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ON FEAR

Perception and Strategies of Control in Seventeenth-Century Philosophy

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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION
A Century of Fear

1. *Emotionality and historical time*

This study is dedicated to the investigation of a specific aspect of the cultural and scientific crisis that swept through seventeenth century philosophy: the multiple and heterogeneous transformations of reflections on passions. It is hoped that in this way, looking at affects from a theoretical viewpoint, we may observe, albeit from a distance and sideways, the experience of an era. Perhaps some analogy with our time will eventually emerge in the background.

Hobbes, Descartes and Spinoza will accompany us in our investigation. Three of their works will be studied: *Leviathan*, *The Passions of the Soul* and *Ethics*, to understand how human emotions are conceived in them, how the connection between reason and feelings is framed, and what different models of self-government, provided at the conclusion of their respective reflections, they present.

A selection will also be made of the passions. In every age, in fact, some are more significant than others. To understand the seventeenth century we will study fear. That this choice is not entirely arbitrary is demonstrated by the fact that, understood as an individual emotion, or conceived as a feeling of the multitudes, increasing space is dedicated to it in the treatises of the seventeenth century.

The reasons for this "success" are to be found in the social and political changes that then shook the European consciousness. To mention just a few of the most significant: the Thirty Years' War, which had involved all the main protagonists of European politics; the English Revolution, when, for the first time, a monarch had been sent to the block by his own people, who had preferred the

Republic to him; and the Fronde in France, which had troubled court life. Meanwhile Italy, dominated by the Counter-Reformation and the Spanish Crown, seemed to have fallen into an irreversible spiral of decline; and finally, Spain and Portugal also saw their importance definitively compromised, to the advantage of other Northern European powers, such as the Netherlands and Sweden, capable of drawing conspicuous advantages from the opening up of ocean routes. Social and economic problems were also of no small importance; we need merely think of the plague, which struck northern Italy between 1629 and 1633, causing more than a million deaths, or the three waves of famine, which between 1630 and 1647 had generated poverty throughout the continent.

The distrust and precariousness inevitably aroused by such events could not fail to increase the spread of fear, sadness, envy and hatred among the population. Fear of the Turkish threat spread especially along the Adriatic and Mediterranean coasts, while Baroque art and literature abound in images and stories of horror. It is not surprising that Thomas Hobbes, when he described human relationships in a state of nature, identified insecurity as the most significant trait.

However, it would be simplistic to consider the seventeenth century only a decadent, anguished century. There were expanding economies and significant advances in the cultural and scientific fields. The increased volume of commercial activities led to significant growth of the merchant middle class: between the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, especially in the countries of Northern Europe, this social class was increasingly engaged in economic exchanges, experimented with new sea routes and showed itself eager to affirm and see its interests, not only material, but also political and spiritual, recognized on the public stage.

In the world of studies too, significant changes took place. The spread of printing had widened the book market, and individual reading was becoming an increasingly frequent practice. At the same time, the philosophy of schools and universities, usually taught by clerics, now appeared to be overly complex, and inadequate for a secular public, usually engaged in economic, political or military activities.

Up to that time the study of the passions had given rise in late-

scholastic philosophy to a complex knowledge, characterized by overabundant cataloguing and, essentially, devoid of any practical usefulness[1]. It was bound to appear obsolete at a time when the tried and tested codes of values and behaviour were changing. Even in the scientific field, the growing spread of the experimental method and, later, of mathematical physics profoundly revolutionized the idea of nature previously at the centre of scholastic Aristotelianism.

While, for the reasons just described, the seventeenth century is bound to be interpreted as a period of profound crisis and extensive upheavals, we should, at the same time, avoid excessive generalizations. Over the past few decades, historiography has begun

