head at the perspective's vanishing point, Perugino situates the Madonna in an eternal space of contemplation. There is no emotion here and no moment in time; rather, there is contemplation and eternity. Finally, consider Michelangelo's famous Vatican *Pietà* of 1499 (figure 6). Here, Mary is a beautiful young woman coolly offering her son to the viewer. The only sign of grief or emotion of any kind is due to the deeply carved marble folds of her clothing. They hold the residue of passion, but the main effect of the work is an idealization of grief. The Madonna has become like John the Baptist in the *Isenheim Altarpiece*: she understands and asks us to meditate on the rational order of things of which her son's passions are a mere part.

As noted previously, our volume raises questions about the boundary between human passions and reason, the relation between passions and cognition, and the means by which passions might help in pursuing the truth. The artworks discussed here suggest answers: the suffering of Christ (and perhaps suffering in general) is part of the order of things, cognitive benefits result from recognizing cases of suffering as part of that order, and the experience of the transition from a state of suffering to one of non-suffering enables one to grasp truths about that order. One is led to glimpse the rightness or justice of that order.

2 The Boundaries between Reason and Passion

The remainder of this paper examines the views of Conway and Leibniz on our questions about the relation between the passions and cognition.⁹ As a means to situate Conway and Leibniz in the wider context of early modern philosophy, it will be helpful to offer a list of features common to both.

Leibniz and Conway are both *rationalists* in that they believe: (a) the world perfectly manifests the rationality and goodness of God and (b) human reason by itself can grasp fundamental truths about God and the world. Conway insists, for example, "whatever is correctly understood is most true and cer-

⁹ I cannot present a full discussion here of the tension between reason and passion in early modern philosophy. For a thorough account of the topic, see James 1997.

tain.”¹⁰ The “precepts of truth,” she explains, are “innate ideas” which “all men find in themselves” (*Principles* VI § 2 (29)).

Leibniz and Conway are both radically *ecumenical* in that neither takes Christianity to be a necessary condition for knowledge about God. Familiarity with Christian doctrines like the Trinity and Eucharist is neither necessary nor sufficient for such knowledge. For the sake of convenience here, let’s just call the relevant knowledge *divine knowledge* where divine knowledge is the human cognition (however partial) of some aspect, property, or attribute of God. Thinkers like Conway and Leibniz assume that this is the most significant knowledge there is. Their ecumenicalism is important for us because it presumes that the human intellect is capable of having such knowledge outside of any particular religious context.

Given the rationalism and ecumenicalism of Leibniz and Conway, it is not immediately clear how suffering is supposed to fit into this epistemological picture. So, it is particularly interesting that they take *suffering to have significant moral and cognitive benefits*. Both consider suffering a necessary condition for some of the most important divine knowledge human beings can have.

3 Conway

The metaphysics of Conway’s *Principles Concerning the Most Ancient and Modern Philosophies* (finished in the 1670s) is enormously complicated.¹¹ There are three features of her metaphysics especially relevant to our topic.

God, Christ, Created World

According to Conway, there are three distinct substances: God, Christ, and the created world. God, the first substance, emanates Christ, the second substance,

¹⁰ Conway 1996. Abbreviated in what follows as *Principles* with references to book, section, and page number from Coudert and Corse translation. So, citation here is (VI § 4 (30)) which is Book VI, section 4, p. 30.

¹¹ Conway composed her work in English, but that manuscript was lost after Francis Mercury von Helmont translated and published it in Latin. There is little reason therefore to fuss about the Latin terms and phraseology found in the *Principles*. For an important study of Conway’s life and thought, see Hutton (2004). For an introduction to some of her concerns, see Coudert 1996, Introduction. For a recent account that situates Conway within religious concerns broadly construed, see White 2008. For an account of her philosophy see Mercer (forthcoming).

who then emanates the world. As middle substance between God and the created world, Christ is the metaphysical conduit and mediator between God and creatures.¹² The created world is one big infinitely complex vital substance, whose various modes constitute individual creatures. The world contains an infinity of creatures *in finitum* and is constituted of the same vital stuff although the vitality can differ radically. Creatures are constituted of an active principle and a passive one where each differs from the other only in the degree of its vitality. Regardless of the changes in the world, Conway maintains that “the substance or essence always remains the same” and there is “merely a change of form in as much as the substance relinquishes one form and takes on another” (*Principles*, VI § 3 (29–30)).

Finally, the created world is constantly bettering itself so that all creatures eventually become conscious moral beings and attain the “excellent attributes” of “spirit and light.” Every created thing is capable of “every kind of feeling, perception, or knowledge, even love, all power and virtue, joy and fruition.” She explains that even

dust and sand are capable of all these perfections through various successive transmutations which, according to the natural order of things, require long periods of time for their consummation, even though [...] God, if he so pleases, may accelerate everything and accomplish them in a single moment.

¹² The causal notion of emanation endorsed by Conway and Leibniz can be summarized as follows. God produces the world through emanation. In emanating the world and its creatures, God is not changed and yet creatures acquire the divine attributes and the essences. Each of the attributes of perfection, self-sufficiency, unity, and being is a function of the other in the sense that the more perfection something has, the more unity, and so on. God is a causal principle that explains the thing (or things) it immediately produces; these products themselves can then act as the causal principle for other things. The result of this two (or more) tiered process of emanation is a hierarchy of being. At each level in the emanative hierarchy, the higher level emanates its attributes or “Ideas” (e.g., Justice) to the lower level in such a way that neither the higher entity (the cause) nor its attribute is depleted in any way, while the lower entity (the product) comes to instantiate the attribute, though in a weaker or inferior manner. The emanative process is continual so that the lower entity instantiates the attribute just as long as the higher emanates the attribute to it. Given that God has the highest degree of perfection, self-sufficiency, unity, and reality and given that the Ideas (e.g., Justice) that God contains are perfect, the emanative relation entails that each product of God exists at a lower level of being than God and has a lesser degree of perfection, self-sufficiency, simplicity, reality, and so on. For many early modern Platonists, the products of God’s emanation contain all the divine attributes (or “Ideas”), though in a manner inferior to the way in which they exist in God. For more on this topic, see Mercer 2001 *passim*. For more on emanative causation in Conway, see Mercer (forthcoming).

God has so arranged things because he “sees that it is more fitting for all things ... to attain, through their own efforts, ever greater perfection as instruments of divine wisdom, goodness, and power, which operate in them and with them” (*Principles* IX § 6 (66)). Of particular importance to us here is the fact that all created things will eventually become conscious and, as such, will move toward greater and greater perfection. They will not attain the perfection of God: “Thus a creature is capable of a further and more perfect degree of life, ever greater and greater to infinity, but it can never attain equality with God. For his infinity is always more perfect than a creature in its highest elevation” (*Principles* IX § 7 (67)).

Ecumenical Rationalism

In the very first chapters of her *Principles*, Conway makes clear both her rationalism and ecumenical goals. She offers a contemplation of the attributes of God and optimistically claims that these can be “communicated to creatures” (*Principles* II § 4 (13)). She explains: “And thus the truly invisible attributes of God are clearly seen if they are understood either through or in those things which have been made” (*Principles* III § 6 (17)). Conway intends to explain the proper way to understand these attributes. Having done so, she assumes that everyone – whatever their religious perspective – can have divine knowledge, namely, knowledge of the attributes of God. Conway insists that “Jews, Turks [Muslims], and other people” can grasp the divine attributes (at least partially).

After a thorough discussion of God’s attributes, Conway moves to Christ as the middle of the three substances and what directly causes and explains the order, rationality, and goodness of the created world. The nature of this middle substance is complicated, but roughly, Christ is “the word” or “Logos” by which “God knows all things.” As such it is *logos ousios*, what God understands in the eternal contemplation of the divine essence. But Christ is also *logos proforikos*, the *logos* made real. Neither *logoi* is the historic Christ who suffered the passions. The *logos ousios* is best understood as the plan or blueprint as conceived by God; the *logos proforikos* is that plan instantiated in the world. The former is unchanging and eternally perfect, the latter is changeable and has the “power” to move “from one good to another” (*Principles* V § 3 (24)). An analogy might help here. The *logos ousios* is like the score of a symphony: a static design for the performance itself; the *logos proforikos* is the performance of the work as an ever changing, though perfectly designed, unified whole.¹³

¹³ For a more technical account of the relation between *logos ousios* and *logos proforikos*, see Mercer (forthcoming).

In order to understand Conway's views about suffering, it is important to see how Christ "the son [of God] himself is immediately present in all things and immediately fills all things. In fact, he works immediately in everything in his own way" (*Principles* V § 4 (25)). Like the musical score, Christ is present everywhere by having determined exactly what is being performed although the score on paper stands statically outside any particular performance. Christ is also present in every performed note in that the score is being performed. The string section moves through its crescendo while the flutes are silent and yet the violins' music and the flutes' silence are a manifestation of the score. Our analogy offers some help in understanding what Conway means when she says: "the son [of God] himself is immediately present in all these creatures so that he may bless and benefit them." Like the score, Christ as *logos ousios*, is the plan for the world; like the performing orchestra, Christ as *logos proforikos* is the plan unfolding. Since the world, for Conway, is always becoming morally better, Christ is always benefitting the world and its creatures by making them better. And the better they become, the more like God they are. In brief, "he raises them by his action to union with God" (*Principles* V § 4 (25–26)).

Conway's decision to call the second substance Christ is a fascinating strategy to engage non-Christians in the Christian narrative. Anyone moved by her metaphysics and its account of "that excellent order ... which appears in all things" will embrace Christ as *logos* and therefore as mediator. She explains that "the wiser among the Jews recognize [...] such a mediator, which they call by different names such as Logos, [...] Mind, Wisdom, the Celestial Adam, etc." When "these matters are correctly considered, they will contribute greatly to the propagation of true faith and Christian religion among Jews and Turks [Muslims] and other infidel nations." It is important to note that Conway is not so much concerned to convert non-Christians to Christian orthodoxy as to engage thoughtful people of all faiths in the metaphysical idea that there is a second substance that mediates between God and creatures:

Therefore, those who acknowledge such a mediator and believe in him can be said truly to believe in Jesus Christ, even though they do not yet know it and are not convinced that he has already come in the flesh. But if they first grant that there is a mediator, they will indubitably come to acknowledge also, even if they are unwilling, that Christ is the mediator" (*Principles* VI § 5 (31–32)).

It is a brilliant ecumenical strategy.

Suffering, Cognition, and Moral Improvement

The Christian narrative maintains that the human soul will be immortal only if Christ suffers. So, the moral order of God's world seems to require the passions.

Conway takes up this idea and makes it a centerpiece of her philosophy. For her, suffering is the key to moral and cognitive improvement. Like Christ, human beings suffer in life; and like him, they do so for the good of the world. But Conway goes beyond the standard Christian story by extending moral improvement to all creatures.¹⁴ Whatever the creature (roach, rat, or rhododendron), it suffers for the sake of the good and therefore bears a connection to the historic Christ.

By giving suffering such a central role in her metaphysics, Conway builds a close connection between the historic Christ and all creatures:

Yet when Christ became flesh and entered into his body [...], he took on something of our nature and consequently of the nature of everything [...]. In assuming flesh and blood, he sanctified nature so that he could sanctify everything, just as it is the property of a ferment to ferment the whole mass. [He] descended into time and for a certain period willingly subjected himself to its laws to the extent that he suffered great torment and death itself. But the death did not detain him long, for on the third day he rose again, and the purpose of all his suffering, up to his death and burial, was to heal, preserve, and restore creatures from corruption and death, which came upon them through the Fall" (*Principles* V § 6 (27)).

What is striking about Conway's version of the Christian narrative is that the historic Christ "took on ... the nature of everything" and simultaneously acted as the "ferment of it all." The nature of everything in the third substance is vitality, though the vitality here is in time. At the very beginning of the *Principles*, she insists that "in God there exists none of the passions ... [f]or every passion is temporal having its beginning and end in time" (*Principles* I § 5 (9)). So, Christ as *logos proforikos* emanated the historic Christ who thereby became a particular mode of vitality. As such, he sanctified and healed everything.

The Isenheim Altarpiece helps explain how the passions of Christ could act to "ferment the whole mass." As the Crucifixion (figure 1) suggests, passions are part of the order of things. As the transition from the Crucifixion to the Resurrection (figure 2) implies, there is an overarching order, in which the suffering occurs and whose end is joy. By meditating on this transition, one becomes aware – as did John the Baptist – that there is an order to things. One *understands* something about the order of the world.¹⁵

¹⁴ For more on Conway's "moral perfectionism," see White 2008, Part I.

¹⁵ James discusses the view of some early modern philosophers that there is an "emotional knowledge" and a "knowledge of the heart". For more on this, see James 1997, chapter 10, especially 234–42.

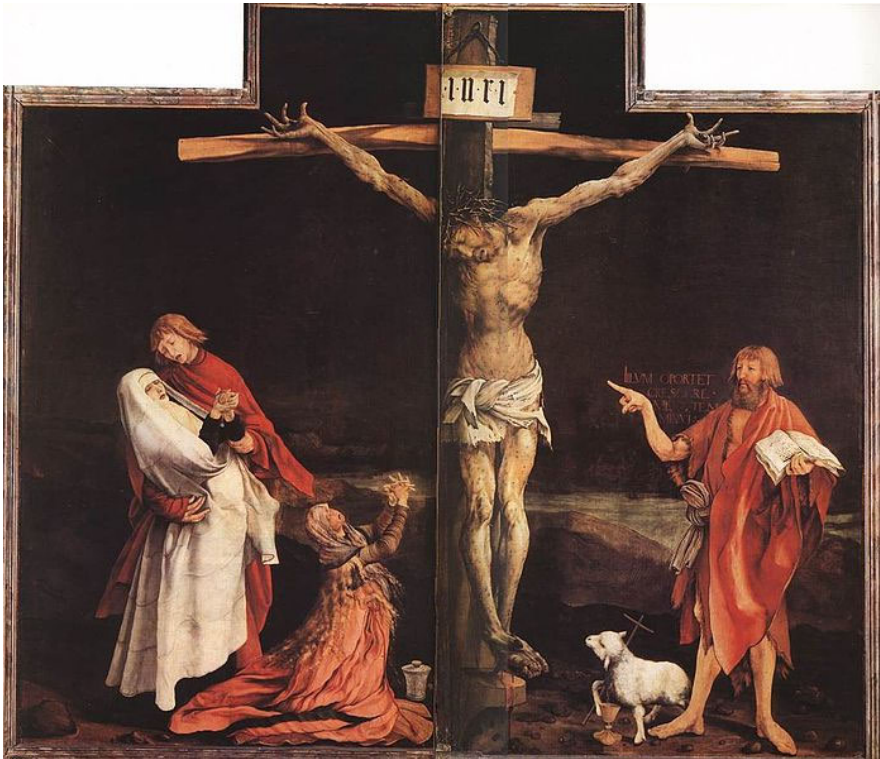


Figure 1: Detail of Isenheim Altarpiece: Crucifixion by Matthias Grünewald, 1512–1513. (Musée d'Unterlinden, Colmar, France)



Figure 2: Isenheim Altarpiece: Resurrection by Matthias Grünewald, 1512–1513. (Musée d’Unterlinden, Colmar, France)



Figure 3: Roettgen Pietà by Unknown, c. 1325. (Bonn, Germany)



Figure 4: La Pietà de Villeneuve-lès-Avignon by Enguerrand Quarton, c. 1455.
(Louvre Museum, Paris)



Figure 5: *Pietà con i Santi Giovanni Evangelista, Maria Maddalena, Nicodemo e Giuseppe d'Arimatea* by Pietro Perugino, 1490. (Uffizi Gallery, Milan)



Figure 6: Pietà by Michelangelo Buonarroti, c. 1500. (St. Peter's Basilica, Vatican City)

But one does more than understand. In suffering, creatures increase in connectedness and vitality. For Conway, one of the most basic features of the third substance is that all of its parts are in sympathetic harmony with all the others:

God has implanted a certain universal sympathy and mutual love into his creatures so that they are all members of one body and all, so to speak, brothers, for whom there is one common father [...] There is also one mother, that unique substance or entity from which all things have come forth, and of which they are the real parts and members" (VI § 4 (31)).

Conway, Leibniz, and many other early modern thinkers share this notion of sympathetic harmony.¹⁶ The basic assumption is that the goodness of the world is partly a function of the variety of the creatures within it, partly a function of the sum of the goodness of the creatures within it, and partly a function of the order among those creatures where the latter is understood primarily in terms of the an enhancement relation among them. Many thinkers believed that (some or all) created things have an enhancement relation with (some or all) other creatures. When two creatures are in an enhancement relation, an increase in the goodness of one will promote an increase in the goodness of another, although the relation is non-reciprocal (that is, the increase in the second will not then promote an increase in the first). So, for Conway, each part of the third substance is in sympathy with every other in the sense that it bears an enhancement relation with it.

The sympathy among creatures is important for two reasons. Creatures benefit morally from the suffering of other creatures. Consistent with the enhancement relation, the suffering of one creature increases the goodness of all other creatures. But creatures also benefit in straightforward metaphysical ways: for Conway, suffering makes the sufferer more vital and hence metaphysically better. She writes: "all pain and torment stimulates the life or spirit existing in everything that suffers" (*Principles* VII § 1 (43)). The third substance is essentially vital stuff that differs in degrees of vitality; the more vital something is, the more spiritual it is and hence the more like God; and the more spiritual it is, the more "the divine attributes" are "communicated" to creatures. Despite the temporary evil of some creatures, the world is progressing toward perfection. Even the most crass and immoral creatures will eventually achieve moral goodness through suffering: "the worst creatures ... become good after many and long torments and punishments" (*Principles* VII Summary

¹⁶ For a fuller account of these notions in the period, see Mercer 2001, chapter 6 and Mercer (forthcoming).

(41)). Divine justice is such that sinners must pay for their transgressions, but the payment or punishment will itself promote moral improvement:

Just as all the punishments inflicted by God on his creatures are in proportion to their sin, so they tend, even the worst, to their good and to their restoration and they are so medicinal as to cure these sickly creatures and restore them to a better conditions than they previously enjoyed (*Principles* VI § 10 (38)).

The improvement of both the world and its creatures depends on suffering. Her position is dramatic: in the same way that the historic Christ suffered for the good of the world, so every creature suffers and thereby contributes to worldly good. In the end, all parts of the third substance will become morally good through suffering; suffering is a sufficient condition for metaphysical improvement and eventually moral goodness.

Finally, Conway suggests that as creatures become metaphysically better, they also become cognitively better: they *understand* more about the unity of things and then about their justice. As creatures become more vital, they become more conscious of the unity between themselves and all other creatures. And as they become more conscious of this unity, they begin to grasp the justice in the world. She writes: “the justice of God gloriously appears in the transmutation of things” (*Principles* VI Summary (28)). Indeed, “the justice of God shines forth wonderfully” as creatures understand more about the role of suffering in the world (*Principles* VI § 8 (36)). We are capable of grasping the “principle of true justice” because “God endowed man with the ... instinct for justice” (*Principles* VI § 7 (35)). In the end, like John the Baptist in the Isenheim Altarpiece, one grasps the order of things.

4 Leibniz

Leibniz made significant contributions to philosophy, logic, mathematics, physics, jurisprudence, and history. He worked as diplomat, engineer, attorney, and political advisor. He corresponded with kings and princesses, and with the most eminent intellectuals of the age. As a philosopher, Leibniz is probably best known for his view that this is the best of all possible worlds. This optimism was fully felt by Leibniz in that he was delighted with the world, but it was also coupled with a realism about human suffering. Throughout his long and varied life, he was concerned with the state of humanity and how to relieve its afflictions.¹⁷

¹⁷ For a full account of Leibniz’s fascinating life see Antognazza 2009. For an account of Leibniz’s views about justice, see Riley 2006. Also see Rutherford 1995, *passim*.

Leibniz's philosophy is enormously complicated and developed over many decades. Scholars continue to disagree about the most accurate way of describing some of his basic doctrines. I cannot offer an overview of his philosophy here. A brief summary will have to suffice of those claims that form the background to his views about the boundary between human passions and reason, the relation between passions and cognition, and the means by which passions might help in pursuing the truth.

God, Substances, and Created World

Like Conway, Leibniz believed in a perfectly good God who creates and maintains the world through emanation. In the *Discours de metaphysique* of 1686, he explains: "It is very evident that created substances depend upon God, who preserves them and who even produces them continually by a kind of emanation, just as we produce our thoughts."¹⁸ Concerning the relation between God and creatures: "For one sees clearly that all other substances depend on God in the same way as thoughts emanate from our substance, that God is all in all, and that he is intimately united with all creatures."¹⁹ Not only is every substance an emanation of God, each is a constantly acting substance that expresses and reflects everything else. Like Conway, Leibniz endorses both universal sympathy and the enhancement relation among creatures. But he goes farther than Conway in claiming that the only interaction among creatures is one of sympathetic harmony. For Leibniz, the individual things of the world – what he first calls substances and later monads – do not causally interact. In *Discours de metaphysique* § 32, he explains:

Now, in rigorous metaphysical truth, there is no external cause acting on us except God alone, and he alone communicates himself to us immediately in virtue of our continual dependence. From this it follows that there is no other external object that touches our soul and immediately excites our perception. Thus we have ideas of everything in our soul by virtue of God's continual action on us, that is to say, because every effect expresses its

¹⁸ Unless otherwise noted, all citations to Leibniz's works will be from Leibniz 1923, abbreviated here as 'A'. Translations are usually based on Leibniz 1989. The *Discours de metaphysique* is in A VI iv [B]; references are to section numbers. *Discours de metaphysique*, § 14: "[I]l est premierement tres manifeste que les substances creées dependent de Dieu, qui les conserve, et même qui les produit continuellement par une maniere d'emanation, comme nous produisons nous pensées."

¹⁹ *Discours de metaphysique*, § 32: "Car on voit fort clairement que toutes les autres substances dependent de Dieu comme les pensées emanent de nostre substance; que Dieu est tout en tous, et comment il est uni intimement à toutes les creatures".

cause, and thus the essence of our soul is a certain expression, imitation or image of the divine essence, thought, and will, and of all the ideas comprised in it. It can then be said that God is our immediate external object and that we see all things by him... God is the sun and the light of souls, the light that lights every man that comes into this world, and this is not an opinion new to our times.²⁰

God emanates all the divine attributes to individual souls, which express the essence of God and bear an enhancement relation to each other. Leibniz claims that every creature expresses and “imitates” God, though each has its own distinctive degree of clarity:

*Every individual substance contains in its perfect notion the entire universe and everything that exists in it, past, present, and future. [...] Indeed, all created substances are different expressions of the same universe and different expressions of the same universal cause, namely, God. But the expressions vary in perfection, just as different representations or drawings of the same town from different points of view do.*²¹

In a very early text, Leibniz works out some of his views about substantial activity and unity in an essay entitled “*On the Incarnation of God*.” He offers a fascinating solution to the problem about how Christ can be both God and man.²² Given our concerns here, it is significant that the historical Christ is also an expression of divinity and itself “contained” in every other. To make the point another way, every substance mirrors and contains Christ.

Leibniz firmly agrees with Conway that the created world is constituted of an infinity of vital creatures *in finitum*, whose divinely arranged interconnec-

20 *Discours de metaphysique* § 28: “Or dans la rigueur de la verité Metaphysique, il n’y a point de cause externe qui agisse sur nous, excepté Dieu seul, et luy seul communique avec nous immediatement en vertu de nostre dependance continue. D’où il s’ensuit qu’il n’y a point d’autre objet externe, qui touche nostre ame, et qui excite immediatement nostre perception. Aussi n’avons nous dans nostre ame les idées de toutes choses, qu’en vertu de l’action continue de Dieu sur nous, c’est à dire parce que tout effect exprime sa cause, et qu’ainsi l’essence de nostre ame est une certaine expression, imitation ou image de l’essence, pensée et volonté divine, et de toutes les idées qui y sont comprises. On peut donc dire, que Dieu seul est nostre objet immediat hors de nous, et que nous voyons toutes choses par luy [...] Dieu est le soleil et la lumiere des ames, *lumen illuminans omnem hominem venientem in hunc mundum*. Et ce n’est pas d’aujourd’huy qu’on est dans ce sentiment.”

21 “*Omnis substantia singularis in perfecta notione sua involvit totum universum*, omniaque in eo existentia praeterita praesentia et futura. [...] *Imo omnes substantiae singulares creatae sunt diversae expressiones ejusdem universi*, ejusdemque causae universalis, nempe Dei; sed variant perfectione expressionis ut ejusdem oppidi diversae representationes vel scenographiae ex diversis punctis visus.” (A VI iv [B] 1646; emphasis in text).

22 See A VI i 532–51. For a fuller account of these views, see Mercer 2001, 146–9, 324–5.

tions form an intricate unity. He parts company with her when he also insists that each creature is itself a substance or monad that expresses the entirety of the perfectly harmonized world and does so from its own unique perspective. In fact, Leibniz's famous doctrine of preestablished harmony results from a commitment to a plenitude of created substances along with a creative rendering of emanation, unity, and enhancement.²³

Ecumenical Rationalism

Like Conway, Leibniz embraces ecumenical rationalism. He believes that Christianity is not required to arrive at the most profound divine knowledge. While he thinks that contemplating the suffering and nature of Christ makes it easier to do this, one can know the basic truths about God without knowing anything about Christianity.²⁴

In the preface to his *Theodicy* of 1710, Leibniz makes several claims relevant to our topic. He is clear that one of the main goals of religion is to effect virtue. The aim of religion is:

to withdraw us from any approach to vice, to inure us to the good and to make us familiar with virtue. That was the aim of Moses and of other good lawgivers, of the wise men who founded religious orders, and above all of Jesus Christ, divine founder of the purest and most enlightened religion.²⁵

He further insists that although Christianity is only one among several enlightened religions, it is the “purest and *most* enlightened” and the one founded by a “divine” personage. So, he takes Christ to be divine, but does not deny that other religions are enlightened, suggesting that “the divine light (lumière divine)” is there to be glimpsed by anyone, of whatever religion. Because the human intellect is naturally poised to discover “beautiful conceptions” and “divine light,” all people have to do – whether Jew, Muslim, Christian, or other – is avoid the obscuring “opinions of men” and discern the “beautiful conceptions” related to “the greatness and goodness of God.” For example,

²³ Mercer 2001, chapters 7–10; Rutherford 1995 *passim*.

²⁴ Leibniz's views about the role of Christianity in the pursuit of divine knowledge changed over the years. In this discussion, the focus will be on his later views, especially on those of the *Theodicy* of 1710.

²⁵ “[...] pour nous éloigner des approches du vice, nous accoutumer au bien, et pour nous rendre la vertu familière. C'étoit le but de Moïse, & d'autres bons Législateurs, des sages Fondateurs des Ordres Religieux, & sur-tout de Jesus-Christ, divin Fondateur de la Religion la plus pure & la plus éclairée.”

about the doctrine of immortality, he explains: “it was not proclaimed for popular acceptance until Jesus Christ lifted the veil.” Although “Moses had already expressed the *beautiful* ideas of the greatness and the goodness of God ..., Jesus Christ developed fully the consequences of these conceptions, proclaiming that divine goodness and justice shine forth to perfection in God’s designs for the souls of men.”²⁶ The *Theodicy* is ecumenically radical: “there are countless paths open to God, giving him means of satisfying his justice and his goodness” (*Theodicy* § 9). In the end, all human beings are capable of grasping what I am calling here divine knowledge.

Leibniz’s Suffering: Moral and Cognitive Benefits²⁷

Leibniz agrees with Conway that there are moral and cognitive benefits to suffering. Unlike Conway, however, he does not think that such benefits come from suffering itself. By itself, a passion can have no moral or cognitive benefit. Any benefit deriving from a passion must come from what is learned in the *transition* from a state of suffering to one of non-suffering. Such a transition can offer three kinds of benefits.

The most basic benefit derived from such a transition is the pleasure of relief. In the *Theodicy*, he writes: “Evil often serves to make us savor good the more; sometimes too it contributes to a greater perfection in him who suffers.”²⁸ The movement from suffering to non-suffering leads to a greater appreciation of the second state.²⁹ The pleasure in it and the recognition of that pleasure is increased because of its concurrence with the previous state. In the *Theodicy*, he explains:

26 “[...] mais elle n’étoit point autorisé d’une maniere populaire, jusqu’à ce que Jesus Christ leva le voile [...] Moïse avoit déjà donné les belles idees de la grandeur & de la bonté de Dieu [...] mais Jesus Christ en établissoit toutes les consequences, et il faisoit voir que la bonté & la justice divine éclatent parfaitement dans ce que Dieu prépare aux ames” (*Theodicy*, Preface).

27 There are many excellent books on Leibniz’s philosophy, but it is striking how little work has been done on the cognitive benefits of suffering. For good introductions to his account of the problem of evil, which is related to the question about suffering in the world, see Rutherford, especially chapters 1–3 and Jolley 2005, chapter 6.

28 “La peine sert aussi pour l’amendement & pour l’exemple, & le mal sert souvent pour mieux goûter le bien, & quelquefois aussi il contribue à une plus grande perfection de celui qui le souffre” *Theodicy* (§ 23).

29 It seems to have been fairly common for seventeenth-century philosophers to think that pleasure comes from control over one’s passions. See James 1997, 264.

Use has ever been made of comparisons taken from the pleasures of the senses when these are mingled with that which borders on pain, to prove that there is something of like nature in intellectual pleasures. A little acid, sharpness or bitterness is often more pleasing than sugar; shadows enhance colors; and even dissonance in the right place gives relief to harmony. [...] Do men relish health enough, or thank God enough for it, without having been sick? And is it not most often necessary that a little evil render the good more discernible, that is to say, greater?³⁰

A second benefit produced by the transition from suffering to non-suffering occurs when there is a sense of “victory” over the passion. This happens when the sufferer has refused to give into the pain or the temptation of the passion: she sheds the moment of intense passion and feels strength in having done so. Leibniz suggests that moral benefits follow such small victories. One gains a sense of her strength and the inspiration to acquire more. He writes in the *Theodicy*: “it is well to observe that the vexations and pains attendant upon victory over the passions in some people turn into pleasure, through the great satisfaction they find in the lively sense of the force of their mind.”³¹ When someone has mustered the “force of mind” to overcome the passions, she has taken a step toward moral improvement. The improvement is encouraged by the pleasure derived from the transition and the awareness of its source or “the force” in one’s mind. So, unlike Conway, Leibniz does not think that suffering is by itself sufficient for moral improvement. But he does think suffering is both necessary and sufficient for some sorts of moral improvement. An awareness of the increased pleasure and personal power that comes from victory over passions will not occur without them.

Given our concerns, the most significant benefit derived from the suffering-to-non-suffering transition is an understanding of the justice and beauty of God’s world. To be perfectly clear: without suffering, there cannot be a transition from suffering to non-suffering and, without the transition, there will not be a proper awareness of the harmony of God’s world. Therefore, suffering is

30 “On s’est servi de tout temps des comparaisons prises des plaisirs des sens, mêlés avec ce qui approche de la douleur, pour faire juger qu’il y a quelque chose de semblable dans les plaisirs intellectuels. Un peu d’acide, d’acre ou d’amer, plaît souvent mieux que du sucre; les ombres rehaussent les couleurs; & meme une dissonance placée où il faut, donne du relief à l’harmonie. Nous voulons être effrayés par des danseurs de corde qui font sur le point de tomber, & nous voulons que les Tragedies nous fassent presque pleurer. Goute-t-on assez la santé, & en rend-on assez graces à Dieu, sans avoir jamais été malade? En ne faut-il pas le plus souvent qu’un peu de mal rende le bien plus sensible, c’est-à-dire plus grand?” *Theodicy* (§ 12).

31 “Il est bon cependant de remarquer, que les chagrins & les peines qui accompagnent la victoire sur les passions, tournent en quelques-uns en plaisir, par le grand contentement qu’ils trouvent dans le sentiment vif de la force de leur esprit [...]”. (*Theodicy* § 329).

a necessary condition for such understanding. The *Theodicy* claims that all human beings – regardless of religion – can find a path to God. They can do so because they all suffer and therefore all have the opportunity to learn about the justice and harmony of God’s world. As one moves from a state of suffering to non-suffering, she not only feels the pleasure of the non-suffering more than she otherwise would, she is also motivated to reflect on the order and justice of the whole. Such reflection is the first step toward glimpsing its profound harmony and beauty.

In *Leibniz’s Metaphysics: Its Origins and Development*, I argue that Leibniz developed a version of preestablished harmony twenty years before the *Discours de metaphysique* of 1686. At the very time he is constructing his account of worldly harmony, he is also concerned to explore the role of suffering in that world. During the years 1670–71, he often notes that human afflictions help them grasp divine harmony. He discusses the role of human suffering in general, and wonders about the cognitive and emotional distress that comes from confusion about the world and its true nature. He contrasts the pain of this confusion to the joy of cognitive success. When such pain is followed by some small insight into the harmony of God’s world, it becomes “delightful” and leads to “admiration” of God. A “dissonant beat” can lead us to recognize the “wondrous” interconnections among things so that we are led to “the ruler who embraces the infinite.”³² In a striking passage from 1671 (when he is first developing the metaphor of mind as a mirror), he writes:

Thus, if there are many mirrors, that is, many minds recognizing our goods, there will be a greater light, the mirrors blending the light not only in the [individual] eye but also among each other. The gathered splendor produces glory. This is part of the reason for the deformity in mind: otherwise there would be nothing in the shadow to be magnified through the reflection of the mirrors (A VI i 464).

Like Conway, Leibniz believes that the improvement of one creature increases the goodness of the world. Consistent with sympathetic harmony and the enhancement relation, one mirror adds to the light and insight of all the others. It follows that as one creature benefits from the suffering-to-non-suffering transition, so do all the others. The cognitive benefit of suffering, therefore, is profound: the movement from suffering or confusion to pleasure or insight increases the chance for divine knowledge and insight into universal harmony. Leibniz’s use of the enhancement relationship is dramatic. Although minds are deformed, they can be made better through their sympathetic mirroring of one another. God has made the world so that each mind can help to lead the others

³² A V i 485. For similar early views, see A VI i 466, 479.

out of shadow. The mirroring of minds allows them to see an “unexpected” unity “where no one would suspect a connection” (A VI i 484). As he makes the point a few years later: “The most confused discord fits into the order of the most exquisite harmony unexpectedly, as a painting is set off by shadow, as the harmony due to dissonances transforms the dissonances into consonance” (A VI iii 126). The world is better because apparent disorder will “unexpectedly” reveal “the wonderful reason” behind this “greatest” of symmetries (A VI iii 122).

The artworks of section 1 help highlight Leibniz’s underlying point. The *Roettgen Pietà* represents Mary at the most profound moment of her suffering (figure 3). Her pain is that of a particular moment in time. In its grip, there is no cognitive benefit. But when this moment has passed, as it has done for Mary in the *La Pietà de Villeneuve-lès-Avignon* (figure 4), it is possible to appreciate the transition from suffering to non-suffering and, more importantly, the *place* of the previous passion in the order of things. The signs of Christ’s wounds are still evident: the passion and pain are recent. But she has moved beyond them to a state of rational contemplation of their place in God’s world. This Madonna, like Michelangelo’s (figure 6), willingly accepts the overarching harmony and beauty of the world. Like John the Baptist in the *Isenheim Altarpiece*, the Mary of these later works sees the justice and order of the world in which her son suffered so profoundly.

