

Emotional Minds

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

Edited by
Sabrina Ebbersmeyer

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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*, *generosité* 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*, it 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 despicentia*]; 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*).