1 For a reconstruction of the moral debate around the passions starting in the mid-sixteenth century, see: A. Levy, *French Moralists: the Theory of Passions 1585 to 1649* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964) and P. Benichou, *Morales du grand siècle* (Paris: Gallimard, 1985). On the changes characterizing the philosophy of the passions in the early modern age, the following studies are still important: R. Bodei, *Geometria delle passioni. Paura, speranza, felicità: filosofia e uso politico* (Milano: Feltrinelli, 1991); E. Pulcini, "La passione del Moderno: l'amore di sé", in *Storia delle passioni*, a cura di S. Vegetti-Finzi (Roma-Bari: Laterza, 1995), pp. 133-180; and of the same author see also: "Tra Prometeo e Narciso. Le ambivalenze dell'identità moderna", in *Identità e politica*, a cura di F. Cerutti (Roma-Bari: Laterza, 1996), pp. 133-165; and *L'individuo senza passioni: individualismo moderno e perdita del legame sociale* (Torino: Bollati Boringhieri, 2001). Focusing on the passions, the differences between Aristotelian-Scholastic philosophy and modern philosophy are investigated in: H. Lagerlund, M. Yrjonsuuri, *Emotions and choice from Boethius to Descartes* (Dordrecht, Boston, London: Kluwer, 2002) and B. H. Rosenwein, *Generations of Feeling: a History of Emotions, 600-1700* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016). For an overall reconstruction of the history of the passions, see: W. M. Reddy, *The Navigation of feeling: a framework for the history of emotions* (Cambridge UK, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001); J. Plamper, *Geschichte und Gefühl. Grundlagen der Emotionsgeschichte* (München: Siedler Verlag, 2012).
On the Scholastic classification of passions, see: *Passioni dell'anima: teorie e usi degli affetti nella cultura medievale*, a cura di C. Casagrande, S. Vecchio (Firenze: SISMEL Edizioni del Galluzzo, 2015) and, with the same editors, *Piacere e dolore: materiali per una storia della passioni nel Medioevo* (Firenze: SISMEL Edizioni del Galluzzo, 2009).

to place increasing emphasis on complexity, subtleties, the multiple differences intrinsic to the dawn of modernity, reflecting, rather than a single picture, a plurality of perspectives. For example, we should not forget that the European space, affected by the phenomena described above, presented heterogeneous social and cultural fabrics, and that various historical events were followed by theoretical reflections and specific representations. In the reformed territories a profoundly moral orientation originated which differed that of the countries of Mediterranean Europe, in which the emergence of a real middle class was slow and uneven. The attempts at theoretical answers offered in the various contexts were also divergent: the Renaissance and Neoplatonic tradition, the reformism of the Counter-Reformation, Pyrrhonism and Neo-Stoicism are just some of the doctrines that tried to provide analyses, reflections and models to respond to the crisis in progress. France experienced the contrast between Jansenist circles, such as Port Royal, and the orthodoxy of the Sorbonne. The United Provinces during the 17th century witnessed two important conflicts, the Armenian Schism and the Utrecht Crisis. In England, the nominalist tradition, of which Hobbes was among the most significant heirs, at least as far as political thought is concerned, was strong. Finally, Spain and Portugal remained, with the universities of Granada, Salamanca and Coimbra, strongholds of that late-scholastic philosophy which, even internally, was not uniform. In Italy, the humanist and neo-Platonic tradition wove a somewhat ambiguous and conflictual relationship with Counter-Reformation culture.

2 *Three writers, three fears*

Therefore, while it is not possible to compose a unified discourse on seventeenth-century culture, aimed at the construction of a homogeneous panorama, devoid of ripples and conflicts, we believe it is possible, despite the complexity of the historical and theoretical period in which we move, to identify some common traits, typical of the philosophy of the time, regarding the description of fear, and the theoretical devices delegated to its control. For this, we will turn to the philosophy of passions of Hobbes, Descartes and Spinoza.

Three different perspectives will be compared. Three models of self-governance and control of fear will be studied in order to try to measure, albeit from a distance, the emotional pulse of an era.

In light of the dramatic context outlined so far, it is not surprising that fear is not only present in their writings, but that it also surfaces in significant episodes of their biographies. In *vita carmine expressa*, Hobbes defines himself as "born twin of fear", when he recalls that, at the time of the war between Queen Elizabeth and Philip II, his mother, who was then on the southern coast of England, gave birth to him prematurely, owing to her fear of an imminent landing of the *Invincible Armada*[2]. Adrien Baillet, in his *Vie de Monsieur Des Cartes*, recalls the attack that the French philosopher suffered by some brigands on the journey to reach West Friesland in 1621 and how he managed to frighten them off, drawing his sword and boldly confronting them[3]. Finally, Jean Maximilien Lucas in his biography of Spinoza observes that the horrible death of the De Witt brothers was certainly an episode that greatly disturbed the author of the *Ethics*, who, "while he could not help shaking at the sight of this cruel and gruesome spectacle", was not however "terrified", as any "common soul" would have been, only because he had been "accustomed to overcoming the inner turmoil" brought to him by his unsteady health since his earliest youth[4].