Leibniz endorses the overall account given of these artworks. He explains in the *Theodicy*:

And it is not to be doubted that this faith and this confidence in God who gives us insight into his infinite goodness and prepares us for his love, in spite of the appearances of harshness that may repel us, are an admirable exercise for the virtues of Christian theology.³³

Because God’s world is perfectly just and beautiful, the transition from suffering to non-suffering offers insight into its nature. Like John the Baptist, one can see the order in things and be delighted: “we *should see*, and should not *believe* only, that what God has done is the best” (*Theodicy* § 44). According to Leibniz, God has created the world to make this easy. Even in our confusion and pain, all we have to do is contemplate the order of things:

But therein we confess our ignorance of the facts, and we acknowledge, moreover, before we see it, that God does all the best possible, in accordance with the infinite wisdom

³³ “Et il ne faut point douter que cette Foi & cette confiance en Dieu, qui nous fait envisager sa bonté infinie, & nous prépare à son amour, malgré les apparences de dureté qui nous peuvent rebutter, ne soient un exercice excellent des vertus de la Théologie Chrétienne”. *Theodicy* (§ 45).

which guides his actions. It is true that we have already before our eyes proofs and tests of this, when we see something entire, some whole complete in itself, and isolated, so to speak, among the works of God [...]. We cannot wonder enough at the beauty and the contrivance of its structure.³⁴

In the same way that the aesthetic pleasure of a symphony depends on the experience of the transitions and order among its parts, so the comprehension of the justice and beauty of God's world depends on the experience of its transitions: "Order, proportions, harmony *delight* us; painting and music are samples of these: God is all order; he always keeps truth of proportions, he makes universal harmony; all beauty is an effusion of his rays."³⁵

Leibniz insists in the *Theodicy* that "there are countless paths open to God." Regardless of one's religion, that path is available to anyone who can see the harmony and beauty of things. Human beings are like Christ in that they all must suffer; and their suffering is like Christ's in that it is done for the sake of the good. God has constructed the world so that human suffering has a cognitive payoff: the movement from suffering to non-suffering helps in the recognition of divine justice and in the acquisition of divine knowledge. He explains:

And when we succeed in respect of his justice, we shall likewise be impressed by his greatness and charmed by his goodness, which will show themselves through the clouds of a seeming reason that is deceived by outward appearances, in proportion as the mind is elevated by true reason to that which to us is invisible, but none the less sure.³⁶

5 Conclusion

Conway and Leibniz are ecumenical rationalists. Yet they believe that suffering contributes to moral development and assists in the acquisition of divine

34 "[...] mais c'est avouer notre ignorance sur les faits; c'est reconnoître cependant, avant que de voir, que Dieu fait tout, le mieux qu'il est possible, suivant la sagesse infinie qui regle ses actions. Il est vrai que nous en avons déjà des preuves & des essais devant nos yeux, lorsque nous voyons quelque chose d'entier, quelque tout accompli en soi, & isolé, pour ainsi dire, parmi les Ouvrages de Dieu. Un tel tout, formé, pour ainsi dire, de la main de Dieu, est une plante, un animal, un homme. Nous ne saurions assez admirer la beauté & l'artifice de sa structure". *Theodicy* (§ 134).

35 "L'ordre, les proportions, l'harmonie nous enchantent, la Peinture & la Musique en sont des échantillons; Dieu est tout ordre, il garde toujours la justesse des proportions, il fait l'harmonie universelle: toute la beauté est un épanchement de ses rayons" (*Theodicy*, Preface, 27).

36 "Et quand on y réussira à l'égard de sa justice, on sera également frappé de sa grandeur & charmé de sa bonté, qui paroîtront à travers les nuages d'une Raison apparente, abusée par ce qu'elle voit, à mesure que l'esprit s'élevera par la véritable Raison à ce qui nous est invisible, & n'en est pas moins certain". *Theodicy* (§ 81).

knowledge. The passions of Christ motivate them to see the benefits to suffering. For both of these rationalists, passions have cognitive benefits. Like Christ, human beings suffer in life and do so for the good of other creatures. Like John the Baptist in the *Isenheim Alterpeice*, Conway and Leibniz see suffering as part of the rational order of God's world. Recognizing how passions fit into that order is the first step to important knowledge about God and creation. In the end, Conway and Leibniz ask us to meditate on the rational order of things while acknowledging its moments of pain.

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Cecilia Muratori

Henry More on Human Passions and Animal Souls

Abstract: Opposing Descartes' mechanistic interpretation, Henry More famously defined the latter's opinion as "murderous", suggesting his concern for the ethical outcomes of considering animals as deprived of a soul. In this essay I examine More's ethical attitude towards the animals in a broader context, analysing in particular the role he ascribes to that level of life that human beings share with brutes: animal life. This investigation shows that the main focus of More's interest is to preserve this connection between the lives of animals and the lives of humans, and at the same time it explains the limits of More's ethical concern for the animals.

Introduction

In a letter to Descartes, in December 1648, Henry More famously declared:

Cæterum a nulla tuarum opinionum animus meus [...] æque abhorret, ac ab internecina illa et jugulatrice sententia, quam in Methodo tulisti, brutis omnibus vitam sensumque eripiens, dicam, an potius præripiens? neque enim vixisse unquam pateris.¹

And he continued: "Sed videamus, obsecro, quid in causa est, quod in brutas animantes quicquam tam severiter statuas".² As is well known, this letter opened up a debate between the two philosophers, a debate that did not end with any sort of agreement on the topic of the existence of a soul in animals.

1 Descartes 2009, 2600. Cohen 1936 translates this passage as follows: "For the rest, my spirit [...] turns not with abhorrence from any of your opinions so much as from that deadly and murderous sentiment which you professed in your *Method*, whereby you snatch away, or rather withhold, life and sense from all animals, for you never concede that they really live". On More's reception of Descartes's philosophy see Nicolson 1929, 362 ff. On the "murderous opinion" see Crocker 2003, 241 and also 69. Serge Hutin also examines the correspondence and briefly refers to the conception of animals as automata: Hutin 1966, 98. The topic of the animal soul in the correspondence with Descartes is mentioned several times in Cottingham 1978. On More's critique of Descartes pertaining the role of spirit or soul see Hutton 2004, 41–43.

2 Descartes 2009, 2600: "But let us examine, I pray, what it be that causes you to judge so severely of animals". Cohen 1936, 50.

As other critics have argued, Descartes's point was anyway not really to prove that animals lack souls, but to explain what can be demonstrated mechanically: everything that animals perform can be fully understood by means of referring to the mechanics of their bodies, making it unnecessary to appeal to the existence of a soul (or rather of a mind, *mens*) as the cause of certain behaviour.³

In this essay I will try to reconstruct the reasons for More's critique of Descartes's opinion regarding the soul in animals, focusing in particular on the ethical outcomes of More's argument. Despite the fact that his compassionate attitude towards animals, his "kindness to the beasts", has often been stressed,⁴ I want to suggest that arguing for the existence of a soul in animals is only a step in a wider project carried out by Henry More, the wider project consisting in his speculation on the role of an *animal life* in all animals – intending this last word, animals, in the broadest sense, including both human beings and the so-called brutes. Explaining the existence and the role of the animal life in human beings *and* brutes appears to be at the centre of Henry More's concern in many of the writings published after the controversy with Descartes. From this perspective, Henry More's arguments in favour of the existence of a soul in animals can be interpreted in the light of his attempt to define the concept of animal life and to prove not only its presence in the soul of all animals but especially its key role in the dynamics of the *human* soul. In fact the conception of animal life in its relation to the structure of the human soul seems to be the focal point even of Henry More's speculations on the soul of animals. In other words, reflection on the life and the soul of animals may be seen as a by-product of another topic that occupies a central place in Henry More's prolific production, that is the explanation of how to deal with that animal that inhabits the human soul: the passions that derive from living in a body and which constitute an important part of animal life.

Starting with remarks on the correspondence with Descartes, I will show that the life that More attributes to animals in the letters is nothing other than

³ See for instance Morris 2000, 402–403: "[...] Descartes aimed to *extend* the range of application of *mechanical* explanation beyond its then-accepted range. *L'Homme* explicitly set out to demonstrate that all of the functions which were traditionally taken to require a vegetative or a sensitive soul could be performed by an 'organic machine'. [...] Thus his aim was to explain *sentience* without recourse to a sensitive *soul*. Success in doing so, if combined with Ockham's razor, would imply that animals did *not* have 'any vegetative or sensitive soul'". Cfr. also Des Chene 2006, 331. See also Des Chene 2001, 6: "The human case retains its centrality, if only because Descartes wrote very little on animals and almost nothing on plants".

⁴ See especially Ward 2000, 58–59: "Nay, his *Kindness* went so low as to the very *Beasts*; Who *had the least* (he said) *and worst of it*. And he abhorr'd that Cruelty and Stupidity of Temper with which over-many are apt to treat the Animals of whatsoever kind".

the animal life he defines in works written after 1650, such as for instance *An Explanation of the Grand Mystery of Godliness*. I will then sketch briefly how More develops the concept of animal life and why it is so important to his theory that its presence should be recognized in animals too.

The result of this investigation will show the reasons for the necessity of preserving the lives and the souls of animals (as More openly declares in the letters to Descartes), but also reveal the main focus of More's reflections on the animal soul, that is the existence and the role of the animal which every human being carries in himself. That animal is in my opinion Henry More's main preoccupation – and this also explains the limitedness of his ethical reflections regarding *real* animals.

Despite calling Descartes's opinion on the animal-machine a murderous one,⁵ Henry More does for instance not seem to doubt that animals should be killed literally, to become food not just for other animals but especially for human beings. I will come in the conclusion to More's considerations on these ethical issues, arguing that the exclusive concentration on the correspondence with Descartes leads to a misunderstanding of More's position. More's description of the usefulness of animals for mankind in *An Antidote Against Atheism* supports in my opinion the interpretation I am suggesting of the connection between animal souls and human passions in the work of the Cambridge Platonist, helping to cast light on an apparent puzzle: why is Henry More's insistence on the existence of a soul in animals so detached from any deep ethical concern about them?

1 Animal Life and Animal Souls

The strongest link between the existence of a soul in animals and the conception of animal life is suggested by More himself, who often uses interchangeably the words *anima*, soul, and *vita*, life⁶. “Animal life” and “animal soul” appear thus in many cases to intertwine in More's argumentation. Further, in More's letter to Descartes of December 1648, the Cambridge Platonist writes that his correspondent has deprived animals of their life in depriving them of a soul. Indeed depriving animals of a soul corresponds, for Henry More, to

⁵ Hall 1997, 152: “But the doctrine of Descartes that most appalled More was his denial of life and sensation to animals – More calls it a sentence of execution, ‘a deadly and lethal pronouncement’, a sword cutting off the living stream from all creatures leaving them as mere statues or machines”.

⁶ See Cohen 1936, 57.

depriving them of life altogether. Despite Descartes's answer to this accusation (“[...] vitam enim nulli animali denego, utpote quam in solo cordis calore consistere statuo [...]”, he writes to More in February 1649),⁷ Henry More persists in his idea that if animals don't have a soul, they can't have a life either. As Leonora Cohen noticed in her essay *Descartes and Henry More on the Beast-Machine*, while Descartes intends soul to mean *mind (mens)*, More interprets it in the sense of *life (vita)*.⁸ And indeed in his letters to Descartes, More describes a series of activities that animals perform and that in his opinion are signs of the life that inhabits them: they express their needs and especially they show us their feelings and passions, as in the following example:

Canis famelicus, cum furtim quid abstulit, cur quasi facti conscius clam se surripit, et meticulose ac diffidenter incedens nemini occursanti gratulatur, sed averso pronoque rostro suam ad distans pergit viam, suspitiose cautus, ne ob patratum scelus pœnas luat?⁹

The reason for this behaviour – so More – lies in the fact that the dog perceives, reacts to the environment around him, and is able to feel passions very similar to ours. In a word, the dog is an animal with a life, and this life consists mainly in his bodily perceptions and the passions generated from this experience. More insists that animals are *really* alive, and *really* feel, not like automata devoid of sensation. It is this kind of life – the passions and perceptions –, and not chiefly the existence *per se* of a soul in animals, that the Cambridge philosopher wants to protect from Descartes's attacks.

But of course the kind of life More attributes to the dog in the example, constitutes a relevant part of the life of human beings too. And this is indeed the point of More's argument: the dog's behaviour shows us that he feels joy, shame and other emotions, just like we do. Perception (in the wider sense of the term, including passions) is what we share with brutes, while reason is that which differentiates man from the beasts.¹⁰ Reason appears to be for More an absolute limit dividing man from animals – reason has nothing to do with the behaviour of the dog described, and indeed More will never argue in favour

⁷ Descartes 2009, 2624. Cohen 1936, 53: “[...] for to no animal do I deny life, inasmuch as that I attribute solely to the heat of the heart [...]”.

⁸ See Cohen 1936, 57: “The identification of *vita* with *anima* is not peculiar to More”.

⁹ Descartes 2009, 2602. Cohen 1936, 51: “The famished dog, when he has furtively snatched a morsel, why does he steal off secretly as if conscious of his deed, and show joy to one as he passes timidly and shyly in retreat, but with cringing lowered head pursue his way into the distance, suspiciously on guard lest he be punished for the crime committed?”

¹⁰ More 1660, 46. About the specific characteristics of man's soul see for instance: More 1662, 53 ff.

of attributing to animals anything more than that which he attributes to the dog in the conversation with Descartes: life, *animal* life.

In *An Explanation of the Grand Mystery of Godliness*, More defines animal life as follows:

[...] we say first in General, That the *Animal life* is that which is to be discerned in *Brutes* as well as in *Men*, which at large consists in *the Exercise of the Senses, and all those Passions that Nature has implanted in them*, either for the *good* of them in *particular*, or for the *Conservation* of their *Species*.¹¹

What More describes in these lines is nothing other than that life which he attributes to animals in the letters to Descartes. Two aspects are to be noted in particular: First, that animal life has its foundation in the senses, in the body; and second, that brutes and human beings share this level of life.¹² In fact in the text that follows, More distinguishes between animal life and divine life, the latter being “[...] the *Light* and the *Purification* of the Eye of the Mind, whereby Reason becomes truly illuminated with the Divine and Moral concernments”.¹³ He then asks why God does not make it possible for human beings to attain divine life immediately, without having to suffer the “tedious and irksome trouble” that accompanies animal life.¹⁴ He replies that

[...] That estate that the Soul of the Blessed at last arrive to, which is the crowning of the *Divine life* in them with *Glory* and *Immortality*, is so *Excellent* and *Transcendent a Condition*, that it is very just and congruous that no free Agent should ever arrive to it but through a competent measure of *Tribulation* and *Distress* [...].¹⁵

11 Ibid.

12 Ibid.: “Whence it will likewise appear That there is simply no *Evil* but *Good* in the *Animal* life it self; but that our undue use of, or immoderate complacency in, such *Motions* is the only *Sin*: which is plain in the outward *Senses*. But we shall chiefly, though very briefly, consider the *Passions* of the brute *Creatures*. The general *Root* of these questionless is *Self-love*, which though is found odiously (as it ought to do taken in the worst sense) amongst men, yet it is a right and requisite *Property* of life in every brute *Animal*”.

13 Ivi, 55. Between *Animal Life* and *Divine Life*, Henry More places a third level called “[...] *Middle life* or *Facultie* of the Soul of Man betwixt the *Divine* and *Animal*; which if we might name by our general *Principle* or common *Root* thereof, we may call it *Reason* [...]” (ivi, 51).

14 Ivi, 43: “[...] it is likely some will be forward to enquire, *What is this Animal life*, and *what the Divine*, that this must so pompously triumph over the other? and why, if the one be so much more pretious in the eyes of God then the other is, does he not without so long *ambages* and tiresome circumstances enthrone her at once, giving her due honour without delay, and mistaken and lapsed Souls that happiness they are capable of, without so tedious and irksome trouble?”

15 Ivi, 44.

Human beings thus share with brutes the tribulation caused by living in a body – a body that feels through its senses, experiences pleasure and also suffers.¹⁶ This happens in animals as well as in man, with the difference that animals will never be able to attain to anything else, while man can hope to achieve a different level of life, divine life.¹⁷ In this way More justifies the fact that human beings and animals not only have but even should have in common this troublesome experience of living in a body, and the effects that derive from it, including “all those passions that Nature has implanted [in the Senses]”.

It is however not clear whether animal life should be considered the source of more complex passions: how is it to be explained, for instance, that certain animals, such as apes and elephants, seem to worship the sun and the moon? Is that also a passion simply implanted in the senses? More answers as follows:

I will not deny that in *Apes* and *Elephants*, and such like brutes Creatures that bid nearer towards humane perfection, that the sight of the *Sun* and the *Moon* may sometime cause a strange kind of Sense or Impress in them, some uncouth confounded Phantasm consisting of *Love*, *Fear*, and *Wonderment*, near to that *Passion* which in us is called *Veneration*. So great power have the more notable Objects of Nature upon the weak Animal senses. And therefore though *Religion* be not, yet *Idolatry* may be the *proper fruit of the Animal life*, as is handsomly discoverable in the *Worship of the Sun and Moon*.¹⁸

On closer consideration, the precise limits of the realm of animal life appear to be more difficult to set than More's definition suggests. In this passage he has on the one hand introduced a certain scale of perfection among beasts, according to which some are closer to humans than others; on the other hand, he has articulated human complex passions, such as veneration, in a multitude of feelings that pertain to animal life and that would explain the behaviour of creatures such as apes and elephants. But the main point that differentiates animal life in animals and in human beings lies elsewhere: it is the fact

¹⁶ On the soul-body connection according to Henry More see Leech 2005, a detailed study in which the author convincingly argues in favour of a shift in Henry More's understanding of this problem (cfr. 5–6 and also 48–49). I thank David Leech for granting me permission to quote from his unpublished doctoral thesis.

¹⁷ More 1659, 418: “For the *Animal life* being as essential to the Soul as union with a Body, which she is never free from; it will follow that there be some fitting gratifications of it in the other World”. The passage is also quoted in Leech 2005, 179. See on this aspect also Ward 2000, 61.

¹⁸ More 1660, 50. The main source on this behaviour of monkeys and elephants is of course Pliny's *Naturalis Historia*, book 8 (see for instance 8, 1, 1). On the elephants's religiosity see also Tommaso Campanella 2007, 91 (see especially Germana Ernst's footnote on the same page).

that animal life in itself is always good, while lack of moderation causes man (but never the animal) to linger in the realm of senses and to sin. This – explains More – derives from the fact that man is a free, rational agent, while the animals know no other conduct than the impulses which animal life urges upon them. Man thus needs to keep the inclinations of animal life within the boundaries of moderation – in other words, he needs to tame his passions.

2 Taming Animal Life

In *Divine Dialogues* the topic of the existence of a soul in animals, the concept of animal life and the taming of the passions intertwine again in the second dialogue, where Descartes's automata-theory is also taken into account. Philotheus (the main voice in the dialogues and defined at the beginning of the book as "A zealous and sincere Lover of God and *Christ*, and of the whole Creation")¹⁹ discusses with the other characters in the dialogues how the existence of a divine providence can be reconciled with the affliction suffered by living beings through diseases. Diseases – explains Philotheus – "[...] may well be approved of by the Divine Wisdom for sundry Reasons. As first, While they are inflicted they better the minde in those that are good, and are but a just Scourge to them that are evil [...]"²⁰ Bathynous, "The Deeply-thoughtfull or profoundly-thinking man"²¹ adds that "outward *Evils*" help us in "[...] seriously bethinking our selves of the duties of Piety and Vertue [...]"²² In other words, unpleasant events such as diseases have a taming effect, helping to keep the dangerous passions of animal life within the boundaries of moderation. But why, then, do animals suffer? – asks Hylobares, the materialist (and it is interesting to note that the materialist is the only character in the dialogue to show any interest in the lives and suffering of animals).²³ This is the question that steers the focus of the dialogue from human passions to animal souls.

¹⁹ More 1668a, unnumbered cast-list page before the first *Dialogue*.

²⁰ Ivi, 218.

²¹ Ivi, unnumbered cast-list page.

²² Ivi, 218.

²³ Cfr. Ivi, 228: "And therefore I will not so much insist upon the death of dumb creatures, as upon such Accidents as may make their lives more lingringly miserable; as the putting some Limb out of joint, the breaking of a Bone, or the like. For why does not that invisible Power that invigilates over all things prevent such sad Accidents? it being as easie for him that made them to keep them from harm, as it was to make them; he being *able* to doe all things without any trouble or disturbance to himself, and being so *good* and *benign* as to despise none of his innocent Creatures".

Cuphophon, “A zealous, but Airie-minded, *Platonist* and *Cartesian*, or *Mechanist*”,²⁴ reminds his interlocutors of the “[...] peculiar Notions of that stupendious Wit *Des-Cartes*: amongst which that touching Brutes being mere *Machina*’s is very notorious”.²⁵ Descartes’s theory is defined as a “new Hypothesis” that “sweeps away all these Difficulties at one stroke”²⁶ – difficulties such as having to explain why animals suffer if unpleasant events (such as diseases) cannot have in their case the function of taming their passions. According to the definition in *An Explanation of the Grand Mystery of Godliness*, the animal life consists purely of sensation and passions – thus animals are quite incapable of reflecting on their passions with the aim of taming them. The interlocutor in *Divine Dialogues* then considers whether Descartes’s theory may not offer after all the only way to “sweep away” such problems. Hylobares objects that this theory is a “subtil invention” since it implies excluding “[...] brute Creatures always from Life, that they may never cease to live”,²⁷ thus connecting the conception of a soulless machine with the deprivation of life, just as Henry More had done in the letter to Descartes already quoted. According to this representation of Descartes, as presented in this account, animals are then not only deprived of a soul, but are banished from life, that is from the kind of life that they, according to More, actually share with humans: the life of sensation and passions. And it is precisely this link between humans and animals that More does not want to destroy.

Nevertheless, Philotheus sees a possible danger in insisting too much on the connection between animals and human beings, as the materialist Hylobares seems to do: though it is important to stress that animals and humans share that level of animal life (arguing against Descartes), one should not forget that animals are not like human beings, since they do not know any other level of life, but are completely determined by self-love, which is the defining characteristic of animal life. Philotheus thus warns Hylobares as follows:

For you phansie Brutes as if they were Men: whenas they have no other Law then the common Law of Nature, which is the Law of *Self-love*, the cravings of which they will satisfie, what-ever is incommodated thereby.²⁸

²⁴ Ivi, unnumbered cast-list page.

²⁵ Ivi, 233. The passage from which this quotation is taken reads: “I am heartily glad to see this puzzling Objection brought upon the Stage; not that I would have the cause of Providence any way entangled or prejudiced, but that there is so fit an opportunity of shewing the unparallel’d unsefulness (in the greatest exigencies) of that peculiar Notions of the stupendious Wit *Des-Cartes* [...]”.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ivi, 234.

²⁸ Ivi, 238–239.

The reader is thus left with these key assumptions: Descartes's theory is denied because it implies depriving animals of life; but animals share with humans the realm of sensation and passions – animal life – and there is no reason for assuming that animals don't really feel just like we do (one might think again of the starving dog mentioned in More's letter to Descartes). Nevertheless sensation and passions, quite simple ones, based on self-love, are all that animals share with humans: nothing more and nothing less.

As we have seen, the main aspect of Henry More's critique of Descartes's theory consists in his refusal to cut off the connection between animals and humans, represented by, *and only by*, animal life. But why is this connection so important to Henry More? One reason already appears clearly in *Divine Dialogues*: this is Henry More's idea of the structure of the soul. Animals and humans share the impulses of animal life, but man can elevate himself beyond this by taming the passions and pursuing virtue. As stated in the passage just quoted from *An Explanation of Grand Mystery of Godliness*, divine life can be attained only through the tribulations of animal life, by fighting actively against the temptations of passions. The role of the passions is therefore essential: they should not be eliminated, but tamed. In the taming lies the virtuous behaviour of man. Likewise, More argues that animal life cannot and should not be eliminated – neither in animals nor in human beings.

In *Enchiridion Ethicum* Henry More thus explains that passions should not be considered only as an impediment: “[...] per Passiones fit quòd vita sensúsque in nobis plenior sit, multóque subindè excitator: Sunt enim Affectus, Animi quasi alæ vel quadrigæ, quemadmodum olim in *Phædro* suo notavit *Plato*”.²⁹ And, this time quoting Descartes in support of his theory, he writes: “Neque illud prætereundum est quod ingeniosè innuit *Cartesius*, quòd Passiones videntur certissimus & solidissimus animæ nostræ thesaurus”.³⁰ Passions, which make up an essential part of animal life, are thus not to be cast out of man's soul: if properly experienced and disciplined they are a fundamental source for the life of man in his body. In *Conjectura Cabbalistica* More writes:

²⁹ More 1668b, 33. *Enchiridion Ethicum* was translated into English by Edward Southwell and published in 1690 under the title *An Account of Virtue*. In the translation, this passage reads as follows: “From all which it is further plain, that by the service of the Passions, our Life and our Senses are more dilated, and also quickened: even as *Plato* noted in his *Phædrus*, That the Affections were as the Wings and the Chariots of the Mind. Des Cartes also says very happily, that the Passions seem to be a most certain and solid Treasure of the Soul”, More 1690, xxiii.

³⁰ More 1668b, 33–34.

“Wherefore the Passions of the Body are not to be quite extinguished, but regulated [...]”.³¹

Eliminating animal life would then create serious structural problems in More’s argument: not only because, platonically speaking, it is quite unthinkable that animals should be soulless,³² but mainly because of the implications this has for the human soul. By undermining the structure of animal life – the level of being shared by humans *and* animals – the understanding of human life itself is threatened. Animal life is necessarily linked with the experience of feeling through a body, an experience that animals and humans share and whose role in the dynamics of human life is not only a negative one.³³ In this sense, the fact the animal life is extended to beings other than humans appears essential for explaining the functioning of human passions: if animals don’t have an animal life, this common ground is dissolved.³⁴ But animals, according to More, are trapped in their bodies almost to the point of being identified

31 More 1653, 206. Also quoted in: Lichtenstein 1962, 82. On the topic of keeping the animal life under control, see also Ward 2000, 61: “[...] *bearing so strict an Hand, and having so watchful an Eyeover their Subtil Enticements and Allurements, and that firm and loyal Affection to that Idea of Coelestial Beauty set up in our Minds, that neither the Pains of the Body, nor the Pleasures of the Animal Life, shall ever work us below our Spiritual Happiness, and all the Competible Enjoyments of that Life that is truly Divine*”.

32 See Crocker 2003, 148 on the rational and theological difficulties in denying a soul to animals. See *Letter VII* in Ward 2000, 174 about the descent of the souls into the body, with special reference to the souls of beasts: “[...] for as to this Act of *efforming the Matter*, the *Souls of Men, Beasts and Plants*, act after the same manner”. (More is responding to a letter by Anne Conway (ivi, 169), in which she had asked: “[...] how the *Souls of Beasts and Plants* came into *Bodies*?”).

33 On this positive aspect of animal life, More writes the following to Lady Anne Conway: “For the *Soul of Man* having *Affections* as well as *Reason*, and there being no small part of Pleasure in the Exercise of them also, and they being more full and high in all likelihood *in the Body*, then *out of the Body* [...] it seems reasonable, that the Exercise of *Passions* is more *palpable* and *sensible* in the *Body* than *out of* it. [...] I will conclude that it is no *Sin* to be found in the *Body of Earth*, much less of *Air* or *Light*: But to be *addicted* so to the *Matter* or *Body*, as to forget *God*, and seek a *Man’s self*, that is the only *Sin* [...]”. (In: Ward 2000, 171–172).

34 On the passions as a common ground shared by animals and humans see also More 1662, 82, where More argues that the usefulness of the passions in the animals is a proof that they must play an important and useful role in the life of human beings as well: “But there is neither *Hope*, nor *Fear*, nor *Hate*, nor any peculiar *Passion* or *Instinct* in *Brutes*, that is in vain: why should we then think that Nature should miscarry more in *us* then in any other *Creature*, or should be so careful in the *Fabrick* of our *Body*, and yet so forgetful or unlucky in the framing of the *Faculties* of the *Souls* [...]?”

with them: their brutish nature consists in feeling.³⁵ While the life of animals coincides entirely with animal life, the life of human beings doesn't.

Nevertheless, More insists on the fact that animals and humans feel very similarly through their bodies, even if man can then actively intervene on his passions. As Aharon Lichtenstein wrote in his monograph on More, the conception of animal life and the positive role of the passions fit into More's "unitary vision", which is based on "[...] the acceptance of nature – physical as well as human – [...]".³⁶ It is indeed this unitary vision which Henry More wants to safeguard and which Descartes's automata-theory puts at risk by casting animal life out of animals. David Leech has argued that More saw a threat in Descartes's mechanicism, which seemed to "[...] encroach too far, i.e. in the realm of *life*, thus destroying the unity of soul".³⁷ I suggest that More's defense of animal souls, as part of his conception of animal life, can be read in this frame. Descartes implied that animals' bodies are lifeless ones, thus introducing a dangerous dualism where Henry More saw a connection: that is between the bodies of animals and the bodies of humans, and the common sharing of the animal life.

Protecting the existence of the life of animals against Descartes, then, also means protecting the role of animal life altogether. But does this mean that according to Henry More human beings should have ethical concerns about the way they treat animals? In the concluding remarks I will show why for Henry More it does only in a very limited way.

3 Ethical Conclusions

We saw that in *Divine Dialogues* the materialist, Hylobares, raised the question about animal suffering. The discussion focuses on the example of hunting: would it not be better if God's intervention would secure that during hunting animals were killed immediately and not injured, as often happens?³⁸ Philotheus replies that God made the world to function independently of his inter-

³⁵ See the *Interpretation Generali* at the end of the 1647 edition of his *Philosophicall Poems*, More 1647, 434.

³⁶ Lichtenstein 1962, 83.

³⁷ Leech 2005, 118.

³⁸ More 1668a, 227: "[...] I will not so much insist upon the death of dumb Creatures, as upon such Accidents as may make their lifes more lingringly miserable; as the putting some Limb out of joint, the breaking of a Bone, or the like".

vention, like an *Automaton* or *Machina*.³⁹ And anyway – he adds – it doesn't happen so very often that animals suffer injuries unless we actively intervene to inflict them; and so the problem is soon dropped.⁴⁰

In *An Antidote Against Atheism*, More's view on the matter of the ethical treatment of animals comes to light more clearly. Here he argues explicitly that animals are made for the sole purpose of serving man with their skins, their flesh, or simply their assistance (provided, for instance, by the dog). The “designed usefulness”⁴¹ of all animals for mankind is indeed a proof that the world is not aimless or merely accidental, as the atheists might argue, but that on the contrary everything we observe in the world is shaped by divine providence.⁴² The fact that man's existence strongly depends on animals is according to Henry More a clear sign that man is supposed to dispose of them in whatever way he sees fit. From this perspective, animals and men perfectly fit together, as More shows in the following passage:

[...] It is wonderful easie and natural to conceive, that as almost all are made in some sort or other for humane uses, so some so notoriously and evidently, that without main violence done to our Faculties, we can in no wise deny it. [...] When we see in the solitary fields a *Shepherd* his *Flock*, and his *Dog*, how well they are fitted together [...] to say nothing of *Duck-hunting*, of *Fox-hunting*, of *Otter-hunting*, and a hundred more such like

39 Ivi, 226–227: “*Hyl*. [...] For why does not that invisible power that invigilates over all things prevent such sad accidents? it being as early for him that made them to keep them from harm, as it was to make them; he being *able* to do all things without any trouble or disturbance to himself, and being so *good* and *benign* as to despite none of his innocent Creatures. *Phyloth*. This is pertinently urged, *Hylobares*. But I answer, That God has made the World as a complete *Automaton*, a *Machina* that is to move upon its own Spring and Wheels, without the frequent recourse of the Artificer; for that were but a Bungle”. See also Ivi, 229: “*Philoth*. As for example, when one shoots at a flock of Pidgeons or a flush of Ducks, do you expect that Divine Providence should so guide the shot that it should hit none but what it kill'd outright, and not send any away with a broken leg?”

40 Cfr. Ivi, 228–229: “But if an immediate extraordinary and absolute Power did always interpose for the safety of the Creature, the efficacy of that Intellectual Contrivance of the Matter into such Organs and Parts would be necessarily hid from our knowledge, and the greatest pleasure of natural Philosophy come to nothing. Which is of more concernment then the perpetuall security of the Limbs of every Beast; especially it happening so very seldome that any of them are either strain'd or broken, unless it be long of us, and then Providence is acquitted”.

41 Cfr. More 1662, 62.

42 On the conception of divine providence see Hutin 1966, 111–116, in particular 112: “Dieu est le centre intime de la création. Il est suprêmement bon, et agit toujours pour le bien des créatures. Henry More est un optimiste résolu: tout ce qui existe est bon, et le mal de certaines parties de l'univers est nécessaire au bien du grand Tout”. On the conception of divine providence in *An Antidote Against Atheism* see also Hall 1997, 120.

sports and pastimes that are all performed by this one kind of *Animal* [i.e. *the dog*]; I say, when we consider this so multifarious congruity and fitness of things in reference to our selves, how can we withhold from inferring, That that which made both *Dogs* and *Ducks*, and *Hares* and *Sheep*, made them with a reference to us, and knew what it did when it made them? [...] And unless we should expect that Nature should make Jerkins and Stockens grow out of the ground, what could she do better then afford us so fit materials for *Cloathing* as the *Wooll* of the *Sheep*, there being in Man Wit and Art to make use of it? To say nothing of the *Silk-worm*, that seems to come into the world for no other purpose, then to furnish man with more costly cloathing and to spin away her very entrails to make him fine without.⁴³

The statement that animals were made “with a reference to us” confirms once again that the human being stands for Henry More unequivocally at the centre of the creation, while all other creatures find the purposes of their lives in the relationship they entertain with man: indeed they come to the world only for this reason, as the example of the silkworm shows. According to this position, it follows that the animals’ flesh is definitely meant to be eaten, and indeed More argues even that some animals are in fact nothing else than meat ready to be consumed when man wants, fresh lumps of food that are only waiting to serve their purpose. Despite having declared to Descartes his concern about the destiny of the animals,⁴⁴ it seems like the proper destiny of animals according to Henry More simply consists in making full use of them:

And though it be possible to be otherwise, yet it is highly improbable that the flesh of *Sheep* should not be designed for food for men; and that *Dogs*, that are such a familiar and domestick Creature to Man, amongst other pretty feats that they doe for him, should not be intended to supply the place of a Servitour too, and to take away the bones and scraps, that nothing might be lost. [...] Again, When we view those large Bodies of *Oxen*, what can we better conceit them to be, then so many living and walking powdring Tubs, and that they have *animam pro Sale*, as *Philo* speaks of fishes, that their life is but for Salt to keep them sweet till we shall have need to eat them? Besides, their *Hides* afford us *Leather* for *Shoes* and *Boots*, as the *Skins* of other Beasts also serve for other uses.⁴⁵

Since it corresponds to the providential order of creation that sheep and oxen should be meant for man to be eaten, one such animal dying for instance of old age is interpreted in this frame of thought as a truly ‘wasted animal’, an

⁴³ More 1662, 62–63.

⁴⁴ Descartes 2009, 2600: “[...] de animantium fato sollicitus [...]”.

⁴⁵ More 1662, 62–3. On the “*Goodliness* in the bodie” of the ox see further, 63. On the argument of Divine Providence used in book 2 of *An Antidote Against Atheism* see Crocker 2003, 158 ff.

animal that didn't fulfill its purpose of existence.⁴⁶ Using rhetorical devices similar to those at work in *Divine Dialogues*, More aims at showing that this order of creation is the most harmonious, since such a state of things is convenient not only for man, who benefits from the various services of the animals, but also for the animals themselves. If they were not killed by man – so More – they might “[...] be torn apieces by more cruel Masters”,⁴⁷ by ferocious wild beasts, so that in the end “[...] we plainly see that it is an Act of *Reason* and *Counsel* to have made Man, that he might be a Lord over the rest of the Creation [...]”.⁴⁸

Just as the character of Hylobares had brought to light the uncomfortable and destabilizing question about animal suffering, so also in *An Antidote Against Atheism* More is concerned with clarifying once and for all that killing animals is the most ethical choice (that is assuming of course, as More does, that animals serve no other purpose than supporting man's life). Surprisingly, this point of view is in its essence not very far from Descartes's statement in a letter to More, where the French philosopher had argued that his opinion is not really cruel towards animals, but rather benevolent towards human beings, who are finally freed from any feeling of guilt in eating animals.⁴⁹ Similarly, Henry More aims at showing in *An Antidote Against Atheism* that the creation is designed by divine providence specifically to meet man's necessities and desires: it is – one could say – a design more benevolent towards human beings than cruel towards animals.