In the following pages, however, we will not deal with the lives of the three authors, preferring to focus only on their reflections on fear. First of all, similarities and differences will be highlighted in the qualification of this sentiment. There are many common traits, starting with the profound dissatisfaction with how scholastic

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2 T. Hobbes, *Malmesburiensis Vita scripta anno MDCLXXII*, in *Opera philosophica quae latine scripsit omnia,* ed. by W. Molesworth*, 5 voll.,* (London: Bohn, 1839-1845), vol. I, p. LXXXVI. (From here on abbreviated to *OL*, followed by the roman numeral of the volume and arabic page number).

3 A. Baillet*, La Vie de Monsieur Des-Cartes Réduite en abregé* (Paris: G, De Luynes, chez P. Boüillerot et C. Cellier, 1692), p. 59.

4 J. M. Lucas, *The Oldest Biography of Spinoza* (1719), ed. and trans. A. Wolf (Bristol: Thoemmes Press, 1992; first edition London: George Allen and Unwin, 1927), p. 180.

philosophy had defined and classified the passions. Furthermore, there was also a shared belief that in order to study affects, it was first of all necessary to deal with "bodies in motion". On the other hand, the theory on the relationship between mind and body and the anthropological models underlying their way of understanding and defining fear are different. While for Descartes it is still an occasional feeling, generated in limited conditions, whose cause can always be identified, in Hobbes and Spinoza, this passion is presented as frequent, not to say daily, and strictly connected to imagination of the future.

The first two chapters of the volume will be dedicated to Thomas Hobbes. In the first, we will consider his meaning of fear, expressed by the pair of terms *fear/anxiety*. There are two traits that make the Hobbesian vision original and extraordinarily modern. First, fear tends to change into anxiety: it ceases to be a passion linked to a specific object, triggered by an easily identifiable danger, to transform itself into a latent emotional condition that is present in every moment of one's life. A form of widespread anxiety with respect to which the object or situation that is the cause from time to time, end up assuming relative importance. Anxiety is an existential condition that one is condemned to live with. Its pervasiveness is explained by Hobbes by recalling what for him is the essential character of modernity: being an era in which there is no order of meaning capable of reassuring man about tomorrow and his extreme limit: death. The desire to control the future dominates the daily emotional life, causing continuous frustration. The fear of the future therefore appears in *Leviathan* as the tragic outcome of the certainty of finitude.

The second distinctive feature of Hobbesian theory concerns the ways in which fear is managed. Hobbes believes that anxiety is, at the same time, a resource for modern man, but also a condemnation. While, in fact, it is the basis of progress, since it pushes man to sharpen his wits, at the same time, dominated by anxiety, the individual is unable to control himself in a permanent and stable way. If left free, fear of the future leads man to hoard common goods and to engage in preventive aggression towards others whenever they are perceived as dangerous. Therefore, it is also necessary to establish a political

government of affects, attributing to the "leviathan", understood as a *persona ficta*, all functions of control. Only the Leviathanic authority (sovereign power), to which all freedoms must be granted, can have the strength to watch over the passions, which if left free risk creating continuous revolts and seditions. By way of example, the fear of others and the anguish of living in a future characterized by insecurity will be the only passions capable of persuading man to give up natural freedom in exchange for obtaining peace.

In the modern era, man now experiences freedom as a right which he is no longer willing to give up, but this necessity ends up leading to individual security and political instability. What relationship exists between anguish and freedom of conscience? How should the sovereign behave in the face of the human desire to think freely? Once the Hobbesian notion of anxiety has been considered, the second chapter will be dedicated to the relationship between the political government of passions and, in particular, of fear and *libertas philosophandi*, which must be considered a sort of appendix to the first, of which it verifies the general theoretical lines, placing them in relation to the circumscribed theme of the freedom of conscience.