More argues that the benefits that animals enjoy under man's subjection far outweigh those which could be attained by living independently in the wilderness, and that even the act of killing them, understood in this context, is far from destabilizing this perfect balance:

[...] [*he, i.e. man*] brought them [*the beasts*] under his subjection, and gave laws unto them; under which they live more peaceably and are better provided for (or at least might be, if Men were good) then they could be when they were left at the Mercy of the *Lion*, *Bear* or *Tiger*. And what if he do occasionally and orderly kill some of them for food? their dispatch is quick, and so less dolorous then the paw of the Bear, or the teeth of the

⁴⁶ See More 1662, 63: “[...] For were it not better that the *Hides* of Beasts and their *Flesh* should be made considerable use of as to *feed* and *cloath* Men, then that they should rot and stink upon the ground, and fall short of so noble an improvement as to be matter for the exercise of the Wit of Man and to afford him the necessary conveniences of life?”

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ Descartes 2009, 2624: “Sicque hæc mea opinio non tam crudelis est erga belluas, quam | pia erga homines, Pythagoreorum superstitioni non addictos, quos nempe a criminis suspitione absolvit, quoties animalia comedunt vel occidunt”.

Lion, or tedious Melancholy and sadness of old Age, which would first torture them, and then kill them, and let them rot upon the ground stinking and useless.⁵⁰

More's conception of the ethical treatment of animals has thus fully come to light: it is not wrong to kill them (quite the opposite in fact), but it would be wrong to torture them to no purpose. Following from what More explained in the previous pages, it is clear that slaughtering animals in order to eat their flesh, or to use their skin, is by no means the exception to the rule, but it must rather be the rule itself. The expressions "some of them" or "occasionally" (to be interpreted in the meaning of: to some occasions) aim at attenuating the impact of what More has nevertheless stated already very clearly: that animals are to be disposed of, just as we dispose of plants or of objects in general, avoiding a situation in which they would "rot upon the ground stinking and" – especially – "useless" (my emphasis).

Indeed, if all men were good, then animals would be killed quickly and without much pain. This idea of moderation is More's only ethical advice in the treatment of the animals, which can and should be slaughtered, just not tortured without need. In *Enchiridion Ethicum*, More states that Nature grants to all creatures – men and animals – the pleasure of enjoying food: from this perspective the act of killing is then considered a necessary way to gain this pleasure, provided that man does not indulge in it exaggeratedly, thus turning a source of pleasure into a possible source of disease and death.

Unde clarè sequitur nihil temerè occidendum esse & sine causa, nec ità voluptati edendi potandive indulgendum, ut perdámus finem illius voluptatis, & morbum mortémque nobis conciliemus.⁵¹

The fact that one should not kill animals "sine causa" seems to suggest a restriction in the range of man's disposal of animals. And yet the statements about the usefulness of animals, born to the world with no other purpose than to serve man, make very clear that almost every use of them is in More's opinion a good cause: from eating them to using their skin, from hunting them to

⁵⁰ More 1662, 63.

⁵¹ More 1668b, 47–48. More 1690, 55: "Whence is clearly follows, that nothing should rashly or causelessly be killed; nor should we so far indulge in the Pleasure of Eating and Drinking, as to lose the end of that Pleasure, and bring upon our selves Diseases and Death". Interestingly, this passage is quoted also on the following website dedicated to "historical literature against cruelty to animals": <http://www.animalrightshistory.org>. This (in many ways very useful) website seems to reflect the common opinion that Henry More's ethical speculations on the treatment of animals were far deeper and more radical than one can in my opinion argue on the basis of the textual evidence.

other such “sports and past-times”. After all, the main reason for not indulging in the pleasure of eating (animals), is that man should avoid becoming ill.

In this context one might consider also the following passage from *Conjectura Cabbalistica*, where More states: “Nor is the Animal Life quite to be starved. For a good man is merciful to his beast”,⁵² a passage that proves again the strong connection between the concept of animal life and questions about the status of animals, also directing attention again to moderation as the sole ethical guideline in the treatment of the animal life, in human beings as well as in animals. Indeed even the generous declaration, contained in *An Explanation of the Grand Mystery of Godliness*, according to which when man attains divine life he develops a feeling of affection towards all his fellow-creatures, remains underspecified if considered in this frame. More writes:

[...] to love and admire God in whom they infinitely and unmeasurably reside, is the truest and highest kind of *Adoration*, and the most grateful *Praising and Glorifying* God that the Soul of man can exhibit to her Maker. But in being thus transformed into this Divine image of *Intellectual Love* our Minds are not onely raised in holy *Devotions* towards God, but descend also in very full and free streams of dearest Affection to our fellow-Creatures, rejoicing in their good as if it were our own, and compassionating their misery as if it were our selves did suffer; and according to our best judgement and power ever endeavoring to promote the one and to remove the other.⁵³

Since no further details are given, we are left with the assumption that after all promoting the good of all creatures, and removing their misery, means again for Henry More simply avoiding unnecessary torture while making full use of the animals, as God has ordained. The pages quoted from *An Antidote Against Atheism* seem to be very clear about the limits of man’s mercy towards the animals, indicating that the creation according to More has its center in the human being, whom the animals are meant to serve.

This is because – as I argued – the focus of More’s interest, even in the correspondence with Descartes, is that link between the animal souls and the human passions. He believed that what Descartes denied to animals he denied also to man as an animal,⁵⁴ that is the importance of the animal life. His view on animals remains therefore, before and after the exchange of letters with

52 More 1653, 205. Cfr. Proverbs, 12,10: “A righteous man regardeth the life of his beast [...]”. More ironically repeats the proverb in a letter to Anne Conway, in which he writes: “[...] be as much idle as the health of your body requires. A good man is mercifull to his beast, and so is a good woman to, I think” (Henry More to Anne Conway, 4th April 1653, in Hutton and Nicolson 1992, 77). In this case the beast is clearly one’s own body.

53 More 1660, 54.

54 Cfr. Coleridge 1969, 76.

Descartes, extremely anthropocentric: animals are made for man's use, their flesh is meant to be eaten. In order to reinforce the fact that killing animals is ethically acceptable, in *An Antidote Against Atheism* More uses the following metaphor:

Besides, all the wit and Philosophy in the world can never demonstrate, that the killing and slaughtering of a Beast is any more then the striking of a bush where a Bird's Nest is, where you fray away the Bird, and seize upon the empty Nest.⁵⁵

Just as in previous passages quoted from the same text, also in this case More minimalizes the role of animal suffering and the ethical relevance of the act of slaughtering. The limits of More's ethical approach thus come to light in the parallel between the life of the animal and the bird in the nest: after all, killing an animal is only a way of properly exploiting the nests, which are there to be used, taking care to drive away the bird first without inflicting too much discomfort (dropping the metaphor: by killing quickly).

Putting More's position in the letters in the context of his reflections on animal life enables us to understand how this apparent conflict – More's passionate defence of the lives of animals on the one hand and his explanations of the usefulness of animals for mankind on the other – is actually not a conflict at all. In other words, considerations on the status of animals *per se* were never on More's agenda. The main purpose of his speculation was always to stress the importance of that level of life that animals share with human beings – nothing less, but also nothing more.

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⁵⁵ More 1662, 63.

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IV. Side glances and further developments

Gianni Paganini

“Passionate Thought”: reason and the passion of curiosity in Thomas Hobbes

Abstract: Three main stages of Hobbes’ reflection on the relationship between reason and the passions are examined here. 1) The first is presented in the Preface to the second edition of *De cive* where Hobbes pleads a strong naturalization of the passions. 2) A step further is taken when Hobbes reflects on the problem of deliberation, that is, on the use of practical reason. During his polemical discourse with Bramhall, he takes sides against the Aristotelian theory of *orexis dianoetike*. 3) Finally, *Leviathan* finds in the passion of curiosity the engine that puts in motion the human mind. This new solution implies going beyond the dualism between reason and the passions, the point at which the preface of the second edition of *De cive* had halted, but at the same time, this solution implies a new definition of human specificity. This is a specificity in which reason and the passions are no longer separate, as in the classical model, but become reciprocally involved to form a unity. Significantly, the “constant” and “regulated train of thoughts”, in which reason exists is called by Hobbes “Passionate Thought”.

In the *longue durée* that stretched from Plato to Kant and preceded the advent of historical reason, the great narratives of philosophy were written by describing abstract individuals with all of their concrete faculties¹, which means that for a long time early modern philosophy was written in chiefly psychological and anthropological terms. Within this scenario, various plots were developed, and without any doubt, reason and passions featured among the principal characters of the drama. In the seventeenth century, theories of right that placed the state of nature in opposition to the political state introduced into these descriptions a dynamic element, implicitly historical, although still too general. In actuality, the great shift represented by the passage from either paradisiacal or barbarian origins to civilization implied a kind of historical consideration of the evolution of human nature. Nevertheless, human faculties that were the protagonists of these new narratives ushered in by Hobbes, Locke and Spinoza still remained the same as before; indeed, the relationship

¹ On the contrary, contemporary psychology might be defined as the abstract description of concrete individuals: I take this insightful formulation from Preti 1977, 43.

between reason and the passions became, if anything, even more crucial, since it was the dominion either of the former or the latter that ended up characterising, respectively, humanity's natural and its political condition.

With regard to this state of affairs, which lasted for more than a millennium, from Plato and Aristotle until the seventeenth century, both roles in the drama have been frequently attributed to Hobbes by contemporary interpretations. For some recent philosophers Hobbes was the first consistent theoretician of purely calculating and instrumental reason, whose idea of philosophy as “nomenclature” and the famous equivalence of thought and calculation are emblematic of the early modern age.² Others, on the contrary, emphasise the role that passion and, in consequence, decision, played in his thought³, as is shown by Hobbes' well-known statement: if men were interested in doing it, that is if there were a passion to push them, then they would even falsify Pythagoras' theorem⁴. It is difficult to reconcile these two very different representations of Hobbes's figure, the most characteristic exponents of which have been, on the one hand, the Frankfurt School, and Carl Schmitt on the other hand. However, in spite of their conspicuous differences, the two views rely on the same traditional scheme, even though they take opposite points of view: sharing the idea that reason has to confront passions in a continuous dualism, the former stresses the role of reason, the latter, in contrast, the role of the will, and therefore passion. Both agree that the clash of the two constitutes a crucial point in Hobbes's theory.

1 “Are all men wicked?” Descartes's criticism and Hobbes's reply

In the beginning, and at least until the second edition of *De cive* (1647), Hobbes, too, reasoned from within this scheme: while recognizing that the passions must not be suppressed, but rather guided by reason, he simply sub-

² See mainly Horkheimer 1970 (first ed. 1930), chapt. II: “Naturrecht und Ideologie”. According to Horkheimer, Hobbes discovered for the first time the historical problem of ideology, but, instead of establishing its dependence on society, he was content with “psychological determinations of the bourgeois world”. In the famous *Dialektik der Aufklärung* (first ed. 1947) Horkheimer and Adorno dealt very briefly with Hobbes, putting him under the category of self-conservation and calculating reason, meaningfully in the *Excursus II*, which is devoted to Sade (“Juliette, oder Aufklärung und Moral”).

³ See for example Schmitt 1922, chapt. II.

⁴ Hobbes 1985 XI, 50/166. The first Arabic number refers to the p. of the *Head* edn., the second to Macpherson edn.

scribed to the classical idea that reason ought to play the decisive role of controlling the emotions, literally coming from above them. In this first phase, Hobbes roughly supported the dualistic scheme that opposes reason and passion, and his only original contribution lay within it: he brought about a strong naturalization of the passions, even while keeping them under the mastery of reason. We shall see that during his Parisian exile Hobbes was led to a deep reconsideration of the specificity of human nature, and in particular of thought; after a difficult discussion with Bramhall on the Aristotelian moral psychology and specifically on the role of reason and the passions in the process of deliberation, he adopted the new conception of “passionate thought”, in which the two opposites merged, thus explaining how reason, through the peculiar human passion of “curiosity”, can lead the process of deliberation, acting from inside and not from above, as was the case in his previous considerations. This is not only the effect of a new alliance of reason and rhetoric, *ratio* and *oratio*, as Quentin Skinner has pointed out; what is more important is also a new idea of the close relationship between reason and passion. The idea of “passionate thought” is a real novelty in Hobbes’s philosophy, which goes much farther than the “reassessment of the art of rhetoric”⁵ and aims, in *Leviathan*, at a deep reconsideration of the philosophical anthropology of his previous works.

Among many other instances drawn from Hobbes’s work, one episode is worth remembering, because it reveals at the same time the continuity of this duality and the internal change effected by Hobbes on one of its terms. The episode we have chosen illustrates one of a long series of clashes with Descartes, though it usually escaped the notice of critical analysts. Finally, even though it may seem relatively slight, this initial transformation of the paradigm was so incisive as to be misunderstood by his contemporaries, including Descartes himself.

In the preface to the second edition of *De cive*, in addition to proposing his well-known metaphor of the state as “a watch, or some such small engine”, Hobbes takes the opportunity to reply as well to some of the objections that had been made when the first edition was published. One of them in particular stands out, targeting one of the central tenets of Hobbes’s doctrine. In fact, the objector seems to have been criticizing the principle according to which men, if they are not held back “through feare of some coercive power”, “distrust and dread each other”, and tend to use force to look after their own interests. As is well known, according to Hobbes, “mutual feare and diffidence” actually guide the behaviour both of individuals and of states; thus each per-

5 Skinner 1996 Chapt. IX.

son locks his own door and states protect “their Frontiers with armed men”⁶. In spite of these plain and common realities, which were clearly stated in the first edition, someone denied, just “in disputing” – Hobbes reports – but not in practice, the factual reality of this behaviour. No author is mentioned by Hobbes in the preface, but it is clear that this kind of criticism aims at replacing the author’s pessimism with a more balanced evaluation of human conduct, if not with a kind of anthropological optimism.

In his reply, contained in the new preface added to the second edition, Hobbes considers the objection to be only a rhetorical commonplace, in the sense that only in words, not in deeds, “very many deny” this given fact of either hidden or open aggressiveness that is constantly found in experience. There is, however, another form of objection that seems to be much more serious. Instead of complaining about the dark picture of man described in *De cive*, others, less numerous (“a trifling few”), tried to give the objection the form of a true theoretical criticism aimed at denouncing the consequences of acknowledging the real or virtual conflict that confronts men:

Some object that this principle being admitted, it would needs follow, not onely that all men were wicked (which perhaps though it seeme hard, yet we must yeeld to, since it is so clearly declar’d by holy writ) but also wicked by nature (which cannot be granted without impiety).⁷

6 Hobbes 1983a, 80; cf. Hobbes 1983b, 32. The whole text in the English version reads as follows: “In the first place I set down for a principle by experience known to all men, and denied by none, to wit, that the dispositions of men are naturally such, that except they be restrained through feare of some coercive power, every man will distrust and dread each other, and as by naturall right he may, so by necessity he will be forced to make use of the strength hee hath, toward the preservation of himself. [...] Some object that this principle being admitted, it would needs follow, not onely that all men were wicked (which perhaps though it seeme hard, yet we must yeeld to, since it is so clearly declar’d by holy writ) but also wicked by nature (which cannot be granted without impiety) [*Homines omnes non modo malos [...] sed etiam naturâ malos esse*]. But this, that men are evill by nature, follows not from this principle; [...] much lesse do’s it follow that those who are wicked are so by nature, for though from nature, that is from their first birth, as they are meerly sensible Creatures [*ex eo quod nascantur Animalia*], they have this disposition, that immediately as much as in them lies, they desire and doe whatsoever is best pleasing to them, that either through feare they fly from, or through hardnesse repell those dangers which approach them, yet are they not for this reason to be accounted wicked [*non tamen ob eam causam mali censeri solent*]; for the affections of the minde which arise onely from the lower parts of the soule are not wicked themselves, but the actions thence proceeding may be so sometimes, as when they are either offensive, or against duty”.

7 Hobbes 1983a, 80 (Praefatio): “Objectum porro à nonnullis est, quod admisso hoc principio, continuo sequatur Homines omnes non modò malos (quod forte etsi durum concedendum tamen est, cùm id clarè dictum videatur in Scripturis sacris, sed etiam (quod concedi

First of all, before commenting on this more insidious objection and the meaning of Hobbes’s reply, we have to ask a question about its authorship: who are these “some”? Although nobody appears to have noticed it, it is highly probable that the core of that objection had been formulated by Descartes in his 1643 letter to Mersenne. In this letter Descartes discussed the doctrine contained in the first edition of *De cive* and recognized that the author of the book (which was published without the author’s name) was the same as the one who wrote the *Third Objections* to the *Meditations*. After reading *De cive*, Descartes realized that this writer was “cleverer at morals than metaphysics and physics”, even though he blames him for adopting in morality “principles” and “maxims that are extremely bad and dangerous, since he supposes men to be all wicked, or he gives them reason to be so”:

Tout ce que ie puis lire du liuvre *de Ciue*, est que ie iuge que son autheur est le mesme que celuy qui a fait les troisiemes obiections contre mes *Meditations*, & que ie le trouue beaucoup plus habile en Morale qu’en Metaphysique ny en Physique; nonobstant que ie ne puisse aucunement approuuer ses principes ny ses maximes, qui sont tres-mauuaises & tres-dangereuses, en ce qu’il suppose tous les hommes méchants, ou qu’il leur donne suiet de l’estre.⁸

Descartes stops right there, on the topic of human nature; he afterwards moves on to different themes such as Hobbes’s supposed monarchism or his strong opposition to the Roman church. Thus, his criticism is very short, yet equally strong, even though he does not affirm that this alleged wickedness would be “by nature”. It is Hobbes who splits the problem into two different halves (“homines omnes esse malos” / “naturâ malos esse”), but it is clear that what is in question for both the English philosopher and his harsh French critic is man’s possible depravity. It is equally clear that that kind of criticism gave Hobbes the opportunity to clarify a difficult topic that pertains strictly to his own philosophical anthropology.

What is more, Hobbes took Descartes’s objection to even further extremes, so that in his answer he is able to graduate his reply according to the gravity of criticism: on one hand, he seems to agree on a kind of generalized “wickedness”, which he is ready to confirm on the authority of the Bible, even though this point is “hard” to accept; on the other hand, he is not ready to subscribe to the “harder” formulation, that is to the thesis of a “wickedness by nature”, which he maintains is an “impious” thesis. However, – as we shall soon see –

sine impietate non potest) naturâ malos esse». See Hobbes 1983b, 33. In the text I quoted the English version.

⁸ Descartes à Mersenne, 1643? (AT IV, 67).

Hobbes's actual thinking on the problem of human "wickedness" is very different from what it might seem to be at a first reading. A close examination of this preface will reveal that the point in question is rather the recognition that passions are absolutely natural to man.

In actual fact, Hobbes's response to Descartes's objection, as it appears in the second edition of *De cive*, is precise and well organised. Over and above the contingent criticism, his reply develops a complex analysis of the relationship between reason and the passions, which characterises the entire first phase of his philosophy, but that is to undergo a decisive turn with *Leviathan*. Hobbes begins by stating an empirical realisation and by laying down a rule of prudence: in order to share his conclusions about the real danger of human aggressiveness, it is not strictly necessary to suppose that all men are "wicked". It is quite enough that some people, even though still fewer than the "righteous", are wicked, for men to be justified in becoming "diffident" and "fearful", and all the more so, because it is always difficult to distinguish the wicked by appearances alone.

Up to now, with these considerations we still are in the field of prudential wisdom, without any commitment to the "hard" question of the good or bad temper of humanity. However, to these tactical considerations Hobbes adds a more theoretical statement that marks a decisive swerve. He goes on by affirming that passions are just as natural to man as is reason, and thus they cannot be considered "wicked", even if the actions arising from them sometimes may be so, for example when they are "harmful or against duty". To demonstrate this, he mentions two examples that we are going to find again in the polemical argument with Bramhall, although in an extended form. These two examples are taken from the behaviour of animals and children.

As he puts it, "the passions of the soul that derive from the animal nature" (for example, those that are found in the actions of children before the advent of reason) are all similar to those that characterise the possibly aggressive behaviour of animals. This is a first step made by Hobbes toward a strong naturalization of passions. Animals, he explains, "are aggressive by nature, that is by their birth" and behave in such a way "as to immediately desire everything that pleases them"; nevertheless, we should not consider animals to be "wicked", because their actions are simply natural. The second step is directed at human beings. Similarly to the beasts, children, too, "have no guilt" when behaving nearly in the same manner, "because they lack the use of reason". In this case, we are not dealing with the fault of passions, but with the default of reason. The evaluation is entirely different in the case of the adult man, whom one assumes to be provided with reason; in that case, a wicked man is like a *puer robustus*, that is a child with all his natural passions, but deprived of the reason he should normally have:

A wicked man is thus the same as a child provided with force, or a man with an infantile soul; and his wickedness is like a lack of reason in an age in which, thanks to nature, guided by education and experience, men have usually already acquired it. If we do not suppose that men are wicked by nature, because they do not receive education and the use of reason from nature, then we must admit that they can by nature feel desire, fear, rage, and the other animal passions, without for this being wicked by nature.⁹

After examining the reality of passions as morally neutral in both animals and children, Hobbes goes on to define “wickedness” not as a matter of evil passions or of sin, but only as a “lack of reason”. The direct consequence is that also in the case of adult men the responsibility for their possible “wickedness” falls on reason rather than on the passions. The latter are not evil in themselves; rather the actions produced by them can be wicked when they are not ruled by reason.

If we look at the whole argument, we can now comprehend that, while pretending to subscribe to the thesis of wickedness (he has really affirmed that one ought to admit that “all men are wicked”), Hobbes is actually overturning that very thesis and showing that passions and desires that are implanted by nature (that is, “from the birth itself”) are not bad, either in animals or in children; these desires become bad when they are not governed by reason, which sometimes happens in adults. Behind the seeming affirmation of a generalized human wickedness (even though not one “by nature”), due to man’s passions and first of all to his aggressiveness, Hobbes is arguing much more for the naturalness of passions, rescuing them from a millennial condemnation, which was made worse by Christianity. What is guilty, for Hobbes, is not the strength of the appetites, but the lack of reason that is supposed to guide them. Thence the description of the adult who is prey to desires as a “*puer robustus*”, a child upset by the strength of appetites that are not balanced by an equal strength of reason. For Hobbes, in the emotional and passionate reality that is common to both man and animals, all traces have been lost of the notions of guilt and sin, and even more so of the Christian idea of original sin. Hobbes’s man, who is simply natural and “not wicked by nature”, must not be represented like Adam before sin, as the theologians would have thought; rather, he is that common man, the same theologians usually describe not as a natural man but as a fallen one.

⁹ Hobbes 1983a, 81: “Ita ut vir malus idem ferè sit quod puer robustus, vel vir animo puerili, & malitiâ idem quod defectus rationis ea aetate qua per naturam, disciplinâ atque damnum experientiâ gubernatam, accedere hominibus solet. Nisi ergo nomine ideo à natura cupiditatem, metum, iram, caeterosque affectus habere animales, ut tamen mali facti à natura non sint”. See also Hobbes 1983b, 33.

As is evident, at least until the second edition of *De cive*, Hobbes is still working within the classical paradigm centred on the difficult balance of reason and passions; his own approach still dwells upon the government of passions by reason; his implicit message more or less endorses a kind of intellectualism in which the key role is given to the control of reason over passions. The novelty is represented instead by the new light shed on passions. Both animals and young men are justified in following their natural appetites. In the adults, the passions are to be guided, but not suppressed by reason, because they are not intrinsically sinful.

To be sure, for Hobbes the consequences of this new approach are much more important than the premises. In actuality, he derives from both moral intellectualism and psychological naturalism implications that are not so usual even in thinkers that share one of these principles. In Hobbes's perspective, not only is the description of the state of nature as "bellum omnium contra omnes" fully justified, due to the natural passions that incite men to seek conflict, but also some of the terminological and conceptual pairs typical of moral and political reflection now acquire new and original meanings.

In the philosophy of the past, the pair of opposites: reason-passions was multiplied into a series of oppositions, such as man-animal, child-adult, citizen (or for Hobbes "artificial man") and man in the state of nature. The first term of each pair always corresponded to the use of reason, and the second to the dominance of the passions. It seems that the starting point for Hobbes's reasoning is very classical indeed and it could be said to relate to a particular version of moral intellectualism which was already codified by philosophers like Socrates or Plato and developed by the Stoics. In this classical perspective, virtuous behaviour (Hobbes would have preferred to say the "right" one) really depends on the dominance of reason over the passions; all blame or wickedness would derive not from the passions as such, but rather from a defect of reason.

Compared to the "objection" related in the preface of *De cive* (second edition), the result of Hobbes's response might look like a paradox. In the preface, on a first and literal reading, Hobbes is arguing that human conduct is actually or virtually aggressive, that is "wicked", according to the objector's point of view or to the common standard. On the contrary, as the follow-up of the argument clearly shows, according to Hobbes's own point of view this same behaviour is perfectly natural and must not be submitted, in itself, to any moral evaluation. To the objector, all this would very likely have turned out to be acknowledging that human nature is truly "wicked by nature", exactly what Hobbes would have excluded. This complicated overlapping of different layers of meaning, according to the different points of view (the objector's one, tex-

tual first reading, second reading, the exaggeration of the objection), clearly explains the complex strategy which is developed in a few lines. However, the whole intention of Hobbes’s discourse is evident.

At the time of *De cive*, and still at the time of the second edition, Hobbes thus operates within the traditional pair reason-passions, continuing to subordinate the latter to the former, even though he holds both to be “natural” and refuses to prejudicially devalue the contribution of the emotions to the life of the adult man. This is already a great innovation. However, in his subsequent works, Hobbes will go much further, up to the point of recombining the opposition reason-passions, and of establishing a much closer relationship between the intellect and the appetite or desire. This is what we are going to call the second paradigm of Hobbes’ psychology that will dominate the doctrine of *Leviathan*; however, in order to better understand the shift from the first to the second paradigm, we need a closer examination of an intermediary phase: the argument with Bramhall, when Hobbes dealt with moral Aristotelian psychology and started subverting the previous scheme based on the dualism of reason and passions.

2 Deliberating animals. Hobbes’s polemical exchange with Bramhall

An important step in this new direction was taken when Hobbes reflected on the problem of “deliberation”, that is, on the use of practical reason, according to the classical Aristotelian model defined in *Nicomachean Ethics*. The occasion was given him by the long polemical exchange with Bishop Bramhall that occupied the philosopher during the years 1645–46 (although the documents relating to it were only published a decade later), therefore a short time before preparing the second edition of *De cive*. Aristotle had drawn up a theory of choice as “desirous reason or reasonable desire”¹⁰ that, on one hand, was

¹⁰ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* (=EN) VI, 2, 1139a35–b5, transl. W. D. Ross: “The origin of action – its efficient, not its final cause – is choice, and that of choice is desire and reasoning with a view to an end. This is why choice cannot exist either without reason and intellect or without a moral state; for good action and its opposite cannot exist without a combination of intellect and character. Intellect itself, however, moves nothing, but only the intellect which aims at an end and is practical; for this rules the productive intellect, as well, since every one who makes for an end, and that which is made is not an end in the unqualified sense (but only an end in a particular relation, and the end of a particular operation) – only that which is done is that; for good action is an end, and desire aims at this. Hence choice is either desiderative reason [*orektikos nous*] or ratiocinative desire [*orexis dianoetike*], and such an origin of action is a man”.

intended to build a bridge between the emotional and the intellectual parts of man, while on the other, it enabled one to clearly distinguish – as Bishop Bramhall reminded Hobbes – between “violent acts and natural acts”, that is, between voluntary and spontaneous acts (which proceed “from an internal principle”), and properly “free” acts, which, as well as coming “from an intrinsic” and not an external cause, require, in addition to this, “a more perfect knowledge of the end” and thus “are elected upon deliberation”¹¹.

From Hobbes’s standpoint, the relation to Aristotelian moral psychology is both positive and negative: the English philosopher agrees with Aristotle in considering that “intellect itself moves nothing” (as Aristotle says) and that all true deliberation and the subsequent action is the result of an appetite; but he disagrees with him in the explanation of the deliberative process, which for him is basically the same for rational men as well as subjects that are not rational.

First of all, we must note that, with regard to the Aristotelian moral categories, Hobbes’s mechanistic psychology breaks all the axiological hierarchies existing among the different principles of action of which the Bishop of Londonderry, as a good Aristotelian, reminds him. Quite properly, of all the principles “moving” the will, Hobbes recognizes in the end a single true one: the transmission of movement from outside, by a sensible object, and the reaction in terms of *conatus*, that is an infinitely small movement, by the inner parts of the sentient being. Within this rigorously causal scheme, dominated by the material cause and by the efficient one, and such as to exclude any role of the final cause¹², all the Aristotelian distinctions that attempt to attribute a superior dignity to human and above all rational will, compared to simple spontaneous actions, seem to lose their meaning. This is the first and strongest objection of Hobbes’ interlocutor. According to Bramhall, “spontaneity” (that is an action that is not coercible) is easily found in animals, in children, in madmen and in the irresponsible, whereas all of them lack “voluntary” action in the true and rational meaning of the word. As the bishop reminds Hobbes, with a logic that is impeccable from the Aristotelian standpoint, these voluntary actions are not simply free in the meaning of spontaneity; they are free in the sense of being the result of a rational deliberation: “[t]hese [voluntary actions] are called free acts. So then the formal reason of liberty is election. The necessary requisite to election is deliberation. Deliberation implyeth the actual use

¹¹ Hobbes 1839–1845b, V, 84. For a definition of deliberation see also *Of Liberty and Necessity* in Hobbes 1839–1845b, IV, 273.

¹² That even in producing will causality operates from the outside is confirmed in *Of Liberty and Necessity*.

of reason”. In the Aristotelian language, really voluntary actions are the product of a “desiderative reason” or “ratiocinative desire” that puts appetites under the control of reason.

Therefore, in Bramhall’s eyes, Hobbes is wrong not to make a clear distinction between spontaneous actions, such as those motivated by the passions (anger, fear) and free actions, which on the contrary, according to the Aristotelian and Scholastic theory, imply a preliminary process of deliberation typically and exclusively of a human agent, since it is based on reason. By contrast, for Hobbes, all actions, whether spontaneous or voluntary, “follow immediately the last appetite” and are the result of basically the same psychological process. Deliberation is the vicissitude of appetite and aversion towards the same thing and lasts so long as there is power to obtain or avoid that which pleases or displeases; the last act of deliberation, that is, the last appetite or aversion, is the will.

For Hobbes, the only difference between actions lies in a peculiarity of this causal mechanism which is entirely emotive or passionate: in the case of an action preceded by deliberation, there is indeed an alternation of different appetites, the last of which determines the will, whereas in the case of “spontaneous” action, which follows the passionate impulse directly, “there is one only appetite” and “that one is the last”¹³. The contrast with Bramhall is clear and is tantamount to the difference between the Aristotelian psychology and the new mechanistic psychology, as developed by Hobbes. From the former standpoint, Bramhall stresses the classical definition of a “free act” as that which “proceeds from the free election of the rational will after deliberation”¹⁴; from the latter, Hobbes replies by denying the very concept of *orexis dianoetike* that, ever since Aristotle’s time, had been the foundation of that definition. My “error”, Hobbes ironically states, “lies in this, that I distinguish not between a rational will and a sensitive appetite in the same man”: for him, appetite, its causality, its efficiency are always the same in both cases¹⁵. By this Hobbes means that the last impulse in the process of deliberation is still an appetite or a desire, not a rational and abstract consideration. The exchange between the two interlocutors is very meaningful in this connection:

Bramhall: “This short section might pass, but for two things: one is that he confounds a voluntary act with a free act”. Hobbes: I do indeed take all voluntary acts to be free, and all free acts to be voluntary; but withal that all acts, whether free or voluntary, if they be

¹³ Hobbes 1839–1845b, V, 345 (LNC=*Questions Concerning Liberty, Necessity, and Chance*).

¹⁴ Hobbes 1839–1845b, V, 363 (LNC).

¹⁵ Hobbes 1839–1845b, V, 365 (LNC). For a wider discussion of mechanistic (and neo-epicurean) assumptions of Hobbes’s psychology, see Paganini 1990.

acts, were necessary before they were acts. But where is the error? “A free act, saith he, is only that which proceeds from the free election or the rational will, after deliberation; but every act that proceeds from the sensitive appetite of man or beast, without deliberation or election, is truly voluntary”. So that my error lies in this, that I distinguish not between a rational will and a sensitive appetite in the same man. As if the appetite and will in man or beast were not the same thing, or that sensual men and beasts did not deliberate, and choose one thing before another, in the same manner that wise men do. Nor can it be said of wills, that one is rational, the other sensitive; but of men. And if it be granted that deliberation is always (as it is not) rational, there were no cause to call men rational more than beasts. For it is manifest by continual experience, that beasts do deliberate.¹⁶

The consequences of this approach are no less important than the fundamentally mechanistic foundation of Hobbes’s psychology. Indeed, it would appear that in stating these consequences the author indulges in a certain bare-faced anti-conformism, as though he deliberately wanted to hurt his interlocutor’s humanistic and Aristotelian culture. He thus openly says that will, in man and in beasts, is “the same thing”, since also animals, like men, “deliberate”: deliberating means for Hobbes to be submitted to a continuous alternation of appetites which precedes the will, and it is clear that also in animals the same process occurs. Not even within the human sphere does the discriminatory criterion based on *orexis dianoetike* hold, since also in “sensual men”, thus men who are not rational according to the category of *Nicomachean Ethics*, the deliberative process is qualitatively similar to that that takes place in “wise men”. It is the very definition of man as a rational animal that Hobbes is casting doubt on: “And if it be granted that deliberation is always (as it is not) rational, there were no cause to call men rational more than beasts. For it is manifest by continual experience, that beasts do deliberate”¹⁷. “Rational animal” defines a genus, not a species, according to Hobbes; the definition of deliberation ends up by including both men and animals. What von Leyden called the “third concept” of liberty in Hobbes¹⁸, that is, freedom of choice

¹⁶ Hobbes 1839–1845a, V, 365 (LNC).

¹⁷ Hobbes 1839–1845a, V, 365 (LNC).

¹⁸ Von Leyden 1982. The first concept being a mere mechanistic notion of the movement of a body which is not hindered by any opposition; the second being the notion of a “free agent [...] that can do if he will, and forbear if he will” (Hobbes 1839–1845a, V, 275). It is impossible to understand the peculiarities of Hobbes’s theory of deliberation, and more in general of the will and choice, without referring to the Aristotelian background the author reacted against. Therefore, it is very surprising that neither the old study by Von Leyden nor the more recent volumes by Overhoff 2000, van Mill 2001, Jackson 2007, mostly entirely devoted to Hobbes’s psychology and, for the last one, particularly to the polemics with Bramhall, do contain any specific treatment of Hobbes’s relation to the text of Aristotle’s *EN*. In Overhoff 2000, 15, we find only one reference to the Aristotelian example of a man jettisoning a cargo in bad weather, which is taken over also by Skinner 2008, 21–22.

before deliberation that literally “takes away liberty” (*de-liberare*), is naturalized, too, during the polemical exchange with a representative of Aristotelian moral psychology such as Bramhall.

Note that in the first text, the one which opens the discussion with Bramhall, i.e. the treatise sent to the Earl of Newcastle, Hobbes mentioned the argument with which the Bishop had countered his equating of spontaneous and voluntary actions. The main tenet of this argument is that, for Bramhall, necessity and choice *cannot* co-exist; for Hobbes, on the contrary, they can, not least in order to guarantee the validity of a covenant signed while impelled by fear. In particular, the bishop was shocked by the examples Hobbes brought of his theory of action in order to destroy the Aristotelian axiological hierarchy between simple desire and rational will. In actuality, in his polemics the English philosopher was constantly referring to some marginal cases that previous philosophers had only considered to be extreme situations, not significant of true human freedom: *i. e.* “the actions of *children, fools, or brute beasts*, whose *fancies* [...] are *necessitated and determined to one*”. Considering these particular cases, Bramhall accuses Hobbes of blurring the true distinction between “the free agent” and the “spontaneous” one. For him, only rational man is “free”, the others, whether children or fools or animals, display only “spontaneity”. Facing this objection that looks like a commonplace as compared to those cases, Hobbes definitely does not back down. Even though he denies in words that he wants to base his reply on “the experience of what children, fools, idiots and beasts” do¹⁹, nonetheless he actually uses precisely those anomalous cases, which are apparently eccentric in comparison to the “normal” model of rational man, in a polemical tour de force. In fact, he aims to show that the lines of demarcation drawn by the classical-humanistic tradition are cancelled out in his own doctrine, since he unites the will and deliberation, on one hand, with causality and necessity, on the other. When confronting the traditional Scholastic distinction between the voluntary and the necessary, Hobbes’s philosophy systematically blurs the divide, even up to the point of inverting the two sides. Thus he intends to demonstrate not only that “spontaneous” actions even of children, fools, idiots and beasts, in reality proceed “from *election and deliberation*”, but also that the “actions *inconsiderate, rash and spontaneous* are ordinarily found in those, that are by themselves and many more thought as *wise*, or wiser than ordinarily men are”²⁰. Given this account of the will, both in the “wise” man and the “fool”, the end result is that for Hobbes “*necessity and election may stand together*”, since he cannot

¹⁹ Hobbes 1839–1845a,V, 242 (LN= *Of Liberty and Necessity*).

²⁰ Hobbes 1839–1845a, V, 243–44 (LN).

imagine a will, even the most rational, that is not produced by a necessary cause: from his point of view there is no notable difference between the will which is moved by passions and the supposed “rational” will.

Undoubtedly, the discussion with Bramhall on the nature of deliberation marks a further step forward compared to Hobbes’s previous formulations on the relationship between reason and the passions. It is true that the author had already presented his peculiar theory of deliberation, although more briefly, in *Elements of Law*; however, he had not explicitly drawn there all the consequences concerning the similarity among adult rational men on one hand and on the other, animals, fools and children.²¹ In the preface to the second edition of *De cive*, as we have seen, the examples of children and animals appear, but the condition of the “wise man” still constitutes a case apart, as if Hobbes had not yet had the time to incorporate the results of his own change of perspective during the altercation with Bramhall.

3 How to overcome the dualism of reason and passion? Hobbes’s problem

In reality, it is precisely the polemical formulations of *Liberty and Necessity* and of *Questions concerning Liberty, Necessity, and Chance* that lay bare the problem that risks remaining unresolved in Hobbes’s approach. Starting from the description of the process of deliberation, which unites all agents and makes no substantial difference between “sensual men” and “wise men”, between men and animals, between adults and children, one might ask at the end how reason can in fact guide passions and direct action, if action is only the result of the “last appetite” in the alternation of passions of desire and flight that characterise the phase preceding the “election”. In short, it appears that in so doing Hobbes has gone too far in naturalising passions, and has ended up by recognizing them to be the only effective motive for human action. It is true that another possibility still remains open: that reason acts not directly, but only indirectly on the will, and thus once again through passions. On this point Hobbes insists, when he declares (again in implicit argument with the Aristotelians, if not with Aristotle, who was ready to recognize them as “mixed actions”, partly voluntary and partly involuntary)²² that an action

²¹ Hobbes 1889, XII, 61–63.

²² See the classical example, which is taken over by Hobbes himself, of one that “throweth his goods out of a ship into the sea, to save his person”: Hobbes 1889, XII, 62. Note that for Hobbes this is an action “altogether voluntary”, whereas such actions were considered by Aristotle as “mixed”. It is true that in sum they are “more like voluntary actions”; however a

performed under the impulse of a passion such as fear is a free action, and not a coerced action, and that therefore even the act of giving up the freedom of the state of nature and signing the covenant derives from a free action. Therefore, the contract is fully legitimate even if the act of subscribing to it is really provoked by the fear of “the most dangerous enemy of nature”, the dread of violent death. All this has remarkable consequences for the entire political theory promoted by Hobbes. As Quentin Skinner has recently pointed out arguing on the political notion of liberty in Hobbes, “[w]hen we covenant out of fear we go through exactly the same process of deliberation as we do when we act out of a more positive passion such as covetousness”²³. Simplifying as far as possible, we might say that, in Hobbes’s scheme, it is a passion (in this case, fear of violent death) that motivates man to use reason, whereas this latter, through calculations of utility, induces us to sign the covenant of union and to submit to authority. However, the decisive impulse, and the last impulse, of which deliberation consists, is still appetite or flight.

In this connection, we might also ask whether fear of the sovereign power – replacing fear of violent death that dominates in the state of nature – is in itself sufficient in the civil society to end once and for all the swinging between the appetites of desire and flight that characterise the deliberating subject. In other words, considering Hobbes’s theory of deliberation, we might raise the famous question of the so-called “fool” who, now finding himself in the civil state, nevertheless continues to think that “to make or not to make; keep, or not to keep Covenants, was not against Reason, when it conduced to ones benefit”²⁴. The problem can be reformulated in terms of the alternation of appetites which constitutes the process of deliberation. Although Hobbes does not explicitly say so, we must suppose that, in the deliberations of the “fool”, that is in his fluctuation between opposite desires, the desire for personal advantage sometimes overcomes the fear of punishment inflicted by the authorities, when he is relatively certain of being safe from punishment. Certainly, in *Leviathan* Hobbes repeatedly stresses that this is “specious reasoning” and “false”, since it is not “reasonable” to expect to receive help once one has broken the covenant, declaring “he thinks he may with reason do

more refined analysis reveals that “in abstract [they are] perhaps involuntary; for no one would choose any such act in itself” (*EN* III, 1, 1110 a 8–19). Hobbes too admits the existence of “mixed” actions, but they are not like the one of a man that jettisons a cargo; in *Elements* “mixed actions” are rather similar to the action of a man that goes to prison: “going is voluntary; to the prison involuntary”.

²³ Skinner 2008, 23.

²⁴ Hobbes 1985, XIV, 72/203.

so”²⁵. In short, what the “fool” makes is all in all an error of rational evaluation, just as it is considerations of reason that advises him to keep the covenant. However, this limited case itself refocuses the spotlight back onto the role of reason in its function of controlling passions, following a model that is certainly an authoritative one in philosophical tradition, but that nevertheless Hobbes had broken with in his polemical exchange with Bramhall on the causes of deliberation.

More generally: might there not be, in Hobbes, a conflict that is hard to resolve between the theory of deliberation, entirely dominated by appetites, on one hand, and on the other hand the fundamental decision to keep the covenant that, on the contrary, is motivated by exquisitely rational considerations? It is true that these considerations are motivated by fear of perishing outside of society and thus by the desire to remain within it, respecting the obligations one has entered into; however, according to Hobbes’s theory of deliberation, the will can be formed only by the last appetite, so that forecasts of the future effects through reason can act on the deliberating subject only in an indirect way, through the passions that are linked to the consequences one foresees. In other words: could it be that, in his reply to the “specious argument” of the “fool”, Hobbes finally presents us with a case of deliberation which is based on a calculation of reason, leaving out of consideration the immediate interest, thus the impulse of the passions? In the altercation with Bramhall, were not those same passionate impulses the ones that determined the processes of deliberation, including in this case of “wise men”?

Recently, Patricia Springborg has devoted considerable attention to this difficulty, stressing the incompatibility between the psychological and deterministic mechanisms. This is well represented by the description of deliberation as an alternation of opposites, mechanistic forces on the one hand, and on the other, “any meaningful concept of freedom”, and therefore the exercise of judgement in human conduct. This is an underlying contradiction that Springborg traces to Hobbes’s both abandoning Aristotelian practical doctrine and identifying the will simply with the last appetite in the course of deliberation:

It is of course precisely because human beings are incapable of consistent judgement in the (Aristotelian) sense of dispassionate deliberation about reciprocal benefit, producing binding commitments that follow from decisions, that covenants are necessary. However, if, according to Hobbes, human beings are incapable of judgement in the usual (Aristotelian) sense, they are also incapable of making promises in the usual sense, understood as binding the will. [...] It is a persistent problem in Hobbes’ epistemology that we are

²⁵ Hobbes 1985, XV, 72/203.

not given the material basis for the calculation of “enlightened self interest”, dictated by the laws of natural reason, that his system to be coherent would require.²⁶

The problem was already outlined by von Leyden who had asked whether there is a point in speaking of a deliberating man according to the principles of scientific determinism.²⁷ But let us continue along this line of reasoning. As we have already remarked, commenting on the polemical exchange with Bramhall, Hobbes precluded the Aristotelian solution of making recourse to “a desirous reason or a reasonable desire” because he had instead adopted a mechanistic theory of deliberation. Therefore, he seems again to be faced with a dualism of reason and passions, movements and ideas, appetites and calculations. His rigorous materialism seems to be incapable of dominating all these oppositions, despite his monistic tendency. Naturalising passions and considering deliberation as a mechanistic procedure both seem to be necessary results of his conception of psychological causation; at the same time they leave open the question of human specificity and of the place of reason therein. Although he had never taken into serious consideration Aristotle’s solution, that at best could have appeared to him to be simply a play on words; and although he never made the problem in question explicit, Hobbes must in some way have been aware of it, since in *Leviathan* we see him attempting to produce an original solution to the problem, and one that cannot be found in any of his previous works.

4 A major change in Hobbes’s thought: philosophical anthropology in *Leviathan*

As Skinner has noted in his book on *Reason and Rhetoric*, a major change occurred in Hobbes’s thought during his Parisian exile; this shift coincided with “a new and far more pessimistic sense of what the powers of unaided reason can hope to achieve”²⁸. The stress in *Leviathan* on interests seems due

²⁶ Springborg 2010, 145. Commenting on Skinner’s book, the author goes even farther, asking whether this sharp contradiction has a huge impact on Hobbes’s whole theory: “If natural liberty entails natural right, in what does the latter consist precisely? Do these notions simply represent fictions, or surrogates for mechanisms of psychological determinism that our cognitive structures do not allow us fully to understand? [...] Most importantly, where does this leave any meaningful concept of freedom?”

²⁷ Von Leyden 1982, 79.

²⁸ Skinner 1996, 347.

to the French context, because that understanding of self-interest as a result of passions and as a power stronger than reason was absent in English political philosophy, whereas on the contrary, it was prominent in France during the Forties.²⁹ This discovery would have led Hobbes to look for a new alliance between philosophy and rhetoric. Skinner concentrated his analysis on the rehabilitation of rhetoric, which would have been the result of a dramatic “*volte face*”³⁰, as compared to the previous devaluation of eloquence as a product of the passions. Now, in *Leviathan*, Hobbes recognizes that “[t]he Sciences are small Power”, whereas “Eloquence is power”³¹, and therefore that reason cannot in itself prevail. According to Skinner, this new stress on the weakness of reason and the necessity of empowering it by rhetorical devices is clearly indicated by the change that occurred in Hobbes’s attitude towards eloquence when passing from *Elements* to *Leviathan*: in the former work he suggested the “art of rhetoric” be “outlawed from civil science”, whereas in the latter he concluded that, although rhetoricians usually rely upon mere opinions and “the passions and interests of men”³², “the science of politics must nevertheless be founded on an alliance between reason and these apparently contradictory faculties”³³, as Skinner notes. This splitting of Hobbes’s work into two phases, according to the place and the importance which is given rhetoric, has been intensely criticized by Agostino Lupoli who made two strong objections to Skinner’s thesis: first, that the characterization of the persuasive and scientific discourses since chapt. XIII of *Elements* is such as to exclude that the latter can be provided in itself with the strength of persuasion; secondly, that the subsidiary function that eloquence is given in the “Review and Conclusion” of *Leviathan* is not enough of a novelty, in comparison to *Elements* and *De cive*, to justify Skinner’s hypothesis of a “*volte face*” or a “new conception of the civil science”³⁴.

It is impossible to settle here the controversy on rhetoric; furthermore, our concern here is basically different: it does not specifically regard either the evaluation of eloquence or its relationship to science, for the shift occurred in the definition of thought itself, by incorporating in it a true motive power that can explain its intervention in the deliberative process. What turns out to be more decisive is that Hobbes, during the French decade of his exile, moved on to a different conception of human specificity, after his polemical exchange

29 Skinner 1996, 427–428.

30 Skinner 1996, 352.

31 Hobbes 1985, X, 41/151.

32 Hobbes 1889, 177; Hobbes 1985, Rev., 389/717–718.

33 Skinner 1996, 354.

34 Lupoli 2006, 31–52, esp. 40.

with Bramhall had brought him to place the “wise” man dangerously close to the “sensual” man, and even men close to the animals, assigning not only to the former, but also to the latter, the power of deliberating. In effect, *Leviathan* draws on all the positive consequences of the new moral psychology that the discussion with Bramhall had already outlined, even though in polemical and paradoxical terms.

This new solution also implies going beyond the dualism between reason and the passions, where the preface of the second edition of *De cive* had halted, it takes into account the mechanistic reconstruction of the deliberative process developed in the controversy with Bramhall; it goes into greater depth on the topic of the closeness between man and animals, which is explicitly avowed in the opening chapters of *Leviathan*. However, at the same time, this solution suggests a new definition of human specificity that cannot be omitted in the comparison to animals. This is a specificity in which reason and passions are no longer separate, as in the classical model and still in *De cive*, but become reciprocally involved to form a close unity. Thus, Hobbes discovers an exit strategy in the aporias of abstract rationalism, to which the concept of reason as mere “calculation” could have reduced him.

In this connection, historiography has usually emphasized the role of language as being the peculiarity of the anthropology that is contained in *Leviathan*, although Hobbes equally stressed the intrinsic ambiguity of this “privilege” that exposes man to the danger of falling into “Absurdity, to which no living creature is subject, but man onely”³⁵. However, the fact remains that without “discourse”, without this “invention”, men could not record their thoughts, call them back to memory, and communicate with each other, “without which, there had been amongst men, neither Commonwealth, nor Society, nor Contract, nor Peace, no more than amongst Lyons, Bears and Wolves”³⁶. Indeed, the philosopher stresses that even “Understanding” is a typical prerogative of man, for the very reason that it consists in “conception caused by Speech”³⁷, nor is the value of this “gift” attenuated by the fact that also animals are recognized as possessing more or less embryonic forms of communication. As well as marking the distance that lies between simple “prudence” (or “experience”) and “knowledge” (or “science”)³⁸, language plays an essential function in the genesis of “reason”, which is not an inborn faculty (“born with us like sensation and memory”), nor is it acquired “only by experience,

³⁵ Hobbes 1985, V, 20/113. See also 12/100.

³⁶ Hobbes 1985, IV, 12/100.

³⁷ Hobbes 1985, IV, 17/109.

³⁸ Hobbes 1985, V, 22/117.

as is prudence”. Rather it requires a complex elaboration, which Hobbes calls “industry”. However, it is also true that, remaining within the limits of his integral mechanism, Hobbes does not assign different material and psychological foundations to human reason than he does to animal prudence, since “besides Sense, and Thoughts, and the Trayne of Thoughts, the mind of man has no other motion” that cannot be common to the other living beings. Even the “movements” that comprise sensibility, and also that rudimentary form of thought that is “prudence”, are to be found in all beings provided with the appropriate organs, including animals. The only real difference between humans and beasts is rather in the degrees and the development of reason and language, the basic elements of which are widely common to both. The distance between men and beasts depends much more on the evolution produced by exercise and learning, in a word, on “industry”, than it does on different natural traits. “[T]he same Facultyes may be improved to such a height, and so distinguish men from all other living Creatures”, Hobbes clarifies immediately afterwards.³⁹

More precisely, what tradition intended by “reason” or “thought”,⁴⁰ Hobbes in *Leviathan* calls “Mentall Discourse”, that is, “a Consequence, or TRAYNE of Thoughts”. In reality, of this succession two types exist: “The first is *Unguided, without Designe*, and inconstant”, as in dreams or in the idle thoughts of those who are without any concern. The second type, evidently more interesting, is on the contrary “more constant; as being *regulated* by some desire, and designe”. Significantly, Hobbes now calls the latter: “Passionate Thought”. This entire paragraph is worth quoting because this telling expression “passionate thought” is unparalleled as such in the previous works and makes its very first appearance in *Leviathan*:

This train of thoughts, or mental discourse, is of two sorts. The first is unguided, without design, and inconstant; wherein there is no passionate thought to govern and direct those that follow to itself as the end and scope of some desire, or other passion; in which case

³⁹ Hobbes 1985, III, 11/98–99.

⁴⁰ To be more precise, from the “train of thoughts” two main branches of Hobbes’s psychology lead off: “discourse”, both “mental” and “verbal”, and “reason”, to which chapt. IV and V of *Leviathan* are respectively devoted. Reason is basically “Reckoning [...] of the consequences of generall names” (Hobbes 1985, V, 17/111). Reason par excellence is science for Hobbes. However, in chapt. VII, dedicated to “the ends, or resolutions of discourse”, Hobbes establishes a notable parallelism between the alternations of appetites in the course of deliberation and “alternate Opinion, in the Enquiry of the truth of *Past*, and *Future*”. As the last appetite in deliberation is called will, so the last opinion in search of truth “is called the JUDGEMENT” (Hobbes 1985, VII, 29/131). The whole “chain of Opinions alternate” is called “DOUBT”

the thoughts are said to wander, and to seem impertinent one to another, as in dream. [...] The second is more constant, as being regulated by some desire and design. For the impression made by such things as we desire, or fear, is strong and permanent, or (if it cease for a time) of quick return: so strong it is sometimes as to hinder and break our sleep. From desire ariseth the thought of some means we have seen produce the like of that which we aim at; and from the thought of that, the thought of means to that mean; and so continually, till we come to some beginning within our own power. And because the end, by the greatness of the impression, comes often to mind, in case our thoughts begin to wander they are quickly again reduced into the way: which, observed by one of the seven wise men, made him give men this precept, which is now worn out: *respice finem*; that is to say, in all your actions, look often upon what you would have, as the thing that directs all your thoughts in the way to attain it⁴¹.

Hobbes thus points not so much to a faculty (be it intelligence or language), but to a “passion” or “desire” as being that which distinguishes the series of regulated thoughts from those that are “without harmony”. Claiming that “it is not Prudence that distinguisheth man from beast”⁴², Hobbes again divides regulated thought into two different species. The first species of regulated thought, which is common to both men and beasts and therefore takes account of “prudence” that also animals share with humans, takes place when one is seeking the causes or the means that produce “an effect imagined”⁴³. The second type of “guided” thought is on the contrary typical of man and exclusive to him: it is produced when, “imagining anything whatsoever, we seek all the possible effects, that can by it be produced”. Of the latter type there is no sign in any but man.

It is important to remark that Hobbes also attributes this second type of regulated thought to the action of a passion: it thence follows that he can speak of human thought as a “regulated train” of “mental discourse” which is basically driven by a specific passion. In actuality, Hobbes attributes this second type of thought to “curiosity” and specifies that this latter is “hardly incident to the nature of any living creature that has no other Passion but sensuall, such as are hunger, thirst, lust, and anger”⁴⁴. Furthermore, when speaking about “intellectual virtues” and specifically about “wit”, Hobbes coherently affirms that the difference of wit among men depends on passions as its causes.⁴⁵

41 Hobbes 1985, III, 10/95.

42 Hobbes 1985, III, 10/98.

43 Hobbes 1985, III, 9/95.

44 Hobbes 1985, III, 9/96.

45 Hobbes 1985, VIII, 35/139.

As we have already explained, simply researching causes is not enough to divide human curiosity from the animal form; instead looking for all the possible effects of a cause is a solely human action:

The Trayn of regulated Thoughts is of two kinds; One, when of an effect imagined, wee seek the causes, or means that produce it: and this is common to Man and Beast. The other is, when imagining any thing whatsoever, we seek all the possible effects, that can by it produced; that is to say, we imagine what we can do with it, when wee have it. Of which I have not at any time seen any signe, but in man onely; for this is curiosity hardly incident in the nature of any living creature that has no other Passion but sensual, such as hunger, thirst, lust and anger.⁴⁶

More generally, this “train of regulated thoughts” which is exclusive to men can be called “*Seeking*, or the faculty of Invention, which the Latin call *Sagacitas* and *Solertia*: a hunting out of the causes, of some effect, present or past; or of the effects, of some present or past cause”⁴⁷. Properly speaking, only the latter kind of “hunting” is exclusively human, as Hobbes has previously stated; maybe this slight inconsistency can be explained by the circumstance that Hobbes here places “regulated thought” against another background, that of “sensual pleasures” that rule passions and thoughts in animals differently from men who are capable of “mental pleasures”.

To understand what should be meant by “mental pleasures”, in contrast to “sensual pleasures” or “sensual passions”, we must refer to the chapter of *Leviathan* on the passions or “Interiour Beginnings of Voluntary Motions”. The “mental” pleasures, Hobbes explains, “arise from the Expectation, that proceeds from foresight of the End, or Consequence of things”, whereas “sensual” pleasures are closely connected to “the sense of an object Present”⁴⁸. It is in this context that we should frame the definition of “curiosity”. It may be found within that meticulous catalogue of the human passions that occupies the whole of Chapter VI of *Leviathan*:

Desire, to know why, and how, CURIOSITY; such as is no living creature but Man; so that Man is distinguished, not onely by his Reason; but also by this singular Passion from other Animals; in whom the appetite of food, and other pleasures of Sense, by praedominance, take away the care of knowing causes; which is a Lust of the mind, that by a perseverance of delight in the continuall and indefatigable generation of Knowledge, exceedeth the short vehemence of any carnall Pleasure.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ Hobbes 1985, III, 9/96.

⁴⁷ Hobbes 1985, III, 9–10/96.

⁴⁸ Hobbes 1985, VI, 25/122.

⁴⁹ Hobbes 1985, VI, 26/124.

If language, together with “industry”, explains the extraordinary development that reason or mental discourse creates in men, in its turn the origin of both reason and language depends on a “passion” that is exclusive to humanity, and which is expressed precisely by the expression “passionate thought”. Hobbes never explains why men, unlike animals, possess this specific desire for knowledge of possible effects that is translated into the true “passion” of curiosity. Curiosity as such is mainly dealt with in Chapter VI of *Leviathan*, where the author draws the distinction between “animal movement” and “voluntary movement” and differentiates between the opposite pairs of emotional life: desire and aversion, love and hate, from which the basic categories of moral evaluation are derived (good and evil, *pulchrum* and *turpe*, pleasant and unpleasant). The philosopher then proceeds to draw up a very detailed catalogue of the human passions.

Hobbes does not give a causal explanation of curiosity’s specificity to man, and does not go further into the definition of the “organs” that make it possible, as he was to do with regard to sensibility, when in *De Corpore* he explains why some bodies feel and others do not. The text of *Leviathan* compensates for this by clearly illustrating the way in which curiosity operates, and the consequences that derive from it, constituting the unique nature of the human condition among all living beings. In order to understand this point we must return to the temporal dimension that is behind the distinction between sensual pleasures and mental pleasures, these latter being the subject of human “curiosity” alone. Whereas pleasures of the former type are oriented to the present, and aim at immediate fruition, those of the latter type, the “mental pleasures”, on the contrary, are all expectations and refer to a future time. This temporal forward projection has serious consequences in connection with the very object of this latter kind of pleasure. The result is that curiosity and the mental pleasure connected with it are strictly ordered to search for “power”. In reality, “power” has the double feature of concerning the “future” effects of present causes and of being activity projected into the “mental” space par excellence, the space not of present events but of future ones. Both of these features (projection in the possible future and the mental nature of the desire) perfectly fit the human passion of curiosity. In fact, Hobbes’s notion of “power” joins together the temporal dimension of the expectation and the psychological peculiarity of the mind, and both these peculiarities are aimed at increasing man’s good, meaning security combined with comfort. As Hobbes briefly puts it: “THE POWER of a Man (to take it Universally) is his [man’s] present means, to obtain some future apparent Good”⁵⁰. Also the differences

50 Hobbes 1985, X, 42/150.

of wit among men, which we have already seen to depend on passions, are basically connected to “the more or less desire of power, of riches, of knowledge, and of honour”; all of them are definitely to be considered “but several sorts of power”. A man that has no great passion for any of these things may be “a good man”, Hobbes says, yet “he cannot possibly have either a great fancy, or much judgement”. In actual fact, thoughts are only “as scouts, and spies” to the desires; they “find the way to the things desired”⁵¹.

5 Man as a “curious” animal: admiration, curiosity and anxiety

In sum, rather than as a rational animal (a definition that Montaigne had already found insufficient and in many ways incomprehensible), man should, in Hobbes’s view, be defined as a “curious” animal⁵²: curious to investigate the causes (what he shares with the other living beings), but above all curious to know their possible effects on which his own power depends. Through the passion of curiosity, man is thus governed by “passionate thought” aimed at attaining “power”, which means reaching means that will make available to him not immediate, or “sensual”, pleasures, but rather “future” pleasures: these latter are “mental” in so far as they ensure the way to obtain security and power not just for the present but also for the future. Strictly speaking, only these “mental” pleasures are made the objects of the passion of curiosity. In short, the aspect of reason or thought that is specifically human, exceeding the level of simple animal “prudence”, depends in the final analysis on a passion, curiosity, that is projected by its nature into the future, thus into a typically “mental” space.

However, let us be more precise, and reflect more closely on the synthesis that Hobbes cleverly encapsulated in his formula “Passionate Thought”. We have remarked that thought is basically incorporated into curiosity, this particular human passion that seeks the causes, and above all their possible effects. Since it coincides with “curiosity”, the search for causes may intervene in the deliberative process from within and not from without, as something dominant that looms from above, as in the classic paradigm of reason dominat-

⁵¹ Hobbes 1985, VIII, 35/139.

⁵² On the peculiarity of Hobbes’s conception of man and his close relationship to both humanism and scepticism, see Paganini 2010a. More generally, on the passion of curiosity: Jacques-Chaquin and Houdard 1998; Kenny 1998; Bos 1995.

ing passions. Since it is identified with “mental concupiscence” (the “Lust of the mind”), which is essentially aimed at the “future”, the passion of curiosity is not a disinterested or abstract faculty, but becomes an “industry” aimed at the search for “power”.

We can go even further in this direction. Accounting for the origin of the “guided” thought and the “regulated” series of mental discourse, curiosity emerges not so much as the vehicle but rather as the engine of thought itself. As a “concupiscence” (even though a “mental” one), curiosity is capable of mobilising thought so as to put it in action and to lead the deliberative process. Although Hobbes does not say so expressly, it is now clear that this is the implicit response to the impasse we discussed when referring to the second edition of *De cive*: the impasse resulting from the split between the re-evaluation of the passions, on the one hand, and the affirmation of rational control over those passions, on the other. Both the careful consideration of the passion of curiosity and its merging into an original conception of “passionate thought” are responsible, in *Leviathan*, for a new concept of reason that might operate in the deliberation process from inside and not from outside. Otherwise we would confront the strange dilemma between either reason being unable to affect the will and therefore leading deliberation or blind passion that is not enlightened by rational considerations.

Thus, can we say that Hobbes’s “passionate thought” aspires to play in the deliberative process the same function as Aristotle’s “rational desire” (“desiderative reason or ratiocinative desire”) in *Nicomachean Ethics*? In one sense, yes we can: in fact, like the latter, also the former guides a type of deliberation that is typical of man. Yet, Hobbes’s “passionate thought” is also profoundly different from Aristotle’s “rational desire”. The passion of “curiosity” is, according to the English philosopher, a much more dramatic motive of human conduct; furthermore, it is deeply involved in the dynamic structure of “endeavour” that permeates all human “vital” and “voluntary” motions.⁵³

If we were to look for a pale Aristotelian equivalent of “curiosity” we could find it in the notion of “wonder”, owing to which “men both now begin and at first began to philosophize”, according to the famous passage of *Metaphysics* (I, 2), on the nature and the origins of philosophy. There is also an obvious echo of this notion of “wonder” in the passage where Hobbes deals with the passion of “Admiration” in *Leviathan*, defining it as follows:

⁵³ See Hobbes 1985, VI, 23/119: “These small beginnings of Motion, within the body of Man, before they appear in walking, speaking, striking, and other visible actions, are commonly called ENDEAVOUR”.

Joy, from apprehension of novelty, ADMIRATION; proper to Man, because it excites the appetite of knowing the cause.⁵⁴

Aristotle too had already described philosophy as basically the knowledge of “first principles and causes”. Nevertheless, the distance from the Aristotelian model may be seen exactly at this point, where Hobbes appears to come closest to it. Let us go back to the text of *Elements of Law* where this concept of “admiration” as the offspring of philosophy makes its first appearance and is much more developed than in the parallel passage of *Leviathan*.

In the text of *Elements* Hobbes explicitly identifies “all conception of future” with the notion of “power”: “all conception of future is conception of power able to produce something”⁵⁵. In that same text, he unites the passion of “curiosity” closely with that of “admiration”, and for the latter echoes the famous phrase of Aristotle’s *Metaphysics*. However, the whole meaning of Hobbes’s conception is quite different:

And this hope and expectation of future knowledge from anything that happeneth new and strange, is that passion which we commonly call ADMIRATION; and the same considered as appetite, is called curiosity, which is appetite of knowledge. As in the discerning faculties, man leaveth all community with beasts at the faculty of imposing names; so also doth he surmount their nature at this passion of curiosity. [...] And from this passion of admiration and curiosity, have arisen not only the invention of names, but also the supposition of such causes of all things as they thought might produce them. And from this beginning is derived all philosophy.⁵⁶

We can see that, apart from the stress upon the knowledge of causes, Hobbes introduces in the Aristotelian mould a series of aspects that are lacking in *Metaphysics* but will reappear in *Leviathan*, such as the comparison to animals, the common origin of both “invention of names” and search for causes, and above all the identity of admiration with curiosity, because the former can be considered as an “appetite”, specifically as an “appetite of knowledge”. This equivalence is typical of Hobbes only, and it does not recur as such in the Aristotelian text.

Furthermore, in *Metaphysics* I, 2, Aristotle had stressed the “free” and disinterested character of the “science that studies causes”, arising from a sense of “wonder”⁵⁷ faced with “phenomena”: “since they philosophized in order to escape from ignorance, evidently men were pursuing science in order to know,

⁵⁴ Hobbes 1985, VI, 26/124.

⁵⁵ Hobbes 1889, I, VIII, 3, 34.

⁵⁶ Hobbes 1889, I, IX, 18, 45–46.

⁵⁷ Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, I, 2.

and not for any utilitarian end”. According to Aristotle philosophy is basically “free”, exactly as a “free man” exists “for his own sake”:

Evidently we do not seek it [knowledge] for the sake of any other advantage; but as the man is free, we say, who exists for his own sake and not for another’s, so we pursue this as the only free science, for it alone exists for its own sake⁵⁸

This feature of philosophy, which is the essential one for Aristotle, becomes much less important for Hobbes. It is true that in the text of *Elements* Hobbes too underlines the relatively disinterested feature of human knowledge, despite the close connection he had established between “admiration” and “curiosity” which is basically an “appetite”. An animal’s reaction of wonder is strictly utilitarian: a beast considers what is strange or new “so far only as to discern whether it be likely to serve his turn, or hurt him”; man, by contrast, aims at knowledge of the cause and beginning. Also the examples of “admiration” that Hobbes takes from the field of astronomy are likely to allude to similar topics that can be found in *Metaphysics*. Nevertheless, Hobbes is on the whole much more realistic and disenchanted when confronting the ideal figure of the philosopher with that of the common man. This vein is clearly unparalleled in the Aristotelian text and opens the way to a sequence of keen remarks about the “little pleasure” that contemplation of heavenly phenomena can give a man who is “in the chase of riches and authority”; for such a man it would be much more interesting to ask whether “any strange accident” leads or not to the object he pursues. Finally, at the end of this paragraph the usual pragmatic concern for the “empowerment” of man neatly overcomes the disinterested tone coming from the Aristotelian topos of admiration. In fact, Hobbes concludes this section of *Elements* by closely connecting the notion of curiosity to power, explaining that, in so far as curiosity is a delight, also all “novelty” is so, “but especially that novelty from which a man conceiveth an opinion true or false of bettering his own estate”. Men usually wait for novelties, not in a disinterested way, but with expectation and fear: they look at the future “with the hope that all gamesters have while the cards are shuffling”⁵⁹. In the end, instead of pure contemplation, as in Aristotle’s praise of “admiration”, it is the attainment of power and the dominion of the future that for Hobbes makes it worth deploying human curiosity.

Whereas in an earlier work such as *Elements of law* Hobbes seemed to be unable to give up the Aristotelian source, even though he was ready to rework it profoundly, in *Leviathan* he is much more free to fully develop his own

⁵⁸ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* I, 2, 982 b 25–28.

⁵⁹ Hobbes 1889, I, IX, 18, 46.

philosophical anthropology, and in that context he takes curiosity out of the shadow of disinterested admiration. In the pair curiosity-admiration it is now the former that prevails over the latter. The whole constellation of new concepts (concern for the future, mental pleasures, search for power) shapes the passion of curiosity and gives it the function of the main engine of the human condition.

In addition, *Leviathan* introduces another nuance that sheds new light on the theme of admiration and curiosity. As the contemplative passion of admiration is transformed into the self-interested appetite of curiosity, so this latter, under the pressure of human fears and needs, becomes anxiety for the future. Curiosity transforms man into a profoundly restless being, “in a perpetual solicitude of the time to come”. Incertitude about the future events, perpetual strain and the struggle to ensure not only present but also future power, all these bring about an anxiety that Hobbes vividly describes by comparing it to the condition of Prometheus. As is well known, Prometheus, in eternal punishment for having stolen fire from Zeus, is chained to a rock in the Caucasus, where his liver is eaten out daily by an eagle, only to be regenerated by night, which, by legend, is due to his immortality. Instead of focusing on the condemnation due to the theft of fire, Hobbes concentrates on the hidden meaning of punishment, and thus, he interprets the entire myth in a completely new light. In Hobbes’s reading, Prometheus becomes the symbol of the prudent man who endlessly looks for causes because he is always solicitous about the future events. The wise man is perpetually anxious about the future since he aims to anticipate events by a careful knowledge of their causes, in order to preserve and increase his own power. Meaningfully, this is for Hobbes another way of saying that man is “curious”:

And first, it is peculiar to the nature of man to be inquisitive into the causes of the events they see, some more, some less, but all men so much as to be curious in the search of the causes of their own good and evil fortune. Secondly, upon the sight of anything that hath a beginning, to think also it had a cause which determined the same to begin then when it did, rather than sooner or later. [...] The two first make anxiety. For being assured that there be causes of all things that have arrived hitherto, or shall arrive hereafter, it is impossible for a man, who continually endeavoureth to secure himself against the evil he fears, and procure the good he desireth, not to be in a perpetual solicitude of the time to come; so that every man, especially those that are over-provident, are in an estate like to that of Prometheus. For as Prometheus (which, interpreted, is the prudent man) was bound to the hill Caucasus, a place of large prospect, where an eagle, feeding on his liver, devoured in the day as much as was repaired in the night: so that man, which looks too far before him in the care of future time, hath his heart all the day long gnawed on by fear of death, poverty, or other calamity; and has no repose, nor pause of his anxiety, but in sleep.⁶⁰

⁶⁰ Hobbes 1988, XII, 52/169.

Obviously, in Hobbes’s philosophy curiosity is tightly intertwined with other relevant aspects of his anthropology. For instance, it is noteworthy that this typical human passion plays a fundamental role in the formation of religion: actually, religion always proceeds from the effects to the first cause. Therefore, curiosity can influence both philosophical or “natural religion” and the “superstitious” one. This latter type, being unable to determine the causes on which future events depend, invents imaginary ones. The strength of anxiety is so upsetting that men hope to find a relief even in venerating with fear causes that do not really exist, such as “some *Power*, or *Agent invisible*”. It is in this sense that “some of the old Poets said, that the Gods were at first created by humane Feare”⁶¹.

The close proximity between reason and passion in the psychological complex of “curiosity” and “anxiety” that are constantly joined together explains a wide range of topics that stretch from the theme of *scientia propter potentiam* (Bacon’s topos to which Hobbes is clearly indebted) to the going astray of curiosity in the fields of imagination and illusion, as happens with the conception of imaginary powers on which men think that their good or bad fortune depends. In regard to language, as also for curiosity, the border between use and abuse, progress and retrocession is a thin one; there is a continual risk of its being crossed, since the real dynamics governing reason are not those of calculation, but those of passion. That Hobbes has become the emblematic figure of an abstract rationalism is one of the biggest paradoxes of historiography we need to counteract.

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⁶¹ Hobbes 1988, XII, 52/170.

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Fosca Mariani Zini

Peut-on être indifférent à soi-même?

Difficultés stoïciennes dans le pur amour de Fénelon

Abstract: Is it possible to be indifferent to oneself? The intend of this paper is to analyze how Fénelon transformed a set of concepts taken from stoic philosophy, such as indifferent values, preferred valued, axiology, favors, caring about oneself, possession and propriety. All of them focus on the problem of the self. After having pointed out analogies, but also differences between both, the paper questions the paradoxical aspects of “pure love” that repeat to some extent, the genuine stoic ones.

Ce ne sont pas des motifs isolés, mais des questions matricielles, structurées par un réseau spécifique de concepts, qui sont pensées constamment à nouveaux frais dans l’histoire de la philosophie. Tel est le cas de la tradition stoïcienne, dont le système et l’ordre rigoureux lui ont assuré une longévité remarquable.¹ Toutefois deux difficultés se présentent aussitôt que l’on cherche à établir quelque chose comme une tradition. D’une part, il n’est pas toujours aisé de faire la part de la conformité au Stoïcisme de tel ou tel philosophe²; d’autre part, il est ardu de déterminer si des éléments stoïciens détachés de leur système et recomposés en d’autres figures peuvent encore se dire «stoïciens».³ Le renou-

1 Cf. Spanneut 1973; Soetard 1993; Neymeyer 2008. Pour une défense actuelle du stoïcisme, cf. Becker 1998.

2 En particulier, à propos du rapport problématique entre le Stoïcisme et le Christianisme, dès les Pères de l’Eglise, cf. Spanneut 1957; Moreschini 2004.

3 Question soulevée avec acuité par Sorabji 2000 et Sorabji 2006. Un exemple éclairant, dans la pensée de l’Age classique, a été examiné par Matheron 1999. L’auteur analyse les trois dernières phrases de *l’Ethique* de Spinoza, Appendice, IV partie, concernant la signification de l’échec face à des événements contraires à nos desseins. Trois aspects évoqués par Spinoza peuvent être considérés comme conformes à l’enseignement stoïcien. Spinoza invite, en effet, à supporter avec une «âme égale» (avec donc la célèbre *aequanimitas* stoïcienne) les contrariétés, si l’on est conscient d’avoir rempli dûment son propre devoir (*l’officium* par lequel Cicéron traduit le *kathêkon*, l’action convenable). Le rappel de l’insertion de l’homme comme partie dans le tout de la Nature ainsi que la distinction entre ce qui dépend de nous et ce qui ne dépend pas de nous se trouvent ici également sous la plume de Spinoza. Pourtant une différence majeure demeure. Tandis que le stoïcien s’apaise puisqu’il considère son échec comme une conséquence de la nécessité universelle, le sage de Spinoza est satisfait parce qu’il a compris qu’il en a été ainsi. C’est la compréhension des raisons de

veau des études sur les traditions hellénistiques⁴ ainsi que sur la «philosophia togata»⁵ interdit de proposer des lectures hâtives, notamment à propos de la présence stoïcienne à l'Age classique.⁶

Je voudrais suggérer ici comment Fénelon élabore de manière originale un réseau conceptuel stoïcien, autour de l'interrogation centrale sur la signification de soi-même. Pour ce faire, je procéderai en trois étapes. Après avoir rappelé les traits saillants de la théorie fénelonienne du pur amour, seront analysées les différences, mais aussi les points de convergences entre la possession de soi stoïcienne et la dépossession de soi fénelonienne. En conclusion, en s'interrogeant sur la possibilité réelle d'accomplir l'indifférence du pur amour, on en soulignera les aspects paradoxaux qui présentent des analogies avec certaines contradictions stoïciennes.

1 Le pur amour

Fénelon insiste souvent sur ce point: l'amour pur, désintéressé et démesuré n'est ni extraordinaire, ni miraculeux.⁷ Qu'il soit ardu de le réaliser ne l'empêche point d'être une forme de vie que des «épreuves», à savoir un exercice méthodique et constant, transforment en une orientation vertueuse de l'existence entière.⁸ Ce sont pourtant sa démesure et son désintéressement, au-delà de la pondération de la raison et de la doctrine, qui lui coûtèrent la condamnation des *Maximes*.⁹

l'échec qui donne satisfaction, bien que la saisie de cette nécessité ne soit rien d'aimable. Ici il s'agit de la seule connaissance du second genre, exercée par la «meilleure partie» de soi. C'est pourquoi demeure une forme de tristesse, et par là une exigence de consolation, due aux idées inadéquates de l'autre partie de l'esprit.

4 A partir de l'instrument précieux fourni par Long et Sedley 1987.

5 A partir du célèbre recueil d'études par Barnes et Griffin 1989. Cf. aussi Valente 1956; Auvray-Assayas 2005 et Inwood 2005.

6 Lagrée 1994.

7 Fénelon, *Explication des maximes des saints*, I, art. XIV: «[...] On peut assurer que cette voie du pur amour et de pure foi est celle où l'on verra toujours moins de ces choses extraordinaires». Fénelon 1983, 1046; cf. aussi, *ibid.*, art. XXIX, Fénelon 1983, 1071.

8 Fénelon, «Lettres et opuscules spirituels», I, art. XIII: «Vous me demandez apparemment quelle doit être en détail la pratique de cette désappropriation et de ce renoncement. Mais je vous répondrai que ce sentiment n'est pas plus tôt dans le fond de sa volonté, que Dieu mène lui-même l'âme comme par la main pour l'exercer dans ce renoncement en toutes les occasions de la journée». Fénelon 1983, 620.

9 Cf. Leduc-Fayette 1996, 44ss.; Le Brun 2002, 83ss. et 190ss.

Que l'amour soit au centre d'une forme de vie chrétienne, cela n'a évidemment rien d'extravagant.¹⁰ Pourtant, Fénelon lui ôte trois conditions qui étaient reconnues par ses contemporains: la nature comparative; le lien avec la béatitude et la certitude de l'espérance. Sur ces points, il prend ses distances avec Thomas d'Aquin, qui avait élaboré la notion du double amour.¹¹ D'une part, il y a l'amour pour soi-même, qui assure notre intégrité¹², puis l'amour pour le prochain, qui implique plusieurs degrés, et partant de comparaisons.¹³ Toutefois une telle comparaison est fondée sur la notion de ressemblance entre les hommes, mais ne rend pas compte de la nature infinie et suprême de Dieu. Il faut donc supposer une incommensurabilité constitutive entre l'homme et Dieu¹⁴, que l'amour de Dieu remplit comme un don. La ressemblance entre l'homme et Dieu n'est pas donnée d'avance, mais est un don de la grâce divine, par lequel l'homme apprend à aimer Dieu comme celui-ci s'aime soi-même et à aimer Dieu dans le prochain.¹⁵

Si l'historiographie a remarqué l'emprunt de Fénelon à cet amour incommensurable et gratuit, il faut cependant en souligner les différences.¹⁶ D'une part, seul l'amour de Dieu est véritable. Les âmes désintéressées doivent se détacher de leur prochain, afin de veiller sur elles-mêmes.¹⁷ D'autre part, le don généreux de Dieu, nous apprenant à l'aimer comme il s'aime lui-même, implique l'abandon de l'amour primitif de soi, qui est toujours intéressé.¹⁸ Car la nature désintéressée de l'amour en interdit toute modalité «mercenaire», à savoir dépendant d'une logique de la rétribution des prix et des punitions, suscitant la crainte et l'espérance.¹⁹

10 Augustin, *Ep. 140 ad Honoratum*: «Il n'y a pas d'autre culte que l'amour», repris par Fénelon, «Lettre II au Duc d'Orléans», Fénelon 1997, 721.

11 Aertsen 2002, 303–321.

12 Thomas d'Aquin, *Summa theologica* (=Somme de théologie), II-II, qu. 25, art. 4.

13 Cf. en particulier, Thomas d'Aquin, *Somme de théologie*, qu. 26, art. 1–7 qui comparent les degrés d'amour concernant les membres de la famille ainsi que les bienfaiteurs. Surtout, on se demande s'il faut s'aimer soi-même plus que son prochain, ou son prochain plus que son corps, ou tel prochain plus que tel autre.

14 Thomas d'Aquin, *Somme de théologie*, II-II, qu. 23.

15 Thomas d'Aquin, *Somme de théologie*, II-II, qu. 25, art. 1.

16 Spaemann 1963, 32ss.

17 Fénelon, *Explication des maximes des saints*, I, art. XII, Fénelon 1983, 1041. En effet, Dieu ne nous chargerait pas de la responsabilité d'autrui.

18 Capital, par contre, pour Thomas d'Aquin, *Somme de théologie*, I-II, qu. 29, art. 4, car on ne peut se haïr soi-même.

19 Fénelon, *Explication des maximes des saints*, I, art. II: il faut par contre apprendre à aimer comme «les enfants, parce qu'ils aiment le Père sans aucun motif intéressé, ni d'espérance, ni de crainte». Fénelon 1983, 1015.

Par conséquent, Fénelon refuse la conception thomasienne de l'espérance, comprise comme «*l'attente certaine de la béatitude*»²⁰, qui engage un rapport vertueux à l'avenir, caractérisé par la magnanimité, comprise comme le juste milieu entre le désespoir et l'arrogance.²¹ Une telle espérance ne se soustrait ni à la recherche de son propre intérêt, ni à l'amour-propre. Certes, Dieu est «*récompensateur*»²², mais l'âme doit savoir distinguer entre le motif et l'objet: la jouissance et la béatitude²³ sont l'objet de l'amour, mais non son motif, encore moins son but.²⁴ Il faut vouloir Dieu non parce qu'il est notre seule félicité, mais par lui-même, voulant ce que Dieu veut que l'on veuille, pour son «*bon plaisir*».²⁵ Une telle désappropriation de soi, qui ne signifie nullement la cessation de toute volonté ou de toute responsabilité comme *moi*²⁶, exige l'expé-

20 Thomas d'Aquin, *Somme de Théologie*, I-II, qu. 103.

21 Thomas d'Aquin, *Somme de Théologie*, II-II, qu. 18, art. 4.

22 Fénelon, «*Lettres et opuscules spirituels*», I, art. XXIII: «*Ce n'est pas que l'homme qui aime sans intérêt n'aime la récompense; il l'aime en tant qu'elle est Dieu même, et non en tant qu'elle est son intérêt propre [...]*». Fénelon 1983, 659.

23 Contre Thomas d'Aquin, cf. Fénelon, «*Lettres et opuscules spirituels*», I, art. XXIII: «*Il n'est donc pas question d'une inclination naturelle et indélébile de l'homme pour la béatitude*». Fénelon 1983, 658.

24 Fénelon, *Explication des maximes des saints*, I, art. II: «*Tout mercenaire purement mercenaire qui aura une foi distincte des vérités révélées pourrait ne vouloir point d'autre récompense que Dieu seul, parce qu'il connaîtrait clairement comme un bien infini et comme étant lui seul sa véritable récompense ou l'unique instrument de sa félicité. Ce mercenaire ne voudrait pas dans la vie future que Dieu seul; mais il voudrait Dieu comme béatitude objective ou objet de sa béatitude, pour le rapporter à sa béatitude formelle, c'est à dire à soi-même qu'il voudrait rendre bienheureux et dont il ferait sa dernière fin. Au contraire celui qui aime du pur amour sans aucun mélange d'intérêt propre n'est plus excité par le motif de son intérêt. Il ne veut la béatitude pour soi qu'à cause qu'il sait que Dieu la veut, et qu'il veut que chacun de nous la veuille pour sa gloire*». Fénelon 1983, 1016.

25 Ce concept revient souvent sous la plume de Fénelon, cf. de manière très prégnante, *Explication des maximes des saints*, I, art. IV: «*[...] le plus pur amour ne nous empêche jamais de vouloir et nous fait même vouloir positivement tout ce que Dieu veut que nous voulions. Dieu veut que je veuille, en tant qu'il est mon bien, mon bonheur et ma récompense. Je le veux formellement sous cette précision: mais je ne le veux point par ce motif précis qu'il est mon bien. L'objet et le motif sont différents; l'objet est mon intérêt, mais le motif n'est point intéressé, puisqu'il ne regarde que le bon plaisir de Dieu*». Fénelon 1983, 1021. «*Faire le bon plaisir*» d'un autre est ce que caractérise l'amour de Griselda à l'égard de son mari cruel, dans la nouvelle de Boccace, *Décameron*, X, 10 reprise par beaucoup d'auteurs, parmi lesquels Perrault et lue par Mme Guyon. Sur ce sujet, cf. Le Brun 2002, 89-106.

26 Il serait en effet faux de dire, comme le souligne Fénelon, *Explication des maximes des saints*, art. V (faux): «*La sainte indifférence est une suspension absolue de volonté. Une non-volonté entière, une exclusion de tout désir même désintéressé. Elle s'étend plus loin que le parfait désintéressement de l'amour*». Fénelon 1983, 1026.

rience de pensée dite de la «supposition impossible»²⁷ ainsi que le désintéressement réel à l'égard de son propre salut, qui doit nous être indifférent.²⁸

Sur ce point, on peut mesurer la distance qui sépare Fénelon de Denys l'Aréopagite²⁹, dont il emprunte plusieurs aspects d'origine néoplatonicienne qui avaient été depuis longtemps intégrés à la réflexion chrétienne, notamment la conception de la bonté infinie de Dieu qui se communique généreusement à tout être fini, en l'attirant à soi dans un processus de conversion à l'origine³⁰ ainsi que la jalousie divine. Dieu est, en effet, présenté à la fois comme amant et aimé, jaloux de toute affection détournée de lui.³¹ Toutefois, deux remarques s'imposent. D'une part, l'amour n'est pour Denys qu'un de noms divins, lesquels dans leur nature symbolique sont incapables d'en exprimer l'imperturbabilité et l'ineffabilité³², tandis que pour Fénelon il s'agit d'une expérience vécue qui est le principe de tout le système simple et complet de toutes les voies intérieures.³³ D'autre part, la jalousie n'est pas la même: pour Denys, elle tra-

27 Fénelon, *Explication des maximes des saints*, art. II, Fénelon 1983, 1016 en reprend explicitement l'idée à Clément et à Chrysostome. Le pur amour est tel que même si Dieu, par un cas impossible, me damnerait, je continuerai à l'aimer. Certes, il s'agit d'une *supposition impossible*, puisque *ibid.*: «Dieu ne peut manquer d'être la béatitude de l'âme fidèle; mais elle peut l'aimer avec un tel désintéressement, que cette vue de Dieu béatifiant n'augmente en rien l'amour qu'elle a pour lui sans penser à soi, et qu'elle l'aimerait tout autant s'il ne devait jamais être sa béatitude».

28 Fénelon, *Explication des maximes des saints*, art. IV: «En cet état on ne veut plus le salut comme salut propre, comme délivrance éternelle, comme récompense de nos mérites, comme le plus grand de tous nos intérêts; mais on le veut d'une volonté pleine, comme la gloire et le bon plaisir de Dieu, comme une chose qu'il veut, et qu'il veut que nous voulions pour lui». Fénelon 1983, 1023.

29 Fénelon, *Explication des maximes des saints*, art. XXVII, Fénelon 1983, 1067, *passim*. Fénelon montre un intérêt particulier pour le néoplatonisme chrétien des Pères Cappado-ciens, outre naturellement pour Denys l'Aréopagite qui était la référence platonicienne par excellence au Moyen Age, avant que l'occident latin pût lire directement au XVe siècle les textes de Platon, Plotin ou Proclus; cf. sur ce sujet, Saffrey 1987, Lilla 2005; Dillon et Klite-nic 2007.

30 Fénelon, *Explication des maximes des saints*, art. XI, Fénelon 1983, 1037, *passim*; *Traité de l'existence et des attributs de Dieux*, Fénelon 1983, I, 2, chap. 5, n. 113. Denys l'Aréopagite, *Les Noms divins*, IV, 10, Denys l'Aréopagite 1980, 708a, *passim*. Cf. Perrotti 1994, 25–45.

31 Fénelon 1983, 1006 («Avertissement»); Fénelon 1997, 709 («Lettres sur divers sujets»). Denys l'Aréopagite, *Les noms divins*, 1980, IV, 13, Denys l'Aréopagite 1980, 712a-b.

32 Cf. en particulier les chaps. 3 et 4 des *Noms divins*. De surcroît, on doit remarquer que le Bon est prioritaire, tandis que la Beauté joue un rôle plus significatif chez Fénelon. Comme le souligne Spaemann 1963, 77–79, la beauté exprime un objet immédiat de la vertu qui suscite une adhésion dépourvue de réflexion.

33 Fénelon 1983, 1006 («Avertissement»).

duit le désir d'une union indicible de Dieu et de l'âme, où celle-ci se trouve divinisée, confondue dans l'altérité ineffable de Dieu³⁴; tandis que pour Fénelon, elle manifeste l'exigence de renoncer à toute forme d'égoïsme.³⁵ De la sorte, Fénelon préfère parler de «transformation» en lieu et place de divinisation de l'homme.³⁶ Bien que Dieu devienne «l'âme de l'âme», l'union ne restitue point l'intégrité originaire, au-delà du temps³⁷, mais implique un état «habituel» de l'âme³⁸, qui est disposée à *coopérer* à tous les instants avec la grâce.³⁹

C'est une telle disponibilité, à chaque moment, à saisir la grâce qui caractérise la passivité (ou selon le terme propre à Fénelon, la «passivité») de l'âme. Loin d'être une forme d'indolence ou de résignation, la passivité exprime l'état contemplatif propre à l'âme.⁴⁰ Il s'agit d'une capacité à recevoir toutes les formes que la grâce divine lui donne, en les reflétant comme une eau tranquille ou un miroir.⁴¹ L'image du miroir ou de la surface réfléchissant fait partie de la tradition philosophique. En particulier, l'âme comme miroir exprime par son lien constitutif entre la passivité de la réception et le retour réflexif sur le visage qui s'y voit la voie par laquelle se fait le contact entre un pôle subjectif

34 Sur cet aspect, cf. de Andia 1996, 123–167.

35 Fénelon, *Explication des maximes des saints*, «Exposition des divers amours dont on peut aimer Dieu», Fénelon 1983, 1010: «Il (i.e. Dieu) n'est pas moins jaloux de nous que des autres objets extérieurs que nous pouvons aimer. A proprement parler, l'unique chose dont il est jaloux en nous, c'est nous-mêmes; car il voit clairement que c'est nous-mêmes que nous sommes tentés d'aimer dans la jouissance de tous les objets extérieurs. Il est incapable de se tromper dans sa jalousie. C'est l'amour de nous-mêmes auquel se réduisent toutes nos affections».

36 Fénelon, *Explication des maximes des saints*, art. XLIII, Fénelon 1983, 1090–1091. Cf. Davis 1979, 85ss.

37 Fénelon, *Explication des maximes des saints*, art. XLI, Fénelon 1983, 1089, *passim*: l'âme n'est en effet pas exempte des fautes quotidiennes. Toutefois cette indigence n'est ni un péché ni une souillure, car la concupiscence qui demeure toujours en cette vie n'est pas incompatible avec une telle pureté. De la sorte, l'âme peut se passer du Purgatoire.

38 Fénelon, *Explication des maximes des saints*, art. XXXIV, Fénelon 1983, 1081, *passim*.

39 Fénelon, *Explication des maximes des saints*, art. VII, Fénelon 1983, 1028, *passim*.

40 Fénelon, *Explication des maximes des saints*, art. XXXV, Fénelon 1983, 1081: «L'état de transformation dont tant de saints anciens et nouveaux ont parlé, n'est que l'état le plus passif, c'est-à-dire le plus exempt de toute activité ou inquiétude intéressée. L'âme paisible et également souple à toutes les impulsions les plus délicates de la grâce, est comme un globe sur un plan qui n'a plus de situation propre et naturelle».

41 Fénelon, *Explication des maximes des saints*, art. XXX, Fénelon 1983, 1075: «L'eau qui est agitée ne peut être claire ni recevoir l'image des objets voisins, mais une eau tranquille devient comme la glace pure d'un miroir [...] Cette âme n'a aucune forme propre, et elle a également toutes celles que la grâce lui donne».

et le principe transcendant qui en est le fondement.⁴² Mais le miroir de l'âme de Fénelon possède trois traits originaux. D'abord, à la différence de la tradition, y compris mystique, il ne s'agit pas tant d'une métaphore de la connaissance⁴³ que d'une passion. Ensuite, il n'est pensé ni dans une logique de réflexion de soi (le reflet de son propre visage), ni de face à face avec Dieu (notre visage comme reflet divin).⁴⁴ Finalement, il ne s'agit que d'une impression fugace, d'une trace volatile.⁴⁵ Toute possession durable reviendrait, en fait, à une propriété nourrissant l'amour-propre.

Compte tenu de ces remarques, il est aisé de déterminer la contribution originale de la réflexion fénelonienne. Loin de chercher à intégrer les passions dans l'équipement cognitif, à partir des présupposés qui s'imposaient à ses contemporains⁴⁶, Fénelon considère le pur amour comme le principe de toute la vie intérieure. Il accomplit de la sorte deux opérations significatives. Il reconnaît, d'abord, dans l'amour une expérience vécue coextensive avec la subjectivité dans son intégrité⁴⁷, et non seulement une voie possible d'ascèse, somme toute secondaire et inférieure au Bien.⁴⁸ Par conséquent, la vie spirituelle fénelonienne ne peut être confondue avec l'intériorité augustinienne, malgré les nombreuses références à l'Évêque d'Hippone.⁴⁹ En effet, bien que Féne-

42 Cf. le recueil de De Smet 2008. C'est justement une telle passivité du miroir que Thomas d'Aquin conteste chez Averroès, *De l'unité de l'intellect. Contra Averroès*, 3 § 64, Thomas d'Aquin 1994, 130 puisqu'elle ôterait à l'âme individuelle toute possibilité de penser.

43 Cf. de Libera 2007, 68ss.

44 Il serait faux de dire que: «L'âme voit Dieu face à face», comme le souligne Fénelon, *Explication des maximes des saints*, art. XLI (faux), Fénelon 1983, 1090.

45 Fénelon, *Explication des maximes des saints*, I, art. XXX: «Tout s'imprime, tout s'efface [...]. Il ne lui reste rien, et tout s'efface comme dans l'eau dès que Dieu veut faire des impressions nouvelles. Il n'y a que le pur amour qui donne cette paix et cette docilité parfaite». Fénelon 1983, 1075.

46 A savoir: les rapports de l'âme et du corps à partir de la notion de corps comme étendue; la conception de la causalité rompant avec toute conception téléologique de la nature; la notion d'un sujet réflexif, conscient et propriétaire de ses pensées: Cf. Spaemann 1963, 50–67; Perler 2011, sp. 11–42 (pour la présentation des problèmes et des enjeux entre la fin du Moyen Age et l'Age classique); 286–305 (pour l'arrière-fond théorique de Descartes) et 361–380 (pour l'horizon problématique de Spinoza).

47 Exigence qui commence à s'imposer à la Renaissance par les discussions complexes sur l'amour, cf. les analyses d'Ebbesmeyer 2002.

48 Bien qu'on reconnaisse traditionnellement le rôle central de l'amour chez Platon et les néoplatoniciens, les études récentes ont remis partiellement en question cette conviction. Cf. Laurent 1992; Rowe 1998; Tornau 2006, 201–229.

49 Augustin d'Hippone était une référence habituelle, mais les interprétations de sa pensée étaient divergentes; au-delà de la catégorie d'*augustinisme cartésianisé* forgée par Gouhier 1977, sp. 19–32. Cf. Magnard 1996; Thouard 1998, 217–241; Le Brun 2002, 65–88.

lon en appelle souvent aux voies intérieures et à l'union avec Dieu⁵⁰, il ne partage pas trois éléments essentiels d'Augustin⁵¹: la confession⁵², le remplacement de moi-même par un Autre qui gît à l'intérieur de moi⁵³; l'analogie entre la volonté, l'amour et la conception avec les personnes de la Trinité.⁵⁴

Ensuite, Fénelon ne considère pas l'amour comme une simple expression émotive, mais comme une disposition de l'esprit qui engage l'âme toute entière.⁵⁵ Le pur amour est, comme la croyance au libre arbitre, une conviction qui n'a pas besoin de preuves, non parce que le doute universel serait insoutenable⁵⁶, mais surtout en tant que pur inconditionné⁵⁷, au-delà de ses manifestations empiriques.⁵⁸ Pour Fénelon, il faut par ailleurs distinguer les actes discursifs et réflexifs de la raison intellectuelle des actes spontanés et directs du

50 Cf. Fénelon, *Exhortations, entretiens, sermons*, «Sur Saint Augustin»: «Augustin ne s'aime plus lui-même tant il aime Dieu [...] Désabusez-moi (i. e. Seigneur) de ma vaine raison, de ma prudence aveugle, de tous désirs indignes d'une âme qui vous aime. Que je meure, comme Augustin, à tout ce qui n'est pas vous». Fénelon 1983, 965.

51 Sur la signification de ces éléments chez Augustin, cf. Marion 2008.

52 La confession des péchés a encore quelque chose d'orgueilleux et d'égoïcentrique, face à la docilité, à la disponibilité et la spontanéité du cœur, comme l'enseignait Mme Guyon à un Fénelon torturé par ses fautes. Cf. Mme Guyon, *Lettres*, VIII: «Je vous prie en nom de Dieu de ne point examiner trop scrupuleusement vos fautes, mais de vous laisser tel que vous êtes». Mme Guyon, 1982, 55. Le conseil fut suivi par Fénelon, *Explication des maximes des saints*, I, art. XII: «Un bon pasteur veille sur l'âme de son prochain sans aucun intérêt. Il n'aime que Dieu en lui. Il ne le perd jamais de vue. Il le console, il le corrige, il le supporte. C'est ainsi qu'il faut se supporter soi-même sans se flatter, et se reprendre sans se jeter dans le découragement». Fénelon 1983, 1041. Sur cet aspect, cf. les belles pages de Perrotti 1994, 147–179.

53 Comme le souligne avec force Fénelon, *Explication des maximes des saints*, I, art. XXXV (faux), il serait faux de penser que: «La transformation est une déification de l'âme réelle et par nature, ou une union hypostatique, ou une conformité à Dieu qui est inaltérable et qui dispense l'âme de veiller sur le *moi*, sous prétexte qu'il n'y a plus en elle d'autre *moi* que Dieu». Fénelon 1983, 1082.

54 Augustin, *Trinité*, IX, 1, 1; XII, 1; XIII, 11, 12; XIV, 17, 27. Si, comme le souligne Beierwaltes 1994, 1–20, la conciliation entre le Christianisme et le Néoplatonisme se réalise surtout par le biais du triple Un de Porphyre, qui influence Augustin entre autres, rien de tel n'apparaît chez Fénelon. Pour une lecture différente, cf. par contre Adam 1991, 202ss.

55 C'est pourquoi il cherche à assumer le langage démonstratif et systématique de ses contemporains, tout en en montant les limites, cf. Spaemann 1963, 66ss.

56 Fénelon, «Lettre II au Duc d'Orléans», Fénelon 1997, 738–740. Ici Fénelon, contre Descartes, considère, d'une part, que le doute universel est insoutenable, d'autre part, que l'on ne peut ni douter ni sortir du doute par un effort cognitif.

57 Car même si Dieu voulait nous tromper, nous ferions notre devoir en nous laissant tromper et croyant que nous sommes libres, cf. Fénelon, «Lettre II au Duc d'Orléans», Fénelon 1997, 740.

58 Sur le pur amour comme quasi-transcendantal, cf. Spaemann 1963, 18ss, *passim*.

pur amour⁵⁹, en d'autres termes il ne faut pas confondre la méditation avec la contemplation.⁶⁰ Les actes spontanés n'expriment ni une forme de naïveté, ni la rêverie d'un sentir pointillé et diffus⁶¹, mais une passivité dont la réceptivité n'exclue point une forme d'unité et de cohésion.⁶²

Or, le trait le plus significatif d'une telle spontanéité est que ses actes de conscience ne laissent point de traces. Car l'uniformité s'oppose à la distinc-

59 Fénelon, *Explication des maximes des saints*, art. XIII: «Il y a une grande différence entre les actes simples et directs, et les actes réfléchis. Toutes les fois qu'on agit avec une conscience droite, il y a en nous une certitude intime que nous allons droit: autrement nous agirions dans le doute si nous ferions bien ou mal; et nous ne serions pas dans la bonne foi. Mais cette certitude intime consiste souvent dans des actes si simples, si directs, si rapides, si momentanés, si dénués de toute réflexion, que l'âme qui sait bien qu'elle les fait dans le moment où elle les fait n'en retrouve plus dans la suite aucune trace distincte et durable». Fénelon 1983, 1043–1044.

60 Fénelon, *Explication des maximes des saints*, art. I, art. XXI: «Il faut distinguer la méditation de la contemplation. La méditation consiste dans des actes discursifs qui sont faciles à distinguer les uns des autres, parce qu'ils sont excités par une espèce de secousse marquée, parce qu'ils sont variés par la diversité des objets auxquels ils s'appliquent, parce qu'ils tirent une conviction sur une vérité de la conviction d'une autre vérité déjà connue, parce qu'ils tirent une affection de plusieurs motifs méthodiquement rassemblés. Enfin parce qu'ils sont faits et réitérés avec une réflexion qui laisse après elles des traces distinctes dans le cerveau [...] Au contraire, la contemplation [...] consiste dans des actes si simples, si directes, si paisibles, si uniformes qu'ils n'on rien de marqué par où l'âme puisse les distinguer [...] Le raisonnement, au lieu de l'aider, l'embarrasse et la fatigue. Elle ne veut qu'aimer. Elle trouve le motif de toutes les vertus dans l'amour». Fénelon 1983, 1059–1060.

61 La comparaison avec Rousseau s'est imposée dans l'historiographie, à partir de la critique commune à la méditation du *cogito* cartésien: cf. Balnes 1989, chap. 3; bien que comme le souligne Spaemann 1963, note 20, 11–12, il ne faut pas considérer Fénelon comme un «précurseur». Rousseau, *Les rêveries du promeneur solitaire* (1782), IIIe *Promenade*, avoue que la solitude champêtre ainsi que les bons livres ont renforcé chez lui ses «dispositions naturelles aux sentiments affectueux» en le rendant «dévot presque à la manière de Fénelon», Rousseau 1964, 60. Toutefois l'amour pur ne produit pas des dispositions, pour Fénelon, mais des actes ainsi qu'un état habituel. La passivité spontanée, pointillée et diffuse se traduit chez Rousseau dans un sentiment de soi qu'exprime le réveil après l'accident de Ménilmontant, *ibid.*, II *Promenade*: «Je ne me sentais encore que par là. Je naissais dans cet instant à la vie, et il me semblait que je remplissais de ma légère existence tous les objets que j'apercevais. Tout entier au moment présent, je ne me souvenais de rien; je n'avais nulle notion distincte de mon individu, pas la moindre idée de ce qui venait de m'arriver; je ne savais ni qui j'étais ni où j'étais; je ne sentais ni mal, ni crainte, ni inquiétude. Je voyais couler mon sang comme j'aurais vu couler un ruisseau, sans songer seulement que ce sang m'appartînt en aucune sorte. Je sentais dans tout mon être un calme ravissant, auquel chaque fois que je me le rappelle, je ne trouve rien de comparable dans toute l'activité des plaisirs connus». Rousseau 1964, 49.

62 Fénelon, *Explication des maximes des saints*, I, art. XXXIII, Fénelon 1983, 1079.

tion entre la substance, les opérations et les facultés de l'âme⁶³ qui conduit à comprendre ses actes sous le prédicable du «propre», et par là comme des opérations que la conscience peut s'approprier par un mouvement réflexif, les considérant finalement comme ses «propriétés», voire comme ses «intérêts». ⁶⁴ De surcroît, l'absence de traces exprime une forme d'adhésion immédiate et désintéressée avec le surgissement d'une conscience qui est foncièrement transitive, sinon elle retomberait dans la sphère du «propre». ⁶⁵ Il accomplit manifestement le geste contraire à celui de Locke, pour qui la conscience se définit par la capacité de reconnaître comme *propres* ses actes passés et d'engager de la sorte sa responsabilité dans le présent et dans le futur. ⁶⁶ Mais, pour Fénelon, la propriété des actes est un signe de l'amour-propre et par là de la constitution d'un soi égoïste. Sur ce point, s'établit la discussion avec les Stoïciens.

2 Etre soi-même: appropriation et désappropriation de soi

L'indifférence de Fénelon s'enracine dans la notion hellénistique d'*apatheia*, transformée en «désappropriation de soi» par une lignée de pensée qui va de

63 D'origine néoplatonicienne, en voulant souligner la continuité des facultés et des opérations de l'âme avec sa substance, afin de réfuter l'entéléchie aristotélicienne, une telle distinction est creusée par Denys, systématisée par Thomas, afin de penser à nouveaux frais la tension entre l'âme comme forme du corps et l'âme comme substance autonome.

64 C'est pourquoi *Explication des maximes des saints*, I, art. XXIX, Fénelon 1983, 1071–1072 considère, comme Augustin, que les actes de l'esprit ne sont pas ses propriétés, mais constituent le fonds même de l'âme, qui ne peut être réellement distingué de ses puissances. Les idées ne sont ni infuses, ni élaborées à partir des sens, mais vues en Dieu. Sur l'accord sur ce point entre Fénelon et Malebranche, cf. Bardout 2003, 151–172. Sur la topologie de l'âme chez Fénelon, supprimant la distinction entre les facultés et son insertion dans la tradition mystique, cf. l'analyse du chercheur prématurément disparu Bergamo 1994, 182ss. L'auteur considère qu'avec François de Sales on passe d'une mystique de l'essence à une mystique de l'état passif, *ibid.*, 179.

65 On peut remarquer que Thomas d'Aquin conçoit une forme de conscience et de présence «habituelle» à soi-même, qui est la condition de la réflexion: la connaissance de soi est toujours médiatisée pour Thomas, *Somme de Théologie*, I, qu. 87, *passim*. Cf. sur ce sujet Putalaz 1991. Fénelon retourne ce dispositif: la présence habituelle à soi est donnée par le pur amour, contre tout acte de réflexion.

66 John Locke, *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1694), II chap. XXVII, «Of Identity and Diversity»: «Le nom de 'personne' [...] c'est un terme du langage judiciaire qui assigne la propriété des actes et de leur valeur, et comme tel n'appartient qu'à des agents doués d'intelligence, susceptibles de reconnaître une loi et d'éprouver bonheur et malheur». Locke 1998, 176.

Clément d'Alexandrie jusqu'à Jean de la Croix, François de Sales et le cardinal de Bérulle.⁶⁷ A première vue, il s'agit d'un *renversement radical*. Tandis que le Stoïcisme vise la tranquillité de l'âme par le mépris des biens secondaires, l'assèchement de toute passion, l'égalité d'âme par laquelle tout bien ainsi que tout mal valent de manière indifférente et le retrait dans la citadelle intérieure d'un soi, vidé de tout désir; Fénelon confie à la passion démesurée du pur amour, dépourvu de tout intérêt, la tâche de mener l'âme vers le repos serein d'une radicale dépossession de soi, où même son propre salut lui est devenu indifférent.

Ainsi le retrait stoïcien dans la forteresse inexpugnable de soi-même se mue-t-il en l'abandon de soi. Car pour Sénèque, le *magnus animus*, ou le sage, doit chercher à rentrer en soi-même pour devenir à lui-même sa seule mesure. Pour ce faire, une discipline sévère du jugement doit être exercée.⁶⁸ Car tous les biens, sauf la vertu, doivent être considérés comme des valeurs «indifférentes», ni bonnes ni mauvaises, auxquelles l'âme doit renoncer. A part soi-même, l'âme n'a aucun bien propre, sinon en usufruit.⁶⁹ On peut cependant reconnaître, parmi ces valeurs «indifférentes», des biens «préférables», à condition de les assumer comme des simples conditions optimales pour exercer la vertu.⁷⁰ Par conséquent, le sage stoïcien doit rester impassible, ne donnant prise à

67 Cette lignée a été retracée par Goré 1956, sp. 69–74 à propos de François de Sales.

68 Il ne s'agit pas de volonté, puisque l'âme stoïcienne n'a pas de facultés distinctes. Cf. Sénèque, *Ep.*, 113, 18. Au juste, la nature unitaire ou multiples des puissances de l'âme fut une question les plus discutées dans l'école stoïcienne, qui chercha avec Panetius et Aspanius une conciliation avec la théorie aristotélicienne de l'âme. Mais dans la tradition la plus ancienne, le différent porte sur les modalités de l'unité: si pour Chrysippe il y a une seule faculté, si bien que toute *ormé* implique un jugement sous la forme de l'assentiment, Zénon soutient que la *ormé* peut être causée par la raison sans s'identifier avec elle: cf. Diogène Laërce, *Vies*, VII, 110–116; en particulier VII, 158: «La partie directrice est la partie principale de l'âme, dans laquelle les représentations et les impulsions se produisent et à partir de laquelle le langage est émis».

69 Sénèque, *Ep.*, 120, 18: «C'est pourquoi une grande âme, consciente de la supériorité de sa nature, a soin de se comporter au poste où elle est placée, avec honneur et zèle; au demeurant, elle ne considère comme sien aucun des objets qui l'entourent; elle en use comme d'objets prêtés, en voyageuse pressée qu'elle est». Sénèque 1993, 1073.

70 Sénèque, *Ep.*, 74, 17: «S'ils ont la même appellation que les biens véritables, ils ne possèdent pas la marque distinctive du bien. *Tenons-les donc pour des commodités que nous appellerons, pour le dire en notre langue, 'choses préférables'*. Au reste, sachons que, simples effets mobiliers, ces avantages ne sont point partie de notre personne. *Logeons-les chez nous, à condition de ne pas oublier qu'ils sont hors de nous*. Même logeant chez nous, qu'ils soient comptés comme possessions secondaires, de rang inférieur, qui ne confèrent à personne le droit de se rengorger». Sénèque 1993, 802. Cf. aussi Diogène, *Vies*, VII, 106.

aucune passion⁷¹, afin de ne se laisser détourner par des faux biens et appartenir finalement à soi-même.⁷²

La désappropriation de soi semble s'opposer frontalement à un tel projet de possession de soi. Car Fénelon dénonce tout «usage modéré», et par là l'adoption compromissive des valeurs préférables: seule la perte radicale, y compris de soi, conduit à la véritable tranquillité de l'âme.⁷³ Au lieu de chercher à s'appartenir à soi-même, il faut se considérer comme un bien provisoirement emprunté et se vider de soi-même.⁷⁴ La citadelle intérieure s'est désintégré en un rien qui doit tout à l'être suprême.⁷⁵ C'est pourquoi il faut chercher à se tenir à ce rien qu'on est.⁷⁶ Rien ne semble donc plus opposer Fénelon à la philosophie stoïcienne que la conception de soi. Ce que l'un cherche, l'autre l'abandonne du revers de la main.⁷⁷

Pourtant, la césure entre l'appropriation de soi et la désappropriation de soi ne doit pas cacher une profonde affinité. Car le projet de s'appartenir soi-même n'est pas seulement difficile à réaliser, mais il se fonde surtout sur une constitutive dépossession de soi. La terminologie juridique est ici prégnante.⁷⁸ Sénèque utilise, en fait, plusieurs expressions tirées de la jurisprudence, pour signifier qu'être soi-même n'est ni une donnée, ni un droit, mais un bien qu'il faut acquérir, dont l'obtention est constamment menacée. Le soi peut être perdu, devenir l'objet d'un crédit ou d'une dette. De toute manière, il ne s'agit que d'une possession, jamais d'une propriété.⁷⁹ Pour l'acquérir d'une manière

71 Sénèque, *De vita beata*, XXIV, 3; *Ep.*, 74, 30–33, *passim*.

72 Sénèque, *Ep.*, 42, 10: «Fais le tour de ces faux biens qui nous entraînent à la folie, que nous perdons avec tant de larmes: tu sauras que ce n'est pas le dommage qui afflige, mais l'idée d'un dommage; ces disparitions-là, on ne les sent pas, on les rumine. *Qui se possède n'a rien perdu; mais combien sont-ils qui ont le bonheur de se posséder?*». Sénèque 1993, 697.

73 Fénelon, «Lettres et opuscules spirituels», Fénelon 1983, 624: «Tout ce qu'on appelle usage modéré ne nous assure point de notre détachement comme nous en sommes assurés par une privation tranquille».

74 Fénelon, «Lettre II au Duc d'Orléans», Fénelon 1997, 721: «Il faut réduire ce moi dans son petit coin, comme une foible parcelle du bien emprunté».

75 Fénelon 1997, 720: «[...] nous ne sommes qu'un rien revêtu par emprunt».

76 Fénelon, «Lettres et opuscules spirituelles», I, art. XXVI, Fénelon 1983, 682: «Heureux qui n'est plus à soi!»

77 Fénelon, «Lettres et opuscules spirituels», I, art. XXVI, Fénelon 1983, 682.

78 Sur cet aspect, cf. Lolito 2002, 131–175.

79 Sénèque, *De Tranq.*, XI, 1–2: «Le sage n'a aucun lieu de craindre la Fortune, puisque ce ne sont pas seulement ses esclaves, ses propriétés, sa situation, mais son corps même, ses yeux, ses mains et tout ce qui nous attache à la vie, puisque c'est sa personne en un mot qu'il compte au nombre des biens révocables, puisqu'il vit dans la pensée que son être lui est seulement prêté et qu'il est prêt à le rendre de bonne grâce à la première réquisition.

stable, une inversion de signe entre le positif et le négatif, le plus et le moins, est nécessaire. Le retrait en soi, pour prendre possession de soi, n'est pas l'effet d'une haute estime de soi, qui se choisit soi-même au nom d'une supériorité, mais la conséquence d'un jugement selon lequel le seul véritable bien qui demeure, lorsqu'on a tout perdu, c'est soi-même.

L'appartenance à soi-même ne dépend donc pas d'une supériorité présumée de ce qui nous est propre, mais d'une dépossession, à savoir du retranchement de tout ce que nous ne pouvons pas nous approprier réellement. Non seulement rien n'est à nous, mais nous ne devons emprunter qu'à nous-mêmes.⁸⁰ Les Néoplatoniciens reprochaient aux Stoïciens d'avoir vidé le soi, en lui ôtant toute nature substantielle, lui empêchant de pouvoir être le sujet d'une conversion vers soi-même. Mais un tel évidement est pour l'école stoïcienne la condition nécessaire pour s'engager dans un processus d'appartenance sur le fond d'une constitutive dépossession de soi. C'est en renonçant à soi comme à un sujet, propriétaire de ses actes, ou à une substance déterminée, donnée une fois pour toute, que le sage peut rentrer en lui-même.

Compte tenu de ces remarques, Fénelon développe deux autres aspects de la pensée stoïcienne: *l'aequanimitas* comme indifférence et *l'apatheia* comme impassibilité.⁸¹ *L'aequanimitas* est un état d'âme qui naît d'un jugement. Puisque tous les biens, sauf la vertu, sont des valeurs indifférentes, l'un ne vaut pas plus que l'autre, tous ne valant rien. Car l'âme les considère avec une âme égale, avec le même détachement souverain.⁸² L'impassibilité du sage dérive d'un jugement qui n'évalue pas la gradation d'un plus ou d'un moins, mais reconnaît que le plus et le moins s'annulent réciproquement. C'est par cette évaluation de la valeur nulle des choses que le sage sait faire face à l'adversité. Son impassibilité, qui procure la tranquillité de l'âme, n'est pas du tout une

Et cette idée qu'il ne se possède pas ne le conduit point à faire bon marché de lui-même: il se conduira au contraire en toutes choses avec le même scrupule et la même circonspection qu'un homme pieux et vénérable qu'on a chargé d'un fidéicommissé». Sénèque 1993, 360. On pense à Lucrèce, *Sur la nature des choses*, III, 970–971, pour qui la vie nous est donnée en usufruit et non comme propriété.

80 Sénèque, *Ep.*, 119, 2: «J'ai pour toi un créancier tout prêt, celui qui recommande Caton l'Ancien: 'N'emprunte qu'à toi-même'». Sénèque 1993, 1064

81 Comme le remarque de Libera 1991, 245 la *Gelassenheit* «mystique» peut dériver de deux notions stoïciennes: *l'apatheia* comme impassibilité et *l'aequanimitas*.

82 Sénèque, *Ep.*, 91, 18: «Supposons que la Nature nous dise: 'Ces choses dont tu te plains existent pour les autres comme pour toi. Je n'ai rien de plus facile à offrir à personne; cependant quiconque les voudra saura se les rendre faciles.' Comment? Par *l'égalité de l'âme*». Sénèque 1993, 920.

attitude résignée, mais est une forme de patience guerrière⁸³, une exaltation de l'*andreia*, de la «uirilis uia».⁸⁴

Pour Fénelon, l'indifférence est également le résultat d'une prise de position: tous les biens ne valent rien face au bien infini qu'est Dieu.⁸⁵ Le pur amour n'est ni une affection, ni un sentiment, mais une disposition de l'esprit qui se traduit par le détachement volontaire de tout ce qui est la marque de la finitude humaine. C'est en cessant d'être une passion, pour devenir une condition *pure* de la constitution de soi, que l'amour n'entre pas en contradiction avec l'impératif stoïcien de se débarrasser de toute passion.⁸⁶ A cet égard, l'impossibilité de la supposition de la damnation fonctionne comme l'impossibilité de l'égalité de l'âme du sage. Leur nature conjecturale ne renvoie pas tant à un modèle idéal inatteignable qu'à un devoir inconditionné qui peut fonder la possibilité de la morale.

Toutefois, l'amour pur n'est pas un présupposé formel, mais une disposition qui engage toute l'expérience vécue et traverse de part en part les modalités cognitives et affectives de soi-même, sans se réduire à aucune.⁸⁷ C'est pourquoi l'indifférence du pur amour permet de dépasser le faux courage et d'assumer avec force le découragement de la tristesse jusqu'au bout, sans chercher la consolation.⁸⁸ La passivité du pur amour est donc une droiture de l'esprit, qui réunit en elle-même toutes les vertus et non une forme de résignation.⁸⁹

Ainsi, si l'appropriation de soi et la désappropriation de soi semblent de prime abord s'opposer frontalement⁹⁰, ils forment en réalité un chiasme. Le sage stoïcien règle sa conduite selon l'inconditionné irréalisable de l'apparte-

83 Sénèque, *Ep.*, 96, 5. Sur ce sujet, cf. Dionigi 2001, 413–443.

84 Contre la solution faible des Epicuriens, qui est une solution non virile, visant la simple consolation: cf. Sénèque, *De Const.*, 1.1.

85 Fénelon, «Démonstration de l'existence de Dieu», Fénelon 1997, 615–619; «Lettre II au Duc d'Orléans», Fénelon 1997, 724–727, *passim*.

86 Sur la nature quasi-transcendantale de l'indifférence du pur amour, cf. Spaemann 1963, 18ss.

87 Une des exigences majeures est de fonder la morale sur cet inconditionné pour échapper à une logique «marchande» entre la générosité sans bornes de Dieu et l'obligation de la reconnaissance de la créature. Sur ce point, Fénelon reprend et radicalise la morale des bienfaits de Sénèque, *De Beneficiis*, cf. surtout, III, 7, 3; 14, 2; IV, 9, 1 et 12, 4, *passim* et Fénelon, «Lettres sur divers sujets», Fénelon 1997, 707–708, *passim*.

88 Fénelon, «Lettre et opuscules spirituels», I, art. XX, Fénelon 1983, 648, *passim*.

89 Fénelon, *Explication des maximes des saints*, I, art. XXXIII, Fénelon 1983, 1079.

90 On peut, en effet, comparer les deux différents souhaits: Sénèque, *Ep.*, 75, 18, p. 811: «Inestimable bien que d'arriver à s'appartenir»; Fénelon, «Lettres et opuscules spirituels», I, art. XXVI: «Heureux qui n'est plus à soi!». Fénelon 1983, 682.

nance à soi-même, sur le fond d'une constitutive dépossession de soi, tandis que le sage fénelonien adopte la supposition impossible de la radicale dépossession de soi, sur le fond d'un amour-propre constitutif. Car ce qui distingue alors ces deux perspectives est le *souci de soi*. C'est cet aspect qu'il faut maintenant analyser.

3 Le souci de soi

Les Stoïciens condamnent sans ambiguïté toute forme d'amour-propre, comme expression d'une trop grande estime de soi, qui conduit à vouloir toujours être le meilleur, sinon le seul.⁹¹ Toutefois, ils estiment que l'être vivant est caractérisé par l'*oikeiosis*, un sentiment de proximité et de familiarité avec soi-même, permettant de se reconnaître toujours comme soi-même, non pas par une conscience responsable de ses actes, mais par la continuité du souci de soi.⁹² C'est justement un tel souci de soi qui justifie, chez Locke, la compréhension des actes de la conscience comme des «propriétés».⁹³ Car Locke étend à la con-

91 Sénèque, *De Ira* (= *Sur la colère*), II, XXXI, 3: «Voici la conséquence de l'amour excessif de soi-même: nous jugeons que nous devons être inviolables même à nos ennemis; chacun a en lui l'âme d'un roi, il veut qu'on donne toute licence à sa personne, mais pas contre elle». Sénèque 1993, 147. C'est manifestement une critique du magnanime aristotélicien, qui se tient en haute estime, et ne fait grand cas de rien: Aristote, *Ethique à Nicomaque*, IV, 1123b13–1124a19. Sur le désir d'être le meilleur, sinon le seul, cf. Cicéron, *De Off.*, I, 64.

92 Sénèque, *Ep.*, 121, 16–17: «Age infantile, croissance, jeunesse, vieillesse ne sont pas la même chose; et cependant je ne fais qu'un avec le petit enfant, l'enfant, l'adolescent que j'ai été. Ainsi la constitution de chacun a beau passer par des états différents, la proximité de chacun à sa constitution reste la même; ce n'est pas un enfant, un jeune homme, un vieillard, c'est moi-même que la nature me recommande. Par conséquent, l'enfant s'adapte à la constitution qui pour lors lui est échue, non à celle qu'il aura demain, devenu jeune homme. Et de fait, si un état supérieur l'attend auquel il devra passer, le modeste état où il naît ne laisse pas d'être conforme à la nature. Je cherche le plaisir: pour qui? Pour moi: *je me soucie donc de moi*. Je suis la douleur: pour l'amour de qui? Pour l'amour de moi: *je me soucie donc de moi*. Si je fais tout, en me souciant de moi, c'est que le souci de moi précède tout. Ceci appartient à tous les animaux et il n'est pas greffé en eux, mais inné». Sénèque 1993, 1078–1079.

93 John Locke, *Essay concerning Human Understanding* (1694), II chap. XXVII, «Of Identity and Diversity»: «Soi est cette chose qui pense consciente [...] qui est sensible, ou consciente du plaisir et de la douleur, capable de bonheur et de malheur, et qui dès lors se soucie de soi dans toute la mesure où s'étend cette conscience». Locke 1998, 165.

science la sphère originaire de l'*oikeiosis*, caractérisant, chez les Stoïciens, la tendance à se conserver et à s'occuper de soi et de ses proches.⁹⁴

Par contre, Fénelon semble réduire l'amour primitif de soi à l'amour-propre.⁹⁵ Sa préoccupation est justement de ne pas s'occuper de soi-même.⁹⁶ Seule l'opération de la grâce purifie l'amour et le rend désintéressé dans l'exercice de toutes les vertus.⁹⁷ La propriété remplace chez Fénelon le péché. Toutefois, il faut distinguer entre la propriété absolument négative, comme amour orgueilleux de sa propre excellence, et la propriété qui subordonne cette estime de soi à la perfection de Dieu.⁹⁸ Il serait faux, à cet égard, de considérer un tel amour intéressé comme une souillure, incapable d'exercer des vertus méritoires.⁹⁹

Mais peut-on se débarrasser vraiment de tout intérêt et ne se soucier plus de soi-même? Ou, dit en d'autres termes: peut-on être indifférent à soi-même? A y regarder de près, Fénelon ne semble pas éviter les difficultés rencontrées jadis par les Stoïciens, concernant les conditions réelles de l'exercice de l'inconditionné. Car Fénelon emprunte à la «philosophia togata» la conviction que le sage est aussi malade que le sot¹⁰⁰, de sorte que la thérapie de l'âme doit être graduelle, conforme aux capacités individuelles¹⁰¹, sans mépriser les faiblesses du patient¹⁰² et sachant que la guérison n'est jamais assurée.¹⁰³ Par conséquent, tout en distinguant le pur amour des autres for-

94 Avec un renversement. Si pour les Stoïciens l'attachement à soi-même règle l'acquisition des biens matériels ou spirituels, pour Locke c'est la possession de ceux-ci qui définit soi-même.

95 La distinction se trouve thématifiée par Rousseau (1749 et 1753), note 15: «Il ne faut pas confondre l'Amour-propre et l'Amour de soi-même; deux passions très différentes par leur nature et par leurs effets. L'Amour de soi-même est un sentiment naturel qui porte tout animal à veiller à sa propre conservation et qui, dirigé dans l'homme par la raison et modifié par la pitié, produit l'humanité et la vertu. L'Amour-propre n'est qu'un sentiment relatif, factice, et né dans la société, qui porte *chaque individu à faire plus de cas de soi que de tout autre*, qui inspire aux hommes tous les maux qu'ils se font mutuellement, et qui est la véritable source de l'honneur».

96 Fénelon, «Lettres et opuscules spirituels», I, art. XXVI: «[...] comme pourrai-je m'empêcher d'être occupé de moi?». Fénelon 1983, 681.

97 Fénelon, *Explication des maximes des saints*, I, art. XVI, Fénelon 1983, 1050, *passim*.

98 Fénelon, *Explication des maximes des saints*, I, art. XVI, Fénelon 1983, 1049–1051.

99 Fénelon, *Explication des maximes des saints*, I, art. XVI, Fénelon 1983, 1051–1052.

100 Sénèque, *Ep.*, 27, 1; 53, 11–12.

101 Cicéron, *Tusc.*, II, 36–36; III, VI, 12; IV, XXVII, 58–59.

102 C'est pourquoi Fénelon, *Explication des maximes des saints*, I, art. III, Fénelon 1983, 1018 souligne qu'il faut être patient avec les âmes «mêlées» qui ont du mal à s'affranchir de tout intérêt.

103 Car Fénelon, *Explication des maximes des saints*, I, art. XXXIX, Fénelon 1983, 1987, souligne que des imperfections peuvent demeurer. Il s'agit d'une infirmité due plus au «naturel»

mes «mercenaires», mélangés différemment d'amour-propre, Fénelon n'hésite pas à leur reconnaître une valeur éducative¹⁰⁴, voire une forme de «sainteté réelle».¹⁰⁵

Pourtant, le reproche majeur ne porte pas sur la nature de compromis des deux doctrines. Il concerne plutôt l'interrogation sur la possibilité conceptuelle d'écarter l'amour ou le souci de soi dans la doctrine du pur amour et de la désappropriation de soi. Car Fénelon n'évoque que la «familiarité respectueuse» avec Dieu¹⁰⁶ et souligne que le pur amour exige la perte de soi.¹⁰⁷ Ne faut-il pas cependant supposer qu'on se soucie de se soustraire à l'amour-propre, afin d'atteindre l'état «habituel» du pur amour¹⁰⁸? Ne doit-on pas postuler une forme de familiarité avec soi-même, qui se préoccupe de sa propre transformation?

Conscient de ces difficultés¹⁰⁹, Fénelon donne deux réponses qui, tout en écartant le souci de soi, font place à l'impossibilité de s'oublier soi-même. La première réponse postule une «imperfection naturelle» qui n'est pas pour autant blâmable. Les sens et l'imagination peuvent offusquer notre volonté de se conformer à Dieu, mais il ne s'agit que d'un mouvement involontaire. C'est cette nature involontaire qui a fait crier au Christ, se faisant homme sur la Croix: «O Dieu! Mon père, pourquoi m'avez-vous délaissé?¹¹⁰». La seconde solution ne se réfugie pas dans l'argument, somme toute défensif, de l'involontaire faiblesse humaine. Fénelon propose plutôt quelque chose qui puisse tenir lieu du souci de soi, sans en partager le mélange présumé d'intérêt. A la différence de la

qu'à la volonté. De surcroît, *ibid.*, art. XXXVII, Fénelon 1983, 1084, mêmes les âmes transformées ont toujours le libre arbitre, de sorte qu'elles peuvent pécher.

104 Fénelon, *Explication des maximes des saints*, Fénelon 1983, 1008–1012.

105 Fénelon, *Explication des maximes des saints*, I, art. XVII: «Il y a un très petit nombre d'âmes qui soient dans ces dernières épreuves, où elles achèvent de se purifier de tout intérêt propre. Le reste des âmes, sans passer par ces épreuves, ne laisse pas de parvenir à divers degrés de sainteté très réelle et très agréables à Dieu». Fénelon 1983, 1052. Par ailleurs, Fénelon, *Explication des maximes des saints*, I, art. II, Fénelon 1983, 1014ss. reprend en partie à son compte le classement néoplatonicien des degrés de vertus (purgatives, illuminatives et contemplatives) propres à la thérapie de l'âme.

106 Fénelon, *Explication des maximes des saints*, art. XXXII, Fénelon 1983, 1078. Même notre raison ne nous appartient pas, mais nous transcende, bien qu'elle soit familière et intime: Fénelon, «Démonstration de l'existence de Dieu», § 62, Fénelon 1997, 641–642.

107 Fénelon, «Lettre et opuscules spirituels», X: «Tout est alors égal, parce que le moi est perdu et anéanti, le moi n'est pas plus moi qu'autrui [...]». Fénelon 1983, 588.

108 Fénelon, *Explication des maximes des saints*, I, art. XXXIV, Fénelon 1983, 1081.

109 Afin de justifier ce qu'un Stoïcien ne doit pas faire, à savoir assurer la possibilité du vouloir et du libre arbitre.

110 Fénelon, *Explication des maximes des saints*, I, art. XIV-XV, Fénelon 1983, 1045–1049. C'est un sujet qui tourmente Fénelon, cf. Le Brun 2004, chaps. XX et XXI.

tendance positive et primaire du souci de soi, *l'impossibilité de s'oublier soi-même* exprime de manière négative l'exigence de supposer un résidu individuel, se préoccupant de soi-même.¹¹¹ Une telle interdiction d'oubli de soi retrouve cependant deux traits du souci de soi stoïcien. D'une part, le «non-oubli de soi» implique, qu'on le veuille ou non, le sentiment de quelque chose qui nous est familier, propre et indéniable.¹¹² D'autre part, puisque le pur amour ne doit pas dériver de la haine de soi, on ne doit pas s'oublier au point de se débarrasser de tout intérêt propre, si l'on n'est pas encore prêt de le faire.¹¹³ De même que l'action du sage est bonne non par elle-même, mais parce que c'est le sage qui l'accomplit, de même l'amour du sage est pur plutôt par sa disposition d'esprit que par une différence de nature avec l'amour intéressé.¹¹⁴

En conclusion, si l'historiographie a justement souligné la dette de Fénelon à l'égard de la tradition «mystique»¹¹⁵, il ne faut pas oublier la lignée de pensée dans laquelle l'auteur s'est toujours expressément reconnu, comprenant Platon, Cicéron, Sénèque¹¹⁶, Clément d'Alexandrie, Grégoire de Naziance, outre Augustin, Bernard et François de Sales.¹¹⁷ Bien que la réflexion sur l'indifférence stoïcienne soit un élément central de la théologie de l'Age classique¹¹⁸, j'ai cherché à suggérer ici comment Fénelon s'insère

111 Fénelon, *Explication des maximes des saints*, I, art. XII: «Mais il n'est jamais permis de s'oublier jusqu'à cesser de veiller sur soi comme on veillerait sur son prochain si on en était le pasteur». Fénelon 1983, 1042.

112 Fénelon, *Explication des maximes des saints*, I, art. XII. Le texte poursuit, en effet, précisant que: «Il faut même ajouter qu'on n'est jamais si chargé de son prochain qu'on l'est de soi-même, parce qu'on ne peut point régler toutes les volontés intérieures d'autres *comme les siennes propres*» (je souligne). Fénelon 1983, 1042.

113 Fénelon, *Explication des maximes des saints*, I, art. XII: «On ne doit jamais s'oublier pour retrancher les réflexions même les plus intéressées, si on est encore dans la voie de l'amour intéressé». Fénelon 1983, 1042.

114 Fénelon, *Explication des maximes des saints*, I, art. XII: «L'unique différence est que la vigilance du pur amour est simple et paisible, au lieu que celle de l'amour intéressé, qui est moins parfait, a toujours quelque reste d'empressement et d'inquiétude, parce qu'il n'y a que le parfait amour qui chasse la crainte avec toutes ses suites». Fénelon 1983, 1042.

115 Selon de Certeau 1982, 107–155 (chap. 3) c'est justement l'Age classique qui fit passer le mot «mystique» du statut d'adjectif au statut de substantif, en voulant même en établir une science. Toutefois, de même qu'au Moyen Age il y eut plusieurs théologies selon les disciplines, voire plusieurs conceptions de la science théologique, il y eut plusieurs mystiques, voire multiples formes de rationalité mystique. Cf. De Libera 2003. Spaemann 1963, 223–234 a souligné que Fénelon n'est pas à proprement parler un mystique, puisqu'il transforme le discours même de la mystique. Sur ce changement, cf. Bergamo 1991.

116 Fénelon, *Sur le pur amour* (1719), Fénelon 1983, 656–671.

117 Fénelon, *Explication des maximes des saints*, I, art. II, Fénelon 1983, 1017, *passim* et *Le Gnostique de saint Clément d'Alexandrie*, Fénelon 1930, sur lequel cf. Simon 2003, 211–232.

118 Cf. De Paris 1638. Cf. Goré 1956.

dans la pensée stoïcienne, en en reprenant aussi bien ses questions matricielles que ses difficultés.¹¹⁹

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119 A Denis, cet article est dédié.

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Catherine Newmark

«...le plus de douceur en cette vie...»

Moralistik, Sensualismus und der Geschmack von Passionen
im 17. und frühen 18. Jahrhundert

Abstract: What do passions taste like? Are they sweet, bitter, salty? And where and how do such questions arise? The paper draws a short sketch of the beginnings of sensualism in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century and shows the transition from a classical philosophical view of the passions with its interest in their epistemic properties and the moral challenges they present, to an account of what they feel and taste like, and an appreciation of the happiness these sensual qualities bestow, that can be found in moralist writings from the late seventeenth century onwards.

Das 17. Jahrhundert ist nicht nur in literarischer, sondern auch in philosophischer Hinsicht ein „siècle des passions“, ein Zeitalter, das sich ausgiebig und nachhaltig mit der Theorie und Praxis von Emotionen, Passionen oder Affekten, beschäftigt.¹ Was ist ihr Status zwischen Sinnlichkeit und Intellekt, zwischen Ethik und Erkenntnistheorie? Wie können sie moralisch beherrscht werden? Gehören sie vorwiegend zum Körper und müssen physiologisch beschrieben werden, wie es Descartes tut, oder sind sie ein grundlegendes vitales Bewegungsprinzip, wie Hobbes behauptet, oder aber müssen sie als essentielles metaphysisches Strebevermögen des Menschen gefasst werden, wie Spinoza denkt?

Im Vergleich zu diesen großen philosophischen Themen ist es eine eher kleine Frage, der sich dieser Beitrag widmet: hier soll es um den Geschmack der Passionen im 17. Jahrhundert gehen, um die Frage, inwiefern sie süß, bitter oder salzig sind. Diese zunächst vielleicht eher abwegig erscheinende Frage kann auch als diejenige nach dem Beginn einer historischen Entwicklung verstanden werden, die am Ende des 18. Jahrhunderts in Ästhetiken des Geschmacks münden wird: wie und in welchem Zusammenhang wird die

¹ Ich verwende *Passion* als den im 17. Jahrhundert (neben *Affekt*) üblichsten Begriff und den moderneren Allgemeinbegriff *Emotion* in diesem Text synonym. Für eine genauere historische Differenzierung dieser Begriffe vgl. die Einleitung in Newmark 2008, besonders 9–11, sowie die dort angegebene Literatur und Landweer/Renz 2008, 3–4.

(positive) sinnliche Erlebnisqualität von Passionen zum Thema – in einem Jahrhundert, das Passionen vorwiegend als epistemische und moralische Problemzonen auffasst? Der Beitrag nimmt seinen Ausgang von Descartes, dessen Passionstheorie in ihrer Wirkung überhaupt nicht überschätzt werden kann, beschäftigt sich dann vor allem mit Autoren der moralistischen Tradition, namentlich Christina von Schweden und François de la Rochefoucauld, und endet mit Madame du Châtelet und einem Ausblick aufs 18. Jahrhundert.

Im letzten Artikel von Descartes' Traktat *Les passions de l'âme* findet sich ein erstaunlicher kleiner Passus. Hier schreibt der rationalistische Philosoph nämlich, nachdem er über zweihundert Seiten lang eine mehrheitlich physiologische Theorie der Passionen entwickelt hat, sowohl in epistemologischer als auch moralischer Hinsicht die Unzulänglichkeit und Unzuverlässigkeit der Passionen immer wieder betont hat, und in zahlreichen Einzelbeschreibungen den mäßigenden und kontrollierenden Umgang mit ihnen im Detail ausgemalt und gefordert hat, folgendes:

Au reste l'ame peut avoir ses plaisirs à part. Mais pour ceux qui luy sont communs avec le corps, ils dependent entierement des Passions, en sorte que les hommes qu'elles peuvent le plus emouvoir, sont capables de goustier le plus de *douceur* en cette vie. Il est vray qu'ils peuvent aussi trouver le plus *d'amertume*, lors qu'ils ne les sçavent pas bien employer, & que la fortune leur est contraire.²

Dieser Hinweis auf eine eigentümliche und glückbringende Süße von Passionen fällt aus dem physiologisch orientierten Passionstraktat ebenso heraus wie aus den sonstigen cartesischen Schriftstellen zum Passionsproblem, etwa Descartes' wichtige und lang anhaltende Korrespondenz darüber mit Elisabeth von der Pfalz zwischen 1643 und 1649 oder die wenigen Briefe zum Thema an Königin Christina von Schweden.³

Die cartesische Passionslehre, wie man sie in diesen Schriften findet, ist nämlich insgesamt – auch wenn Sie konzeptuell mit dem aristotelischen Paradigma der Passion als Teil des *appetitus sensitivus* bricht⁴ – vorwiegend am peripatetischen Ideal der Mäßigung orientiert, mit neustoischen und epikureischen Einschlügen, was das Ideal der Seelenruhe betrifft: es geht Descartes überall darum, zu zeigen, dass die sinnlichen Passionen epistemisch unzuverlässig und moralisch schädlich sind, so sie nicht richtig durch die Vernunft kontrolliert oder gemäßigt werden.

Vor allem in seinem Briefwechsel mit Elisabeth von der Pfalz, der den ethischen Fragen mehr Raum gibt als das Passionstraktat, argumentiert Des-

² *Passions de l'âme*, a. 212. Descartes 1994, 218 (Hervorhebungen CN).

³ Descartes 1971–1974, passim.

⁴ Vgl. dazu Newmark 2008, 26–52 und 68–91.

cartes sehr ausführlich für eine Mäßigung der Sinnlichkeit. Descartes entwickelt hier eine Moralphilosophie, die gegen die Wechselhaftigkeit sinnlicher Freuden die Konstanz geistiger Zufriedenheit stellt: nur im rein rational zu erlangenden *contentement de l'esprit* liege das wahre Glück.⁵

Wie für die meisten Rationalisten sind auch für Descartes die Freuden der Sinnlichkeit mit denjenigen des Geistes gar nicht zu vergleichen; sie sind diesen nicht nur an Dauer und Intensität unterlegen, sondern auch von Natur aus trügerisch:

Mais il y a deux sortes de plaisirs: les uns qui appartient a l'esprit seul, & les autres qui appartient a l'homme, c'est a dire a l'esprit en tant qu'il est uni au cors; & ces derniers, se presentant confusement a l'imagination, paroissent souvent beaucoup plus grans qu'ils ne sont, principalement avant qu'on les possede, ce qui est la source de tous les maux & de toutes les erreurs de la vie. [...] il n'y en a aucune [sc. des passions] qui ne nous represente le bien auquel elle tend, avec plus d'esclat qu'il ne merite, & qui ne nous face imaginer des plaisirs beaucoup plus grands, avant que nous les possedions, que nous ne les trouvons par apres, quand nous les avons.⁶

In seiner in diesen Briefen der 1640er Jahren entwickelten Ethik präzisiert Descartes im Grunde genommen die „morale par provision“, die er im *Discours de la methode* von 1637 aufgestellt hatte, und zwar vor allem konkret auf das Passionsproblem hin: Während im *Discours* die zweite provisorische Maxime noch ganz allgemein *Festigkeit* und *Entschlossenheit* beim Handeln verlangte,⁷ wird sie nunmehr direkt auf die Vernunft bezogen und in einen Zusammenhang mit den Passionen gebracht: „La seconde, qu'il ait une ferme & constante resolution d'executer tout ce que *la raison* luy conseillera, sans que *ses passions ou ses appetits* l'en detournent [...].“⁸

Aus Sicht der cartesischen Ethik sind Passionen also wenig wünschenswert und schon gar nicht süß. Süß und glücksverheißend ist für Descartes einzig und allein die Vernunft:

[...] la plus grande felicité de l'homme depend de ce droit usage de la raison, & par consequent [...] l'estude qui sert a l'acquerir, est la plus utile occupation qu'on puisse avoir, comme elle est aussy sans doute la plus agreable & *la plus douce* [...].⁹

Was Descartes den Passionen höchstens zugesteht, ist eine gewisse vitale Nützlichkeit. Wenn er sich gegen den stoischen Rigorismus verwehrt, der Passionen

5 Brief an Elisabeth vom 18. August 1645. Descartes 1972, 275–277. Vgl. Descartes 1965, 22.

6 Brief an Elisabeth vom 1. September 1645. Descartes 1972, 284–285.

7 Descartes 1965, 24.

8 Brief an Elisabeth vom 4. August 1645. Descartes 1972, 265 (Hervorhebungen CN).

9 Brief an Elisabeth vom 4. August 1645. Descartes 1972, 267 (Hervorhebungen CN).

ganz abschaffen will, dann nicht, weil Passionen auch etwas *Schönes* sein können, sondern weil sie auch etwas *Nützlich*es sind. In einem Brief an Elisabeth erklärt er das folgendermaßen:

Toutefois, ie ne suis point d'opinion qu'on doive s'exempter d'avoir des passions; il suffit qu'on les rende suiettes a la raison, & lorsqu'on les a ainsi apprivoisées, elles sont quelquefois d'autant plus *utiles* qu'elles penchent plus vers l'exces.¹⁰

Vor dem Hintergrund dieser Passionslehre fällt die eingangs zitierte Passage also ganz eindeutig aus dem Rahmen; nicht nur, weil sie eine hohe Wertschätzung der Passionen zu implizieren scheint, die man im cartesischen Werk sonst so nicht findet, sondern auch, weil sie auf so etwas wie die *Erlebnisqualität* von Emotionen zu zielen scheint. Nicht das Abwägen der Frage, wann, wie und in welchem Maße man Emotionen haben dürfe und solle, steht hier im Raum, sondern die simple Feststellung, dass Emotionen eine intensive Erlebnisqualität eignet, die das Leben versüßt. Oder auch verbittert – jedenfalls aber ihm einen Geschmack gibt, der sonst fehlen würde.

Man kann hierin eine deutliche Verschiebung des Fokus' der Passionstheorie sehen: von einer normativen Moral der Passionskontrolle, wie sie die rationalistischen Selbstermächtigungsprojekte des 17. Jahrhunderts allgemein prägt, hin zu einer eher zustimmenden Beschreibung der Intensität des *Fühlens* von Emotionen, wie man sie sonst vorwiegend erst aus dem 18. Jahrhundert kennt. Wie aber kommt eine solche, und sei es nur am Rande, in das Werk des Stammvaters aller Rationalisten?

Eine nahe liegende Vermutung wäre, dass es sich um eine galante Verbeugung in Richtung derjenigen intellektuellen adligen Damen handelt, für die das Passionstraktat verfasst wurde, also Elisabeth von der Pfalz und Christina von Schweden.

Vor allem letztere scheint eine gute Kandidatin für diese These. Denn während für die langjährige Briefpartnerin Elisabeth von der Pfalz die Passionen vor allem aufgrund ihres philosophischen Interesses am Leib-Seele-Problem und ihres persönlichen Bemühens um eine Therapie der Emotionen Thema sind, ist Königin Christina von Schweden, Descartes' letzte Arbeitgeberin (er folgte 1649 einer lange vorbereiteten Einladung an ihren Hof in Stockholm) vor allem als Moralistin an einer Ethik der Passionen interessiert. Und sie vertritt dezidierte eigene Positionen, die sich mit Descartes' Sinnesskepsis nur schlecht zur Deckung bringen lassen. Zumindest finden sich solche Positionen in ihren später verfassten Sentenzen und Aphorismen, die sie nach ihrer Abdankung

¹⁰ Brief an Elisabeth vom 1. September 1645. Descartes 1972, 286–287 (Hervorhebungen CN).

1654 in Rom gegen Ende ihres Lebens zu Papier brachte und die unter den Titeln *L'ouvrage du loisir* und *Les Sentiments* posthum veröffentlicht wurden.¹¹

Die Aphorismen, die man in diesen beiden Werken findet, sind nicht ausschließlich den Passionen gewidmet, Christina lässt sich auch ausführlich über Politik, Krieg, Macht, das Ideal des guten Herrschers (*le prince*) und historische Helden (*les grands hommes*) aus, sowie über Gott, die Religion, die Tugenden, das Schicksal und vieles andere mehr. Dem Interesse des Zeitalters entsprechend findet man aber auch zahlreiche Überlegungen zu den Passionen, und hier wiederum ganz besonders viel zur Liebe, dieser seit Augustinus christlichen Zentralpassion, die im Kontext säkularer höfischer Literatur des 17. Jahrhunderts nochmals ganz anders – und viel sinnlicher – in den Fokus des Interesses gerückt ist.

Was diese Passionen nun betrifft, so findet man bei Christina sehr deutliche antirationalistische Positionen. Nicht nur stellt sie sich dezidiert gegen die stoische Seelenruhe oder Apathie: „Cette tranquillité tant vantée des philosophes est un état fade et insipide.“¹² Sie ist auch eindeutig der Auffassung, dass Passionen nötig sind, um dem Leben Geschmack zu geben: „Les passions sont le sel de la vie, qui est insipide sans elles.“¹³ Oder an anderer Stelle, noch nachdrücklicher: „Les passions sont le sel de la vie; on n'est hereux ni malheureux qu'à proportion qu'on les a violentes.“¹⁴ Wo Descartes in seinem kleinen Abstecher erst von einer *Versüßung* des Lebens durch Passionen spricht, da scheint bei Christina mit der – an King Lear anklingenden Rede vom *Salz des Lebens* – eine weitaus stärkere Notwendigkeit der sinnlichen Passionserlebnisse für das geglückte Leben vorausgesetzt zu werden. Damit ist bei Christina schon relativ früh etwas vorskizziert, was erst im 18. Jahrhundert zur vollen Blüte gelangen wird: eine sensualistische Glücksauffassung, für die das Erleben von Emotionen zentralen Wert für das menschliche Leben besitzt. Und die sich dabei explizit gegen rationalistische Glückskonzeptionen abgrenzt.

Christinas Aphorismen gehören nun zwar nicht zum kanonischen philosophischen Passionsdiskurs, aber es lässt sich doch auch nicht leugnen, dass das blühende moralistische Schrifttum zu den Passionen im 17. Jahrhundert ähnlich großen geistesgeschichtlichen Einfluss hat wie die philosophischen Entwürfe und durchaus im regen Austausch sowohl mit Schulphilosophie als auch mit den neuen antischolastischen Philosophen steht. Viele der frühen moralistischen Passionstraktate des 17. Jahrhunderts, etwa diejenigen von

¹¹ Vgl. Christine 1994.

¹² *Ouvrage du Loisir* 362. Christine 1994, 194.

¹³ *Ouvrage du Loisir* 361. Christine 1994, 194.

¹⁴ *Sentiments* 180. Christine 1994, 332.

Nicolas Coëffeteau, Marin Cureau de la Chambre, Pierre Le Moyne oder Jean François Senault waren einflussreich und wurden viel gelesen.¹⁵ Im Unterschied zu diesen etwas älteren Moralisten, die in den 1620ern bis 1640ern schreiben, verkörpert Christina allerdings eine Moralistin neuen Typs, eher dem Duc de la Rochefoucauld verwandt.¹⁶ Nicht nur sind die älteren Moralisten, die sich mit Passionen befassen, meist Priester (oder zuweilen auch Ärzte, wie Marin Cureau de la Chambre) und argumentieren also religiös, sondern auch orientieren sie sich stilistisch, formal und inhaltlich noch ganz an den klassischen philosophisch-theologischen Mustern und übernehmen vor allem tradiertes Material: ihre Passionstraktate sind allesamt nach dem Schema klassischer aristotelischer-thomistischer Passionslehre verfasst, wahlweise mit augustinischen und stoischen Übernahmen. Jedenfalls aber vorwiegend trockene Auflistungen von einzelnen Passionen und deren Merkmalen, ergänzt durch moralische Überlegungen zur jeweiligen Nützlichkeit und Schädlichkeit und technische Hinweise zur Kontrolle; und insgesamt orientiert an der normativen Frage nach dem Umgang mit Passionen. Von Aufbau und Ausrichtung unterscheiden sich die moralistischen Passionstraktate der 1620–1640er Jahre damit kaum von denjenigen der klassischen Schulphilosophen.

Dagegen zeichnen sich die neuen Moralisten der zweiten Hälfte des 17. Jahrhunderts wie Christina oder La Rochefoucauld, die wiederum in Montaigne einen frühen Vorläufer haben, durch einen kompletten Stilbruch mit schulphilosophischen und theologischen Mustern aus: Sie sind keine Prediger, sondern Politiker, ihre theoretischen Intentionen sind nicht normativ, sondern deskriptiv, ihre Beobachtungen des Menschen subjektiv und empirisch, ihre Moral wenig teleologisch und schon gar nicht theologisch, sondern vielmehr höchst diesseitig und im Diesseits wiederum höfisch. Dieser Stilbruch hat unbestreitbare Vorteile, gerade was die Passionslehre betrifft. Die aphoristische Form eignet sich ohne Zweifel in mancher Hinsicht besonders gut fürs Nachdenken über Passionen, zumindest was deren gelebte Dimension betrifft: hier kann das knappe *aperçu* vielsagender sein als die weitschweifige Systematisierung. Denn es lässt sich mit guten Gründen die These vertreten, dass eines der Probleme klassisch philosophischer Passionstheorien darin besteht, dass sie immer wieder in eine Schieflage geraten, wenn sie versuchen, die gelebte Dimension der Passionen zu beschreiben und sie mit naturwissenschaftlich-philosophischen Erklärungen, die sie theoretisch entwickelt oder übernommen haben, zusammenzubringen – das seltsame Phänomen, dass in den meisten vormo-

¹⁵ Coëffeteau 1620, Cureau 1640, Le Moyne 1640, Senault 1641; vgl. dazu Lafond 1993.

¹⁶ Es gibt auch eine direkte Verbindung zwischen den beiden: Christina hat La Rochefoucaulds Maximen kommentiert. Vgl. La Rochefoucauld 1999, 599–621.

dernen Passionstheorien die Beispiele oft nicht so ganz auf die ausgearbeiteten Theorieteile zu passen scheinen (ein Problem, das man unter anderem auch bei Descartes findet).

Solche Probleme haben die aphoristischen Moralisten nicht. Ihre Beschreibungen emotionalen Empfindens und ihr damit einhergehendes pointiertes Durchleuchten menschlicher Schwächen sind an keine Systematik gebunden und ihre Kritik an der zeitgenössischen rationalistischen Philosophie und deren intellektuellen Glückskonzeptionen kümmert sich nicht um gangbare systematische Alternativen. Auffallend oft wird die Kritik an den Rationalisten im Zusammenhang mit dem Passionsproblem geübt. So wird erstens allgemein die Möglichkeit einer Herrschaft der *ratio* über die *passio* bezweifelt. Christina etwa schreibt: „C'est sur les sympathies et sur les antipathies que la raison a perdu ses droits.“¹⁷ Das Gefühl lässt sich nicht überstimmen. Und es wird zweitens den Passionen generell etwas Unverfügbares zugeschrieben: „L'on ne triomphe de ses passions, que lorsqu'elles sont faibles.“¹⁸ Wer denkt, er könne seine Passionen beherrschen, hat einfach keine starken Passionen. Rationalistische Passionskontrolle erscheint angesichts voll manifestierter Passionen einer gewissen Heftigkeit als schlichte Selbstbelügung: „Les violentes passions triomphent toujours des hommes, si le ciel ne s'en mêle.“¹⁹

Ähnliche Rationalitätsskepsis findet man beim Duc de la Rochefoucauld. Genauso wie Christina einer hochadligen, hochpolitischen und hochintriganten höfischen Welt entstammend, vertritt er eine mehrheitlich pessimistische – oder realistische – Sicht auf die Natur des Menschen und auf die Möglichkeiten und Grenzen dessen Umgangs mit Rationalität sowohl als mit Sinnlichkeit. Auch seine berühmten *Maximen* sind keine reine Passionsliteratur, wohl aber genauso wie diejenigen von Christina ausgiebig mit dem Passionsproblem befasst – wie schon ein fulminanter Auftakt mit einer Reihe von pointierten allgemeinen Beobachtung zum Thema zeigt.

La Rochefoucauld hält Passionen erstens nicht für vereinzelte Ereignisse, sondern für etwas dauerhaft Präsentes: „Il y a dans le coeur humain une génération perpétuelle de passions, en sorte que la ruine de l'une est presque toujours l'établissement d'une autre.“²⁰ Und ganz wie Christina fasst er sie als wesentlich unverfügbar auf: „La durée de nos passions ne dépend pas plus de nous que la durée de notre vie.“²¹ Und La Rochefoucauld ist nicht nur skept-

¹⁷ *Ouvrage du Loisir* 38. Christine 1994, 146.

¹⁸ *Ouvrage du Loisir* 401. Christine 1994, 199.

¹⁹ *Ouvrage du Loisir* 402. Christine 1994, 200.

²⁰ La Rochefoucauld 1999, 9 (m. 10).

²¹ La Rochefoucauld 1999, 8 (m. 5).

tisch, was die Möglichkeit einer Kontrolle der Passionen betrifft, sondern formuliert auch eine grundsätzliche Kritik an der rationalistischen Philosophie: „La philosophie triomphe aisément des maux passés et des maux à venir. Mais les maux présents triomphent d'elle.“²² Der passionsfreie Zustand ist für ihn ebenfalls nicht wünschenswert, sondern – eine weitere kulinarische, wenn auch nicht unbedingt geschmackliche Kategorie – *lauwarm*: „Les passions de la jeunesse ne sont guère plus opposées au salut que la tiédeur des vieilles gens.“²³ Und auch wenn er insgesamt in Bezug auf die Glücksmöglichkeit des Menschen eher pessimistisch ist, so hängt auch bei ihm Glück und Unglück in wesentlichem Maße an den Passionen: „Ceux qui ont eu de grandes passions se trouvent toute leur vie heureux, et malheureux, d'en être guéris.“²⁴

Wenn solche aphoristische Literatur wie bisher gezeigt einerseits in direkte Opposition zur rationalistischen Philosophie ihrer Zeit geht, so ist diese Abgrenzungslinie sicherlich nicht die einzige. Die moralistische Wertschätzung der Passionen muss auch im breiteren Kontext der im 17. Jahrhundert allgemein starken antistoischen Passionsapologie gesehen werden, die eine Reaktion auf den neustoischen Rigorismus des 16. Jahrhunderts ist, und die von den frühen Moralisten und sogar den rationalistischen Philosophen selbst geteilt wird. Auch Descartes verwahrt sich gegen die stoische Apathie: „ie ne suis point de ces Philosophes cruels, qui veulent que leur sage soit insensible“²⁵. Die grundlegende antistoische Passionsapologie ist in der zweiten Hälfte des 17. Jahrhunderts freilich im Wesentlichen schon durch die vielen moralistischen und philosophischen Traktate geleistet; wie Jean Lafond bemerkt, stellt spätestens ab 1660 der Stoizismus keine ernsthafte Gefahr mehr für die Vorstellung einer Natürlichkeit und Nützlichkeit der Passionen dar.²⁶ Die nur mehr fragmentarische Darstellung der Aphoristen baut also auch bereits auf einer Selbstverständlichkeit des theoretischen und literarischen Umgangs mit Passionen auf.

Von zentraler Bedeutung für die neuen Moralisten ist aber sicherlich auch das zweite große Revival antiker Philosophie im 17. Jahrhundert, nämlich dasjenige des Epikureismus. Spätestens seit Pierre Gassendis breitenwirksamen Werken Mitte des 17. Jahrhunderts ist dieser wieder eine feste Größe im intellektuellen Diskurs.²⁷ Bei Gassendi werden die wesentlichen antiken Topoi wiederbelebt: Lust oder Freude ist von Natur aus gut, und ohne Lust gibt es kein

22 La Rochefoucauld 1999, 12 (m. 22).

23 La Rochefoucauld 1999, 82 (m. 341).

24 La Rochefoucauld 1999, 109 (m. 485).

25 Brief an Elisabeth vom 18. Mai 1645. Descartes 1972, 201–202.

26 Lafond 1993, 184.

27 Vgl. Gassendi 1647, Gassendi 1649, Gassendi 1658.

Glück. „Voluptatem sine qua notio felicitatis nulla est, rem bonam suapte natura esse“, wie das 2. Kapitel des dritten Buches über die Ethik seines *Philosophiae Epicuri Syntagma* überschrieben ist.²⁸ Anders als die stoische Ethik fasst die epikureische Definition das Glück also nicht als Absenz von Emotionen, sondern umgekehrt als Lust oder Freude. Allerdings wird zumeist doch auch eine ruhige Form von Lust privilegiert: es gibt Lust in der Bewegung und Lust in der Ruhe, erklärt uns Gassendi mit Epikur – und diejenige in der Ruhe ist vorzuziehen. Auch Gassendi definiert darum das Glück als Seelenruhe.²⁹

Zumindest Christinas Position scheint mir allerdings, wie auch diejenige späterer Sensualisten, über Gassendi und seinen wiederbelebten antiken Epikureismus hinauszugehen, und zwar insofern es nicht nur um die Suche nach Lust geht. Gassendi akzeptiert zwar mit Epikur Schmerz als manchmal notwendiges Übel, privilegiert aber klar die Lust.³⁰ Dagegen ist mit Christinas Rede vom *Salz des Lebens* durchaus auch das negative Spektrum emotionalen Erlebens mitgemeint; es geht hier nicht nur um Glück, sondern darum überhaupt *etwas zu fühlen*. Die ohnehin zweifelhafte und meist im Dienst einer Passionsberuhigung stehende Unterscheidung zwischen positiven und negativen Passionen, die sich seit der Antike durch alle Passionslehren zieht, wird in dieser Form des Sensualismus (oder Proto-Sensualismus) ausgeschaltet.

Voll ausgebildet findet man diese am Fühlen selbst orientierte sensualistische Position dann spätestens in der ersten Hälfte des 18. Jahrhunderts. Eine exemplarische frühe Vertreterin ist Madame du Châtelet und ihr *Discours sur le bonheur* aus den 1740er Jahren. Hier werden die Passionen nicht mehr als einzudämmende Gefährder der Seelenruhe und damit des Glücks aufgefasst, sondern in die Glücksdefinition direkt und explizit mit hinein genommen: „Il faut, pour être heureux, s’être défait des préjugés, être vertueux, se bien porter, avoir des goûts & des passions, être susceptible d’illusions [...]“.³¹ Nichts ist, so Madame du Châtelet, angenehmer als Emotionen, sie sind der einzige Weg zum Glück und sie zu unterdrücken bedeutete eine Unterdrückung des Lebens selbst:

Il faut commencer par se bien dire à soi-même & par se bien convaincre que nous n’avons rien à faire dans ce monde qu’à nous y procurer des sensations & des sentiments agréables. Les moralistes qui disent aux hommes: *réprimez vos passions, & maîtrisez vos desirs*, si vous voulez être heureux, ne connoissent pas le chemin du bonheur. *On n’est heureux que par des goûts & des passions satisfaites [...]*.³²

²⁸ Gassendi 1998, pars III, cap. II, 619.

²⁹ Vgl. Gassendi 1998, 627–635 (pars III, cap. IV–V).

³⁰ Vgl. Taussig 2003, 115–116.

³¹ Châtelet 1961, 4 (Hervorhebungen CN).

³² Châtelet 1961, 4–5 (Hervorhebungen CN).

Dass Passionen auch negativ oder destruktiv sein können, wird nicht gelehrt, aber Madame du Châtelet hält dieses Übel für kleiner als eine völlige Abwesenheit von Lust:

Mais supposons pour un moment, que les passions fassent plus de malheureux que d'heureux, je dis qu'elles seroient encore à désirer, parce que c'est la condition sans laquelle on ne peut avoir de grands plaisirs; or, ce n'est la peine de vivre que pour avoir des sensations & des sentiments agréables; & plus les sentiments agréables sont vifs, plus on est heureux. Il est donc à désirer d'être susceptible de passions, & je le répète encore: n'en a pas qui veut.³³

Spätestens hier ist nun endgültig diejenige emphatische Wertschätzung des Emotionserlebens ausformuliert, welche sich bereits bei den Moralisten der zweiten Hälfte des 17. Jahrhunderts in Ansätzen andeutet. Je mehr Geschmack das Leben hat, desto besser. Je mehr man emotional erlebt, desto besser: die angenehmen Emotionen werden privilegiert, aber die unangenehmen gehören dazu. Es geht also nicht mehr so sehr um positive versus negative Emotionen als vielmehr um schiere Intensität. Auch bei Madame du Châtelet wird dieses emphatische Bekenntnis noch weiter ausdifferenziert, auch sie behandelt Fragen des richtigen Umgangs mit den Passionen, aber die grundsätzliche Richtung ist klar: Passionen sind nicht die Gefahr, die der Vernunft und der Seelenruhe und damit dem Glück droht, sondern vielmehr das Fundament für jegliches menschliche Glück.

Wichtig für diese schleichende Amalgamierung von Glück und Emotion ist neben den bereits erwähnten epikureischen, antistoischen und antirationalistischen Motiven zweifelsohne auch die ihrerseits schleichende Amalgamierung von Emotion und Liebe, mithin die Transformation der *passion de l'âme* zur *passion tout court* und damit zum modernen Begriff der *Leidenschaft*. Eine Entwicklung die ebenfalls in der Liebeskasuistik des 17. Jahrhunderts ihren Ausgang nimmt, sei es in der Literatur, sei es in der Moralistik, nicht zuletzt in derjenigen von Christina oder La Rochefoucauld, die der Liebe einen besonderen Status als paradigmatische und besonders wünschbare Emotion zuschreibt. Und die ihren Höhepunkt in der Philosophie (und Praxis) der Libertinage im 18. Jahrhundert finden wird, dieser letztlich konsequentesten Ausprägung des von mir hier in seinen Anfängen skizzierten eudämonistischen Sensualismus.

Das im 17. Jahrhundert aufkommende Interesse an der Erlebnisqualität von Emotionen und die damit einhergehende Metaphorik von Süße, Bitterkeit und Salzigkeit der Passionen führt freilich nicht nur in gerader Linie zu den sensua-

³³ Châtelet 1961, 6.

listischen Glücksethiken des 18. Jahrhunderts, sondern auch in einer eher rationalistischen Traditionslinie zu den daselbst sich entwickelnden Ästhetiken und Ethiken des Geschmacks, deren Entstehung man von Leibniz über Wolff und Baumgarten bis zu Kant verfolgen kann, der den Geschmack oder das „ästhetische Gefühl“ als sinnliche Urteilkraft zu einem relevanten Seelenvermögen aufwertet, das über Gut und Schlecht urteilt.³⁴ In dieser Theorietradition werden die Gefühle allerdings nur epistemisch aufgewertet, nicht hingegen in einem ethischen Sinne glücksrelevant: Leibniz und Wolff identifizieren ganz rationalistisch das Glück mit beständiger intellektueller Lust,³⁵ während Kants Pflichtethik mit ihrer Abwendung vom Eudämonismus das Glück als Kategorie schlicht aus der Moralphilosophie herauskomplimentiert.³⁶

Aber das ist dann schon ein historischer Moment, wo die Philosophie die Deutungsmacht über die Emotionen endgültig verloren hat. Auch in Deutschland siegt spätestens mit der Empfindsamkeit des ausgehenden 18. Jahrhunderts das sensualistische Paradigma – wenn nicht *in* der Philosophie, dann doch *über* die Philosophie.

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³⁴ Kant 1990b, 1–5, 12–15; vgl. Reckí 2006, 92–110.

³⁵ Leibniz 1965, 391; Wolff 1968, §§ 509–518.

³⁶ Vgl. z.B. Kant 1990a, A 166, 108.

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Verena Mayer

Gefühl ist alles!

Zur semantischen Genese einer Erfahrungskategorie

Abstract: In German philosophy today the word *Gefühl* is often used as an equivalent for the English word *emotion*. I will argue that this is misleading. Despite the similar, very broad and vague meaning of both terms there are deep conceptual differences between *Gefühl* and *emotion*. They can be traced back to the development of our emotional vocabulary in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. While *emotion* was meant to be an inner arousal, a motion of the subject, *Gefühl* initially meant a perceptual capacity, the sense of touch. This meaning remains of some importance up to the phenomenological account of the emotions in the first half of the twentieth century. In what follows, I will give a sketch of the semantic development of the term mainly during the eighteenth Century and suggest some systematic conclusions that could be drawn from this approach.

1 *emotion* versus Gefühl

Das Wort Gefühl wird in der Philosophie, der Psychologie und den Neurowissenschaften heute zumeist als Übersetzung des Englischen *emotion* und als austauschbar mit dem wenig gebräuchlichen Kunstwort „Emotion“ verwendet. Was die *emotions* oder Emotionen sind, ist umstritten. Als paradigmatische Elemente der Gefühls-/Emotionsklasse gelten Ärger, Furcht, Liebe, Zorn etc., also gewisse konzeptuelle Einheiten, die mit innerer Bewegung, Lust oder Unlustempfindungen (englisch: *feelings*) oder einer gewissen Intensität einhergehen.¹ Philosophen und Wissenschaftler verschiedenster Disziplinen beschäf-

¹ Der wissenschaftliche und philosophische Sprachgebrauch weicht heute vom Alltagsgebrauch erheblich ab. Ist es schon ungrammatisch, von einer „emotion of fear“ zu sprechen (Furcht ist aber wohl die am meisten diskutierte *emotion*), dann gibt es erst recht keine „emotion of surprise“ oder gar „emotion of disgust“. Insbesondere im wissenschaftlichen Umgang mit dem Wort werden die Grenzen oft so gesetzt, wie es die Theorie verlangt. Gross 2008 etwa zählt unter die Emotionen „irritation when a shoelace breaks“. Mulligan grenzt dagegen „emotions“ als *vorübergehende affektive Episoden* von anderen affektiven Phänomenen scharf ab, nämlich von „bodily feelings“, „moods“, „sentiments“ (Liebe, Hass, Verehrung, an jemanden glauben), „emotions dispositions“, „passions“, und „preferences“, Mulligan 2010, 476. Mulligans rechnet also Liebe weder zu den Emotionen noch zu den

tigen sich in den letzten Jahrzehnten intensiv mit der Frage, wie diese Klasse zu definieren wäre, ob es überhaupt einheitliche Kriterien gibt, die alle Emotionen erfassen und welche dieser Emotionen „natürliche Arten“ sein könnten. Es wurde diskutiert, ob *emotions* konative oder kognitive Zustände seien, ob sie Wertwahrnehmungen oder Wahrnehmungen von Körperempfindungen seien oder ob es sich wenigstens teilweise um neurobiologisch verankerte Affektprogramme handle.² Die Diskussion geht dabei grundsätzlich von der genannten paradigmatischen Klasse aus, der Paul Ekman noch zwei merkwürdige „Emotionen“ hinzugefügt hat, nämlich Überraschung und Ekel.³

Die angloamerikanische Diskussion über die Gefühle hat sich weitgehend unabhängig von einer ähnlich intensiven, aber fast vergessenen Debatte in der Phänomenologie nach 1900 entwickelt. Viele Aspekte der heutigen Debatte – etwa die Rolle der *feelings*, die Intentionalität der Emotionen oder ihre Beziehung zu Werten und zur Moralität – wurden von Husserl, Heidegger, Scheler und den Münchner Phänomenologen bereits aufgegriffen und detaillierten phänomenologischen Analysen unterzogen.⁴ Im Unterschied zur heutigen *philosophy of emotion* sprachen die Philosophen damals jedoch nicht über Emotionen oder *emotions*, sondern über „Gefühl“ und „die Gefühle“, eine nicht nur verbale, sondern semantische Differenz, die sich tief in die Konzeptualisierungen hinein bemerkbar machte. Die Semantik von „Gefühl“ bewirkte, dass sich die phänomenologische Debatte von vornherein auf die Analogie von Gefühlen zu Wahrnehmungen und die Beziehung des Fühlens zum Werten konzentrierte, während die angloamerikanische Debatte lange Zeit um den Unterschied zwischen *emotions* und *feelings* kreiste. Die dort diskutierte kognitivistische These, wonach *emotions* nur akzidentiell mit *feelings* verknüpft seien, macht wiederum für die Begriffe von Fühlen und Gefühl buchstäblich keinen Sinn.

Im Folgenden gehe ich der Entwicklung des Gefühlskonzepts im 18. Jahrhundert nach. Wie eine ganze Reihe anderer Begriffe aus unserem emotionalen Vokabular, darunter auch *emotion*, entstand es erst im späten 17. Jahrhundert und hat seine heutige Bedeutung wohl erst im 20. Jahrhundert erhalten. Im Vergleich zum englischen Vokabular lässt sich folgendes festhalten. Zum einen gibt es im Deutschen kein besonderes Wort für die paradigmatische Klasse der *emotions*, also Liebe, Hass, Angst oder Eifersucht, obwohl diese zu den Gefüh-

Leidenschaften; Überraschung oder Irritation fällt in keine dieser Kategorien, gilt also nicht als affektiv. Die Beispiele sind zahllos.

² U.a. Damasio 1994, 1999, Deigh 1994, 2010, Francke 2004, Goldie 2002, Griffiths 1997, de Sousa 2010.

³ Ekman 1992.

⁴ Vendrell Ferran 2008, Vongehr 2001, Bermes/Henckmann/Leonardy 2003.

len zählen. Das Wort „Emotion“ hat sich in der Alltagssprache nicht durchgesetzt und ist ein *terminus technicus* in der Philosophie, Psychologie und anderen Wissenschaften geblieben. Der Klasse der *emotions* entspricht am ehesten noch das Wort „Leidenschaft“,⁵ das jedoch veraltet ist und fast nur noch ironisch gebraucht wird. Zum zweiten fallen die „Gefühle“ nicht mit den *feelings* zusammen, also mit körperlichen Zuständen oder Wahrnehmungen davon. So kann man zwar auch ein Gefühl von Hunger oder Schmerz, Kälte und Wärme haben, aber auch das Gefühl von Überlegenheit, von Sicherheit oder Demut, das Gefühl, dass ein Gewitter naht, dass Unheil droht oder die Sache einen guten Ausgang nimmt, dass ein mathematischer Beweis richtig ist oder ein Gemälde eine Fälschung. Im Folgenden soll gezeigt werden, dass das Gefühl Eigenschaften hat, die weder den *emotions* noch den *feelings* zugeschrieben werden: Gefühl hat einen perzeptiven Charakter, der Bewusstsein einschließt, und der von Anfang an als eine Art der nicht-propositionalen Erkenntnis aufgefasst wurde. Es ist aus diesem Grund auch ungewöhnlich, von einem „blinden Gefühl“ zu sprechen, während der Ausdruck „blinde Leidenschaft“ schon fast pleonastisch erscheint. Der klassische Gegensatz von Verstand und Gefühl ist in diesem Sinne nicht ein Gegensatz zwischen Erkenntnis und innerem Fühlen, sondern zwischen propositionaler und nicht-propositionaler Erkenntnis, also eine Unterscheidung im Reich der Vernunft selbst.

Die Entstehungsgeschichte des Gefühls im 18. Jahrhundert, die im Folgenden nur in einigen Aspekten dargestellt werden soll, macht diese Konnotation sichtbar. Wenn am Ende des Jahrhunderts Faust in seinem „Glaubensbekenntnis“ sagt, „Gefühl ist alles“⁶, so will er damit nicht behaupten, Gott sei eine Frage der inneren Gemütsbewegung. Im Licht der ursprünglichen Wortbedeutung antwortet Faust auf die Gretchenfrage vielmehr, dass Gott nicht eine Frage des Glaubens, sondern des „Erfühlens“ sei, einer nichtsprachlichen, aber dennoch zweifelsfreien Perzeption.

2 Gefühl als Tastsinn

Es wird gelegentlich behauptet, das Wort Gefühl sei eine Übersetzung des französischen Wortes *sentiment*.⁷ In einem Nürnberger Wörterbuch aus dem Jahr

⁵ Vgl. aber Charland 2010.

⁶ „Und wenn du ganz in dem Gefühle selig bist / Nenn es dann, wie du willst / Nenn's Glück! Herz! Liebe! Gott! / Ich habe keinen Namen / Dafür! Gefühl ist alles. / Namen sind Schall und Rauch, / Umnebelnd Himmelsglut.“ Goethe, *Faust I*: Marthens Garten. Goethe 1987, I.2, 174.

⁷ Engelen 2007.

1678 erscheint das Wort jedoch als Bezeichnung für den fünften Sinn, den Tastsinn.⁸ Das Wortbildungsmuster ist identisch mit dem der vier anderen Sinne Gehör, Gesicht, Geschmack und Geruch. Diese Ausdrücke waren zunächst insofern mehrdeutig, als sie den Wahrnehmungssinn und gleichzeitig die Qualität des durch den Sinn Wahrgenommenen bezeichneten. So konnte jemand ein „Gesicht“ haben, d.h. eine visuelle Erscheinung, aber diese auch durch das „Gesicht“ sehen. Solche Mehrdeutigkeiten werden heute z.B. dadurch vermieden, dass man den Geschmackssinn vom Geschmack und den Geruchssinn vom Geruch verbal unterscheidet. Das Wort „Gesicht“ hat die Bedeutung des visuellen Sinnes ganz verloren, und das „Gefühl“ ist durch „Tastsinn“ ersetzt. Ganz verloren ist die ursprüngliche Bedeutung des Wortes „Gefühl“ jedoch nicht. So kann man etwa sagen, man habe kein Gefühl mehr in den Händen, und damit meinen, dass man nichts mehr mit den Händen fühlen, also ertasten könne.

Das Gefühl im Sinne von Tastsinn ist die vorherrschende Bedeutung des Wortes im frühen 18. Jahrhundert. Allerdings wird dabei der Tastsinn schon bald auf die Wahrnehmung über die Haut und den gesamten Körper ausgedehnt. Der fünfte Sinn ist also der Sinn, mit dem man etwas körperlich spürt. Dies dokumentiert ausführlich Barthold Heinrich Brockes Gedicht „Irdisches Vergnügen in Gott“ aus den Jahren 1721–1748. Im Kapitel „Die fünf Sinne“ beschreibt Brockes unter dem Abschnitt „Das Gefühl“ den offenbar noch rein physiologischen Bedeutungsumfang des Wortes.⁹

(119)

Hiemit stellen wir dem Dencken
 Vom Geschmack nun auch ein Ziel,
 Unsre Geister hinzulencken
 Aufs empfindliche Gefühl,
 Dessen Kräfte den Gedancken
 Ohne Mass' und ohne Schrancken
 Allenthalben, allgemein,
 Und im gantzen Körper seyn.

⁸ Vgl. *Trübners Deutsches Wörterbuch*, Götze 1937–38, 53. Die Frage, ob es den Tatsinn gibt oder wie viele Sinne wir haben, war strittig. Zum Gefühl als Tastsinn vgl. die ausführliche Studie von Binczek 2007; zur Begriffsgeschichte von *emotion* vgl. Dixon 2003, Charland 2010.

⁹ Zitiert wird im folgenden nach Online-Resource auf Zeno.org: <http://www.zeno.org/Literatur/M/Brockes,%20Barthold%20Heinrich/Gedichte/Irdisches%20Vergn%C3%BCgen%20in%20Gott>, abgerufen am 10.4.2011. Die vorgestellten Zahlen bezeichnen die Nummern der Strophen.

Für Brockes ist das Gefühl also bereits nicht mehr ein bloßes Ertasten mit den Händen, sondern ein Empfinden mit dem ganzen Körper, das zugleich in der Intensität und Lokalität beliebig variiert. Später werden Philosophen die Körpergefühle differenzieren. So unterscheidet etwa Kant in der *Anthropologie* zwischen einem Organgefühl und einem Vitalgefühl, ein Unterschied, den später Scheler aufgreift.¹⁰ Wichtig ist an dieser Stelle, dass das Gefühl dem Verstand Informationen über die qualitative Beschaffenheit der Welt liefert. Brockes erprobt die Bandbreite dieser Informationen quasi mit geschlossenen Augen, wobei sich eine Fülle von möglichen Daten offenbart:

(120)

Eines Körpers Leichte, Schwere,
Glätte, Fest- und Flüssigkeit,
Was gefüllet ist, das Leere,
Hart und weich, lang, schmal und breit,
Was sich biegt, was stumpf, was spitzig,
Was erfüllt von Frost, was hitzig,
Naß und trocken, warm und kühl
Zeigt der Seele das Gefühl.

Der Körper wird hier als komplexes Wahrnehmungsorgan verstanden, dessen Funktion das Erfühlen der Umwelt in ihren physikalischen Qualitäten ist. Obwohl später dem Gefühl als bloß subjektivem Erleben jede epistemische Zuverlässigkeit abgesprochen wird, ist es bei Brockes in seiner Funktion als Körpersinn keineswegs besonders irrtumsanfällig oder im Ergebnis vage. Im Gegenteil: das Gefühl ist der untrüglichschte und präziseste Sinn:

(121)

And're Sinne können trügen;
Ihm ist minder Trug bewust.

So können wir, meint Brockes, wohl unsicher sein über die Wirklichkeit dessen, was wir sehen oder hören, aber wir vergewissern uns, indem wir die vermeinte Sache berühren und ihre Wirklichkeit erfühlen. Es ist also das Gefühl, das uns letzten Aufschluss über die Realität vermittelt. Spätere Phänomenologen werden den Tastsinn als dasjenige Medium ausweisen, das erst äußere Wirklichkeit konstituiert, indem es durch Berührung des eigenen Körpers und anderer Dinge den eigenen Leib als besonderes, fühlendes Ding aussondert

¹⁰ Vgl. Kant 1907 ff., II, 154 (im folgenden AA); Scheler, 1980, 331–345.

und der nichtfühlenden Außenwelt gegenübergestellt.¹¹ Bloß Gesehenes befindet sich zu uns in einer gewissen Entfernung, seine Wirklichkeit kann unsicher sein und es affiziert uns nicht direkt. Skeptische Bedenken bezüglich der Existenz der Außenwelt beruhen so gesehen auf einer einseitigen Betonung des visuellen Sinns. Dagegen stehen wir im Gefühl der Welt zu dieser in einer Art Kontinuum, das keinen Zweifel an der Wirklichkeit der Sache selbst (wenn auch gelegentlich der erfüllten Qualitäten) aufkommen lässt. Schon Berkeley hatte in seiner Abhandlung *On Vision* auf diese wirklichkeitsstiftende Funktion des Fühlens aufmerksam gemacht.¹² In der *Anthropologie* schreibt Kant über den Tastsinn ähnlich: „Dieser Sinn ist auch der einzige von unmittelbarer äußerer Wahrnehmung; eben darum auch der wichtigste und am sichersten belehrende.“¹³

Der fließende Übergang vom gefühlten Objekt zum Subjekt führt zu einer weiteren Extension des Begriffs. Das Wort Gefühl bezeichnet nun auch die affektive Reaktionen, Lust und Unlust, die beim Tasten deutlicher als bei den anderen Sinnen auftreten.¹⁴ Wir fühlen nicht nur objektive Eigenschaften der Dinge wie Kälte und Wärme, fühlend werden diese auch unmittelbar als angenehm oder unangenehm bewertet und so zu uns selbst und unserem „Lebensgefühl“ in Beziehung gesetzt. Das Gefühl schafft auf diese Weise einen andauernden evaluativen Dialog zwischen uns und der Welt, in der wir leben. William James, der unter dem Titel *emotion* die Phänomenologie des Gefühls beschrieb, nannte den Körper in diesem Sinne einen „sounding-board“.¹⁵ Während der Gesichtssinn vergleichsweise distanziert und „kalt“ ist, dringt über das Gefühl als wahrnehmendes Bewerten die Welt in das Subjekt ein und gewinnt erst dadurch ihre Bedeutung *für* das Subjekt.

Diese Neubewertung der Sinnlichkeit hat weiterreichende Konsequenzen. Gegenüber der neuzeitlichen Auffassung des Menschen als mechanische Maschine, als „Uhrwerk“, wird nun durch das Gefühl der Körper als sinnlich belebte Einheit, als Organismus, als Leib, erfasst. Wir sind nicht nur physikali-

11 Vgl. dazu die Konstitution der Welt, wie sie Husserl in den *Ideen II* (Husserl 1952) entwickelt.

12 Berkeley, 1709. Berkeley möchte hier zeigen, „the manner wherein we perceive by sight the distance, magnitude, and situation of objects. Also to consider the difference there is betwixt the ideas of sight and touch, and whether there be any idea common to both senses“, Berkeley, 1709 (§ 1).

13 Kant *Anthropologie*, 155. Zu Kants Gebrauch der Ausdrücke Gefühl, Empfindung etc. s.u. Abschnitt 4

14 Vgl. aber Kants gegenteilige Meinung s.u. 4.1.

15 James 1890, 450. Zur phänomenologischen Interpretation von James' Theorie der Emotionen vgl. Ratcliffe 2005.

schen Kräften unterworfen, sondern durch Lust und Unlust in einem neuen Sinne motiviert. Das natürliche Welt-Leib-Zusammenspiel zielt auf eine ausgedehnte „Lust der Seelen“, deren Explikation und Lobpreisung das ganze Brockessche Unternehmen gilt. Der übergreifende Titel des Gedichtes, „Irdisches Vergnügen in Gott“, deutet bereits darauf hin: Leben im Sinne des gefühlvollen Wahrnehmens gilt Brockes als Zweck des göttlichen Planes. Berührung, Tastsinn, schafft Lust, weil sie diesen Zwecken dient. So schreibt Brockes weiter:

(121f)

Alles menschliche Vergnügen,
Anmuth, Wollust, Freud' und Lust
Fliesen bloß aus dieser Quelle;
Und die allerkleinste Stelle
Unsers Cörpers hat die Kraft,
Daß sie Lust der Seelen schafft.

Das Gefühl ist jedoch nicht nur der Zweck, sondern in einem prädarwinistischen Sinne auch das Mittel zur Perpetuierung der Schöpfung. Es animiert uns zur Fortpflanzung ebenso wie zur Selbsterhaltung. Dass wir in der Welt überleben, verdanken wir also ebenfalls dem „Wunder des Gefühls“:

(129)

Daß wir Schmerzen können leiden,
Und empfindlich sind für Pein,
Lehrt uns alle Sachen meiden,
Die uns schäd- und tödtlich seyn.
Diesem Sinn' ists zuzuschreiben,
Wenn wir unversehret bleiben.
Daß man sein' Erhaltung sucht,
Ist nur des Gefühles Frucht.

Das Gefühl als über den ganzen Körper erweiterter Tastsinn, ist also in mehrfacher Hinsicht gegenüber den anderen Sinnen im Vorteil: es verschafft uns Wirklichkeit und gibt uns Informationen, die unserer Orientierung in der Wirklichkeit dienen, gleichzeitig aber ist es die Quelle von Lustgewinn und Vergnügen am Leben selbst und dient dadurch der Erhaltung des Systems. Ausgestattet mit solchen umfassenden Funktionen gilt das Gefühl damit als das höchste der Sinnesorgane. Es absorbiert die anderen Sinne auch schon deshalb, weil diese nur Körperteile (Augen, Ohren, Nase, Mund) betreffen, das Gefühl aber Funktion des ganzen Körpers ist. Tatsächlich fühlen wir in gewisser Weise auch mit den Augen und Ohren im evaluativen Sinne, etwa wenn ein Lichtblitz oder

ein lauter Knall schmerzen oder eine gehörte Symphonie in uns zärtliche Gefühle erzeugt. Das Gefühl ist somit in vielfacher Hinsicht der übergreifende Wahrnehmungssinn: es verhilft uns überhaupt erst zu Realität, die wir dann mit den anderen Sinnen erkunden; es leitet uns in unseren Bestrebungen und Zielen; es lässt uns das Leben genießen und es dient der Arterhaltung. Die anderen vier Sinne wären ohne das Gefühl defektiv; wir könnten sie nicht zu einem umfassenden Weltbegriff integrieren. Unser in-der-Welt-sein, mit Heidegger gesprochen, verdanken wir zumindest nach Brockes daher allein dem Gefühl.

3 Die Extension des Gefühlsbegriffs

Es ist auffallend, dass von der paradigmatischen Klasse der *emotions*, oder von Leidenschaften und Affekten, bei Brockes nicht die Rede ist. Auch der Plural „die Gefühle“ ist ihm unbekannt, er kommt erst gegen Ende des 18. Jahrhunderts in Gebrauch.¹⁶ Das Gefühl ist aber für Brockes auch nicht in erster Linie inneres *feeling*, obwohl es mit Lust und Schmerz oft einhergeht. Gefühl ist mehr als bloßes subjektives Erleben und daher auch nicht beschränkt auf das Innenleben des Subjekts. Es bezeichnet vielmehr die variierenden Kontaktgrenzen zwischen Subjekt und Umwelt, die *per se* intelligente und überlebensnotwendige, lusterzeugende Orientierung eines Organismus in der Welt. Es ist in diesem Sinne und im Gegensatz zu den „passiven“ Leidenschaften eine aktive Tätigkeit des Erfühlens von Informationen. Schließlich ist es als orientierende Aktion grundsätzlich objektbezogen und insofern intentional *sui generis*.

Diese ursprüngliche Bedeutung von „Gefühl“ als Tastsinn oder auf den Körper erweiterter „Fühlsinn“ erhält sich durch das gesamte 18. Jahrhundert, dabei oft in der Verbindung „Gesicht und Gefühl“. So heißt es in Mendelssohn's *Morgenstunden* über die Assoziation der Sinne:

Wir verbinden die Eindrücke verschiedener Sinne, und erwarten den Eindruck des einen, sooft wir den Eindruck des andern gewahr werden. Gesicht und Gefühl sind so oft verbunden gewesen, dass wir ein ähnliches Gefühl erwarten, so oft uns ein ähnlicher Gegenstand in die Augen fällt.¹⁷

Ein flüchtiger Leser versteht hier das Wort „Gefühl“ im Sinne einer affektiven Reaktion; eindeutig meint Mendelssohn aber das organische Tastgefühl. Men-

¹⁶ Vgl. *Grimms Wörterbuch*, Artikel „Gefühl“ (Online-Resource).

¹⁷ Mendelssohn 1929ff, 41:

delssohn schreibt ganz wie Brockes dem Gefühl in diesem Sinne „Gewissheit der unmittelbaren Erkenntnis“ zu.¹⁸ Auch Kant verwendet das Wort „Gefühl“ gelegentlich noch in der Bedeutung des Tastsinns. In den *Träumen eines Geistersehers* entwickelt er eine hypothetische Erklärung der Illusion oder Wahnvorstellung, wonach „der verworrene Mensch bloße Gegenstände seiner Einbildung außer sich versetzt“ und den Gegenstand seiner Einbildung als durch einen äußeren Sinn wahrgenommen erlebt. Wenn nun der Schein-Gegenstand eines Sinnes nicht „gefühl“t, d.h. ertastet werden kann, so kennzeichnet ihn der Wahnsinnige als wirklich, aber „durchdringlich“. Er verstößt damit in gewissem Sinne gegen die Konstitutionsbedingungen von Wirklichkeit, und zeichnet sich gerade dadurch als „verrückt“ aus.¹⁹

Erst um 1790 herum scheint dieser Gebrauch des Wortes „Gefühl“ als Tastsinn zu verschwinden. Ein Kennzeichen der Bedeutungsverschiebung ist, dass nun der Tastsinn als „äußeres Gefühl“ vom eigentlichen (inneren) Gefühl unterschieden wird. Aber noch Herder betont die wesentliche und umfassende Funktion dieses äußeren Gefühls, wenn er schreibt, es sei „die Grundlage der andern [Sinne, V.M.] und bei dem Menschen einer seiner größten organischen Vorzüge“.²⁰

Schon im Verlauf des 18. Jahrhunderts hat sich jedoch der Gebrauch des Wortes von der äußeren Wahrnehmung in mehrfacher Hinsicht erweitert. Zum Einen überträgt sich die perzeptive Funktion auf die Wahrnehmung von Zuständen und Erregungen *im* Körper, also von der äußeren auf die innere Wahrnehmung. So sagt Herder „Allen Sinnen liegt Gefühl zum Grunde“²¹ und meint damit die durch die Sinneswahrnehmung angestoßenen „Seelenregungen“. Diese Ausweitung der Bedeutung erscheint folgerichtig, da ja das Gefühl als kontinuierlich von außen nach innen dringendes Erleben verstanden wird. Ich fühle, d.h. nehme wahr, nicht nur die Kälte oder Wärme eines fremden, sondern auch die meines eigenen Körpers oder Körperteils, und nicht nur, indem ich ihn von außen berühre, sondern auch „von innen“, ohne Zuhilfenahme der Hände. Ich fühle aber in analoger Weise wie Kälte und Wärme

18 Ebd., 60.

19 „Es ist alsdenn kein Wunder, wenn der Phantast manches sehr deutlich zu sehen oder zu hören glaubt, was niemand außer ihm wahrnimmt, imgleichen wenn diese Hirngespenster ihm erscheinen und plötzlich verschwinden, oder, indem sie etwa einem Sinne, z. E. dem Gesichte vorgaukeln, durch keinen andern, wie z. E. das Gefühl können empfunden werden, und daher durchdringlich scheinen.“ AA II, 347. Nach der Erklärung, die Kant in diesem Aufsatz entwickelt, müsste „der Phantast“ erkennen, dass die Erscheinung „unwirklich“ ist, weil sie keinen physischen Widerstand bietet.

20 Herder 1965, 283.

21 Herder 1978, 71.

andere innere Zuständlichkeiten wie Hunger und Durst, Schmerz und Lust, Trauer und Freude, Einsamkeit und Seligkeit: all dies nun im Sinne eines wahrnehmenden Bemerkens, eines nicht-propositionalen Bewusstseins-von. Es überträgt sich damit nicht nur das Gefühl im Sinne äußerer Wahrnehmung auch auf innere Wahrnehmung, sondern zudem das Gefühl im Sinne beiläufigen Wahrnehmens auf das aufmerksame Wahrnehmen, das Bewusstsein. In diesem Sinne des Bewusstseins wird nun das Gefühl-von-etwas zudem unterschieden von dem bloßen Fühlen, so dass keinesfalls immer die Lust mit dem Gefühl der Lust gleichzusetzen ist. So kann der Genuss einer Speise Lust erzeugen, ohne dass die Lust selbst Gegenstand innerer Aufmerksamkeit ist. Herder spricht von dem „feinen Gefühl des Wohlseins“,²² aber auch dem „eigenen Gefühl eines Daseins als Erkenntnis“:²³ hier blickt das Individuum in sein Inneres und beobachtet sich als fühlend-erkennendes Wesen. Die Entdeckung des Selbstgefühls folgt also der Expansion des Gefühlsbegriffs nach.²⁴ Das Gefühl erhält in diesem Sinne den Charakter von *awareness* und verliert weitgehend den Charakter der Gefühlsempfindung. Das „feine“ Gefühl kann dann sogar in Gegensatz oder Distanz zu den Affekten und Leidenschaften treten. So schreibt Schiller in seinem Gedicht über den Künstler, dass dieser über „der Leidenschaften wilden Drang“ mit dem „prüfenden Gefühle“, also einer Art Intuition urteile.²⁵

Die Wahrnehmungsfunktion des Gefühls erstreckt sich dann aber auch auf nichtsinnliche Eigenschaften äußerer Dinge, insbesondere auf Werte. Verbreitet ist die Rede vom Gefühl der Wahrheit eines Satzes, des Guten einer Tat oder der Schönheit eines Kunstwerks. Offenbar sind solche Gefühle nicht etwa innere Aufwallungen oder Sensationen, sondern wahrnehmende Werterkennntnis, „Wertnehmungen“, die auf komplexe Weise mit Gefühlsempfindungen verbunden sind. Obwohl sich schon bei Herder und Kant entsprechende Beobachtungen finden, hat erst Husserl damit begonnen, im Detail die Fundierungszusammenhänge von Wert und Gefühl zu beschreiben.²⁶

Den semantischen Extensionen des Gefühlsbegriffs liegt eine grammatische und ebenso phänomenologische Zweideutigkeit zum Grunde. Wir lesen

22 Herder 1965, 80.

23 Ebd., 182.

24 Zelle 2004.

25 „Der Leidenschaften wilden Drang / Des Glückes regellose Spiele / Der Pflichten und Instinkte Zwang / Stellt ihr mit prüfendem Gefühle / Mit strengem Richtsheit nach dem Ziele.“ Schiller ³1962, 180.

26 Vongehr 2011. Der in der Phänomenologie bekannte Vorgang der Wertnehmung wird in der anglo-amerikanischen Philosophie etwas missverständlich unter dem Titel der *emotions* diskutiert; vgl. das Kapitel V im *Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Emotion*, Goldie 2010.

Ausdrücke wie „das Gefühl von X“ oder „das Gefühl des X“ als subjektive oder aber als objektive Genitivkonstruktion. Der Ausdruck „das Gefühl der Furcht“ kann also das Furchtgefühl meinen, aber auch die Furcht als Gegenstand des sie wahrnehmenden Gefühls. Besonders augenfällig ist diese Ambiguität bei Kant, der manchmal vom „Gefühl *des* Schönen und Erhabenen“, dann aber auch vom „Gefühl *für* das Schöne und Erhabene“ spricht. Der grammatischen entspricht auf der Ebene der Phänomene eine analoge Zweideutigkeit, auf die Husserl aufmerksam gemacht hat. Im § 15 der Logischen Untersuchungen stellt er fest, dass die „sinnlichen Gefühle“ oder „Gefühlsempfindungen“, etwa Lust, Unlust und Schmerz in Hinsicht auf eine solche Ambiguität den Tastempfindungen ähneln. Hat man sich z.B. verbrannt, dann kann man den Schmerz auf das gebrannte Körperteil, und damit das fühlende Ich beziehen, aber ebenso auf das Feuer als seine Ursache. „Genauso werden ja beispielsweise die Berührungsempfindungen auf das berührende Leibesglied und den berührten Fremdkörper bezogen.“²⁷ Die Aufmerksamkeit ist im letzteren Fall also auf den Gegenstand des intentionalen Erlebens gerichtet, der in seinen Eigenschaften „erfühlt“ wird, kann aber auch zurück zu dem gefühlten Schmerz wechseln. Auch Kant beobachtet solchen Aufmerksamkeitswechsel im Zusammenhang mit seiner Beschreibung der fünf Sinne in der *Anthropologie*. Als eine „Sensation“ definiert er dort eine „Vorstellung durch den Sinn, deren man sich als einer solchen bewußt ist [...], wenn die Empfindung zugleich Aufmerksamkeit auf den Zustand des Subjects erregt.“²⁸

Noch bis mindestens 1910 hält sich diese Ambiguität des Gefühlsbegriffs zwischen einerseits Wahrnehmung und andererseits Gefühlsempfindung. Ein Synonymwörterbuch aus diesem Jahr kommentiert:

Einige Philosophen unterscheiden *empfinden* und *fühlen* so, daß sie unter ersterem das sinnliche Erregtwerden der Seele verstehen, unter letzterem das bewußte Wahrnehmen sinnlicher Eindrücke. So legt man den Pflanzen *Empfindung* bei, aber kein *Gefühl*. Die moderne Psychologie versteht unter *Empfindung* den *objektiven* Inhalt eines sinnlichen Reizes und unter *Gefühl* den die *Empfindung* begleitenden *subjektiven* Inhalt (z. B. Lust, Unlust). – Der allgemeinere Sprachgebrauch kennt jedoch diesen Unterschied nicht, ja vielfach setzt er diese Worte ganz gleichbedeutend.²⁹

Die systematischen grammatischen und phänomenologischen Mehrdeutigkeiten tragen sicher dazu bei, dass das Wort „Gefühl“ zunehmend mit den gefühlten Empfindungen konfundiert wird, und zwar in zweierlei Sinn: zum einen

²⁷ Husserl 1984, 406.

²⁸ AA VII, 153.

²⁹ Eberhard ¹⁷1910, Art. 451: Empfindung, Gefühl, Geschmack. Die Wörter „Leidenschaft“ und „Emotion“ sind nicht verzeichnet.

mit den nicht-intentionalen *feelings* oder Gefühlsempfindungen, die am Subjektpol der Gefühle auftreten, zum anderen mit gewissen innerlich wahrgenommenen Zuständen und Erlebnissen, die mit den Gefühlsempfindungen mehr oder weniger systematisch einhergehen, also den Leidenschaften und Affekten oder Gefühlen im Plural. Für diese zweite Bedeutung des Gefühlsbegriffs spielt wohl auch die Beobachtung eine Rolle, dass „innere“ Gefühle nicht nur auf Grund von Wahrnehmungen äußerer Tatsachen auftreten, sondern auch auf Vorstellungen, Erinnerungen oder Phantasien zurückgehen, die keinen Wahrheitsanspruch erheben können, und schließlich sogar auf physiologische Ereignisse, wie ein zu schweres Mahl. Durch die Erweiterung der Wahrnehmung auf das innere Erleben wird aber nun die Kontinuität der Welt-Subjekt-Beziehung unterbrochen oder zumindest Gegenstand der Betrachtung und des Zweifels. Zwischen einer Wahrnehmung und der damit verbundenen Gefühlsempfindung mag keine einsichtige Beziehung bestehen; es kann sich um bloße gewohnheits- oder erfahrungsmäßige Assoziation handeln. Das Gefühl verliert dadurch seine Transparenz, es wird zum „dunklen Gefühle“. So berichtet Herder, indem er deutlich das Gefühl vom Erfühlen trennt:

Mir ist mehr als ein Beispiel bekannt, da Personen natürlich, vielleicht aus einem Eindruck der Kindheit, nicht anders konnten, als unmittelbar durch eine schnelle Anwendung mit diesem Schall jene Farbe, mit dieser Erscheinung jenes ganz verschiedene, dunkle Gefühl verbinden, was durch die Vergleichung der langsamen Vernunft mit ihr gar keine Verwandtschaft hat: denn wer kann Schall und Farbe, Erscheinung und Gefühl vergleichen?³⁰

In diesem Zusammenhang spricht Herder nun auch von „den Gefühlen“, etwa Rache, Verzweiflung und Wut.³¹

Das Gefühl in diesem emotionalen Sinne, abgetrennt von seinen kausalen und intentionalen Beziehungen, büßt seine Wahrnehmungsfunktion ein und wird zur vorübergehenden emotionalen Episode, die in ihren Eigenschaften nun ganz konträr zu Wahrnehmungen erscheint. Dem Gefühl wird nun Subjektivität, Unzuverlässigkeit, Irrationalität zugeschrieben, Eigenschaften, die z.B. Henckmann so auflistet:

Die Flüchtigkeit und Instabilität der emotionalen Erlebnisse, ihre Gebundenheit an die intersubjektiv unzugängliche innere Welt des erlebenden Subjekts, die mimosenhafte Empfindlichkeit gegenüber einer sprachlichen Fixierung und Mitteilung, ihre Resistenz gegenüber absichtlicher Reproduktion, ihr in Qualität und Intensität unvorhersehbares

³⁰ Herder 1978, 166.

³¹ Ebd., 128; passim.

Auftreten, ihr starker, aber unberechenbarer Einfluss auf das Denken und Tun der Menschen usw.³²

Erst mit diesen Kennzeichen tritt das Gefühl in expliziten Gegensatz zum Verstand und wird in das Reich des „Anderen der Vernunft“ verbannt.

4 Rationalismus und Gefühl

Es ist ein Gemeinplatz der europäischen Kulturgeschichte, dass das 18. Jahrhundert in Deutschland nicht nur wie in England und Frankreich ein Jahrhundert der Rationalität und des Verstandes ist, sondern im selben Maß auch des Gefühls. Die literarischen Bewegungen der Empfindsamkeit und der „Sturm und Drang“, wie er sich in Herders Schriften zeigt, geben dem Gefühl im Sinne von Wahrnehmung und *awareness* eine wichtige Position im Leben des aufgeklärten Subjekts. Erkenntnis gewinnt man in beträchtlichem Maß gerade über das Gefühl. Herder beschreibt diesen Zusammenhang in einer Abhandlung mit dem Titel *Über Erkennen und Empfinden in der menschlichen Seele*, die er mit der These beginnt, beide möchten „am Ende gar einerlei sein“.³³ Herder argumentiert für seine Behauptung, indem zeigt, wie der menschliche Geist sich immer als *embodied*, als „ausgegossen“ in einem Körper versteht, durch den er erst praktisch wirksam zu werden vermag:

Körperlich zu reden, fühlt sich die Seele, d.i. unsre Kraft, zu erkennen und zu wollen, selbst in ihren abgezogensten Verrichtungen mit dieser Masse [des Körpers, V.M.], wenigstens mit Teilen derselben, verbunden [...]. Sie fühlt weiter ihre selbstgedachte und abgezogenste Kenntnisse als Resultate ihrer Verbindung mit dem Körper und (noch immer körperlich zu reden) als ein Werkzeug, oder vielmehr als ein Aggregat unzählbarer Werkzeuge, ihr Kenntnisse zu gewähren. Sie fühlt endlich, im weitesten Verstande, sich als Inwohnerin gleichsam in diesen Körper ausgegossen, daß sie mit allen Werkzeugen desselben empfinde, desselben körperliche und organische Kräfte brauche, dadurch immer eine Kraft von sich anwende, sich also im Gebrauch dieser Kraft fühle, wohlseind, daurend in sanftem Maß fortstrebend fühle – sich also in diesem Körper wie in einem Spiegel ihr[er] selbst erkenne. Dies ist unser Zustand, und daher kommt die innige Vereinigung der Kraft, zu erkennen und zu genießen, zu sehn und zu empfinden.³⁴

Doch wie sich gezeigt hat, kennt auch Herder bereits das „dunkle Gefühle“, das von seiner Erkenntnisfunktion abgeschnitten ist und auf bloßer Assozia-

³² Henckmann 2003, 10.

³³ Herder 1978, 399.

³⁴ Ebd., 401.

tion beruht. Jenes dunkle Gefühl erwähnt auch Kant in der *Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten*, als er die Achtung als Triebfeder der Moralität einführt. Kant verwahrt sich hier gegen den möglichen Vorwurf, er nehme mit dem Wort *Achtung* „Zuflucht in einem dunkelen Gefühle, anstatt durch einen Begriff der Vernunft in der Frage deutliche Auskunft zu geben“.³⁵ Seine Antwort lautet bekanntlich, dass die Achtung kein sinnliches, sondern ein „vernunftgewirktes“ Gefühl sei, und so nicht dem Verdacht einer heteronomen Moralbegründung verfällt.

Kants Weigerung, die Moral in einem sinnlichen Gefühl zu gründen, hat ihm allerdings von Schiller bis Scheler den gegenteiligen Vorwurf des bloßen Formalismus und der Gefühllosigkeit eingetragen. Eine Ethik ohne Gefühle (d.h. ohne *emotions*) kann, wie Scheler glaubt, keine materialen Werte generieren und daher nicht praktisch wirksam werden. Die bisher dargestellte Wortentwicklung zeigt aber auch, dass bei der Interpretation Kantischer Äußerungen über das Gefühl Vorsicht geboten ist. Welche Bedeutung hat das Wort „Gefühl“ für Kant? Die Antwort wird im Folgenden nur anhand einiger Stichpunkte angedeutet.³⁶

4.1. Das oben angeführte Zitat aus den „Träumen eines Geistersehers“ hat bereits gezeigt, dass Kant die Bedeutung von „Gefühl“ im Sinne des Tastsinns geläufig ist. Obwohl er in der *Anthropologie* bei der Darstellung der fünf Sinne nicht vom Gefühl, sondern vom „Sinn der Betastung“ spricht, findet sich die entsprechende Verwendung überall in seinem Werk. In den Reflexionen zur *Anthropologie* heißt es etwa:

Beym Gesicht stellen wir das (s die Verheltnisse im) obiect, bey dem Gehör nicht das obiect, sondern das Verheltnis der accidentien, bey dem Gefühl die substantz zusamt ihren accidentien vor.³⁷

An derselben Stelle unterscheidet Kant diese Bedeutung von Gefühl als äußeren Sinn von einer zweiten Bedeutung: dem Gefühl als innerem Sinn:

Das Gefühl ist entweder das äußerlich empfindende oder das innerlich empfindende Gefühl; das erstere bezieht sich auf [die Wirkung] ein berührend obiect, das zweyte auf gar kein obiect. (ebd.)

Der Tastsinn wird also als intentional verstanden, das innere Gefühl als nicht-intentional. Die Verhältnisse sind jedoch noch komplizierter. Das äußere

³⁵ AA IV, 405.

³⁶ Für eine ausführlichere Darstellung vgl. Verena Mayer, „Kants Gefühl“, in Vorbereitung.

³⁷ AA XV100.

Gefühl kann offenbar auch in innerer Wahrnehmung bestehen, wie die folgende Stelle aus demselben Zusammenhang zeigt:

Die äußere Empfindungen sind von zweyerley Art: 1. die, wodurch wir den Gegenstand empfinden; 2. wodurch wir den Zustand unseres eignen Körpers empfinden. Das letztere heißt das Gefühl allgemein genommen und findet bey allen andern starken Eindrücken auf organen statt. (ebd.)

In der *Anthropologie* selbst nennt Kant die Wahrnehmung innerer Zustände passender den *inneren Sinn*, unterscheidet diesen aber vom Gefühl der Lust und Unlust:

Die Sinne aber werden wiederum in die äußeren und den inneren Sinn (*sensus internus*) eingetheilt; der erstere ist der, wo der menschliche Körper durch körperliche Dinge, der zweite, wo er durchs Gemüth afficirt wird; wobei zu merken ist, daß der letztere als bloßes Wahrnehmungsvermögen (der empirischen Anschauung) vom Gefühl der Lust und Unlust, d.i. der Empfänglichkeit des Subjects, durch gewisse Vorstellungen zur Erhaltung oder Abwehrung des Zustandes dieser Vorstellungen bestimmt zu werden, verschieden gedacht wird, den man den inwendigen Sinn (*sensus interior*) nennen könnte.³⁸

Während also der *sensus internus* bloß wahrnimmt, bewertet der *sensus interior* das Wahrgenommene. Es handelt sich beim Gefühl der Lust und Unlust also nicht um ein bloßes *feeling* der Lust oder Unlust, sondern ebenfalls um eine Beziehung zwischen Welt und Subjekt, die jedoch nicht als ein Anschauungsvermögen, sondern als ein Kausalverhältnis zu verstehen ist. So sagt Kant in seiner Abhandlung *Über das Gefühl des Schönen und Erhabenen*:

Die verschiedene Empfindungen des Vergnügens oder des Verdrusses beruhen nicht so sehr auf der Beschaffenheit der äußeren Dinge, die sie erregen, als auf dem jedem Menschen eigenen Gefühle dadurch mit Lust oder Unlust gerührt zu werden.³⁹

Bemerkenswert ist, dass Kant durch diese Unterscheidung, ganz anders als noch Brockes, das Tastempfinden vom damit verbundenen Lusterlebnis trennt. Er behauptet sogar an einer Stelle der *Reflexionen zur Anthropologie*, das bloße (Tast-)Gefühl sei mit überhaupt keinem Vergnügen verbunden.⁴⁰ Generell unterscheidet also Kant Gefühl im Sinne einer inneren oder äußeren Wahrneh-

³⁸ AA VII, 153.

³⁹ AA II, 207.

⁴⁰ „Das bloße Gefühl ist mit gar keinem Vergnügen verbunden. Nächst dem das Gehör. Dann das Gesicht. Dann Geruch; endlich Geschmack das Großeste. Je [weiter] weniger die Sinne [von der] Organe der Erkenntnis des objects sind, desto mehr afficiren sie im subject das Leben.“ AA XV105.

nung vom Gefühl als ein das Wahrgenommene bewertendes Lust-/Unlusterelebnis.

4.2. Im § 74 der *Anthropologie* führt Kant ferner einen Unterschied zwischen Leidenschaften und Affekten ein. Kennzeichen beider ist, dass sie der Herrschaft der Vernunft nicht zugänglich sind. Die Leidenschaften haben offenbar wenig mit Gefühl zu tun. Sie gehören zum Begehrungsvermögen, das in der Selbstbestimmung des Subjekts in Bezug auf Künftiges besteht, sind deshalb dauerhaft und affizieren das Subjekt nachhaltig. Affekte dagegen bestehen in einem akuten, aufwallenden Gefühl der Lust oder Unlust (wohlgemerkt im oben beschriebenen Sinn), das gleichzeitig „blind“ macht. Affekte und Leidenschaften werden von Kant in drastischen Worten als Krankheiten dargestellt. Grund dafür ist offenbar eben die Tatsache, dass sie nicht vernünftig kontrollierbar sind. Für das Gefühl als Wahrnehmungsvermögen gilt dies, wie gezeigt wurde, nicht. Zwar handelt es sich beim Gefühl um ein „Anschauungsvermögen“, welches nach der berühmten These der ersten *Kritik* ohne Begriffe ebenfalls blind ist. Diese Form der Blindheit kann aber doch „geheilt“ werden: die ertasteten, erfüllten Informationen lassen sich begrifflich fassen und in Worte übersetzen. Gefühl als Wahrnehmung oder Bewertung sowie Affekt und Leidenschaft sind also in Kants Schriften systematisch zu unterscheiden.

4.3. Die interessanteste Frage im Zusammenhang mit Kants Begriff des Gefühls lautet dann, was unter einem moralischen oder ästhetischen Gefühl, dem Gefühl des Schönen und Erhabenen, zu verstehen ist. Aus den Unterscheidungen der *Anthropologie* geht schon hervor, dass damit nicht *emotions* gemeint sein können, also weder unkontrollierbare Neigungen oder Leidenschaften, noch blinde Affekte. Kant bezeichnet also mit dem Wort „Gefühl“ hier entweder ein bloßes Wahrnehmungsvermögen oder aber einen *sensus interior*, ein bewertendes Gefühl der Lust und Unlust. Die *Kritik der Urteilskraft* lässt von Anfang an keinen Zweifel daran, dass es beim Gefühl des Schönen und Erhabenen um Lust und Unlust geht, die mit der sinnlichen Wahrnehmung von Gegenständen einhergehen. Die entscheidende Frage für die Ästhetik (die hier nicht behandelt werden kann) lautet dann, wie eine solche Bewertung durch subjektives Empfinden Anspruch auf Objektivität erheben kann.

Weniger eindeutig ist die Frage in Bezug auf das moralische Gefühl zu beantworten. Macht es Sinn, anzunehmen, dass das moralisch Gute in uns „Lust“ erregt, oder handelt es sich beim moralischen Gefühl einfach um eine Sensitivität für moralische Tatsachen, ähnlich wie wir Kälte und Wärme von Gegenständen empfinden? Wiederum ist klar, dass Neigungen, Leidenschaften und Affekte als moralische Gefühle ausscheiden: schon deshalb, weil sie nicht vernünftig kontrollierbar und deshalb heteronom sind. Aber auch die bloße

gefühlsmäßige Anschauung scheidet aus, denn selbst wenn wir auf diese Weise moralische Eigenschaften unmittelbar wahrnehmen können, müssen sie doch begrifflich, das heißt mit dem Verstand, erfasst werden, um entscheidungsrelevant zu werden. Hier wäre es also nicht das Gefühl, sondern der Verstand, der uns moralisch bewegt. Nun ist nach Kant das Gefühl der Achtung das einzige echte moralische Gefühl, zumindest das einzige, das „Triebfeder“ moralischen Handelns sein kann. Das Gefühl der Achtung ist in der Tat ein Gefühl der Lust und Unlust, allerdings eines, das von Prinzipien, nicht von sinnlich wahrnehmbaren Gegenständen herrührt. Die beiden Arten von Lust und Unlust unterscheidet Kant in der *Anthropologie* so:

1) Die sinnliche, 2) die intellektuelle Lust. Die erstere entweder A) durch den Sinn (das Vergnügen), oder B) durch die Einbildungskraft (der Geschmack); die zweite (nämlich intellektuelle) entweder a) durch darstellbare Begriffe oder b) durch Ideen, – - und so wird auch das Gegentheil, die Unlust, vorgestellt.⁴¹

Kants Gefühlsbegriff umfasst durch diese Erweiterung auf Begriffe und Ideen ein weites Spektrum von Gefühlen, ein ganzes dynamisches Netz von Beziehungen zwischen Lust-/Unlustempfindungen und Verstand. Dabei sind Gefühle keineswegs als bloß einseitige Lust- oder aber Unlustreaktionen auf Wahrnehmungen, Einbildungen, Begriffe oder Ideen zu verstehen. Das Gefühl der Achtung etwa ist, ähnlich wie das Gefühl des Erhabenen, „eine Dynamik der Lust und Unlust, die sich aufgrund einer Erhöhung durch Erniedrigung ergibt“.⁴² Ein „vernunftgewirktes Gefühl“ ist also nichtsdestoweniger dennoch ein echtes, und zwar keineswegs dunkles Gefühl: es besteht in einer wenn auch vielleicht verwickelten lust- oder unlustbetonten *response* auf einen reflektiven Sachverhalt. In dieser Weise ist das Subjekt auch für den Rationalisten Kant auf vielfältige Weise mit seinem belebten, sinnlichen Körper in die Welt der Wahrnehmung und des Intellekts hineingewoben. Es ist dieses dynamische In-der-Welt-Sein, das einer auf die *emotions* zentrierten Philosophie der Gefühle systematisch entgeht.

5 Zusammenfassung

Das Gefühl, ursprünglich der Tastsinn, spielt in der Geistesgeschichte der deutschen Aufklärung eine wesentliche Rolle. Es bezeichnet den Kontakt und die

⁴¹ AA VII 230.

⁴² Recki 2004, 286.

Orientierungsfähigkeit des Subjekts in der Welt und hat deshalb eine erkenntnistheoretische Funktion: es liefert Information nicht nur über die Eigenschaften der Dinge, sondern auch über deren Zuträglichkeit für das Subjekt und dessen Einstimmigkeit mit der Welt. Das Gefühl wird von den Leidenschaften und Affekten weitgehend getrennt; die letzteren, die heute unter dem Titel *emotions* diskutiert werden, sind bestenfalls ein Teil, wenn nicht, wie bei Kant, degenerierte, „erblindete“ Formen des wahren, erkenntnisleitenden Gefühls. Wenn also Faust in seinem Glaubensbekenntnis schließt, „Glück, Herz, Liebe, Gott [...], Gefühl ist alles“, so hat er damit nicht Gemütsbewegungen, sondern wertendes Wahrnehmen im Sinn. Es wäre zu wünschen, dass das wahrnehmend bewertende Gefühl im Lebensvollzug, und nicht nur die kognitiv beschränkten Affekte, Gegenstand einer künftigen Philosophie der Gefühle werden.

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