After Hobbes, the second protagonist of this study will be Descartes's philosophy. We will first proceed by providing a general framework of the theme of the passions with particular reference to the relationship between soul and body and the relationship between affects and knowledge. Subsequently, the Cartesian meaning of fear will be considered analytically. In *The Passions of the Soul* it is identified by the pair of terms *peur/crainte*. While the former indicates a condition similar to fear, or an intense feeling, generated by an easily identifiable cause, the term *crainte* means the opposite of hope, which Descartes defines as the apprehension of not achieving a desired good. The fact that this emotion substantially coincides not with the fear of incurring an evil (as Hobbes thought), but with the apprehension of not fulfilling a desire, demonstrates the substantially positive trait of Cartesian anthropology, quite unlike the nihilism of *Leviathan*'s author.

The trust placed by Descartes in man's ability to govern his passions is also quite different. Unlike Hobbes, who – as said before

– opts for an entirely political solution, handing over to the State all responsibility for governing the passions (a solution which, moreover, we have decided to leave in the background and not directly examine here), Descartes – but Spinoza will also be of the same opinion – believes, instead, that every man can manage to control his emotions. Albeit at the cost of a significant effort.

The philosopher of *Metaphysical Meditations* thinks that rationality and will can play an effective and positive role in the organization of individual passions. Furthermore, in the *Discourse on Method* and in the letters to Princess Elisabeth of the Palatinate, he extends a similar model of self-government, based on the good use of reason by the will, also to political rationality, which must be possessed by those who exercise authority.

Therefore, while in Hobbes and Descartes the trust in the individual possibilities of mastering the passions is very different, both, however, think that it is indispensable, in order to develop some form of control over affects, to establish a point of view external to the emotional flow, to which to delegate the function of neutralization. Like Hobbes, Descartes considers it possible to control fear only by a principle which is distinct from and superior to the flow of passion but, unlike the author of *Leviathan*, he does not entrust this authority so much to political power, as to the individual soul, ontologically distinct from the body. The soul can control passions because it knows their physiological mechanisms and, on the basis of this knowledge, has the power to predict the consequences of instinctual behaviours. The ability to imagine possible scenarios resulting from our choices is seen as the tool through which affects can be arrested and inhibited. While in Hobbes governing emotions means having political control over them, Descartes elaborates a "strategy of sublimation", aimed at neutralizing emotions and justified by the "real difference" between body and soul. The model of generosity of mind, the characteristics of which will be seen at the end of the third chapter, represents the point of arrival for a well-governed rationality.

Spinoza closes the volume: he also defines fear using a pair of terms: *metus* and *timor*. The former indicates a kind of sadness, which is generated when man imagines a condition of uncertainty, while *timor* (apprehension) is defined as a particular form of prudence that

leads to choose the lesser evil. While the former definition evokes the Hobbesian element of the insecurity of the time to come, *timor* is reported as a protective passion that man feels in conjunction with a dangerous situation.

Although Spinoza undoubtedly had in mind the definitions of Descartes and Hobbes when he wrote on fear, however, the author of the *Ethics* arrived at a substantially original elaboration. Like Descartes, Spinoza considers apprehension a negative distortion of desire, while from Hobbes he borrows the close connection of feeling with the perception of the future. However, what defines Spinoza's originality is the firm condemnation of any fear or apprehension. Although they may perform a protective function, however, they always imply a condition of sadness and, therefore, are incompatible with the adoption of virtuous behaviour.

Spinoza shares with Descartes the ideal of generosity, which in *Ethics* he calls, however, firmness. Unlike Hobbes, Descartes and Spinoza agree in the belief that man can manage to control his emotions. While they share trust in man, however, their containment strategies are different: for Descartes it is essentially a matter of exercising the will, while Spinoza entrusts the possibility of reducing the emotional intensity of passions, and therefore also of fear, to the elaboration of an adequate and rational vision of the context in which the individual suffers. Spinoza replaces Hobbes' political government and Descartes's strategies of sublimation with our need to reformulate our own emotional experience, recognizing the conditions of reality that cause it. As with all passions, also for controlling fear, it is necessary first of all to leave room for a realistic vision of the condition in which this feeling is generated. For the philosopher of *Ethics*, it is not reality that frightens, but imagining it: that continuous "brooding" of the mind, which works over information of the real world, predicting their evolution. Only by removing this continuous, distorted, effort, capable only of giving rise to sadness, can man be free from fear. The way to achieve liberation is defined by the ideal of firmness of mind, towards which the process of rationalization of the affects proposed in the *Ethics* tends.

1.
THE 'TIME VARIABLE'
The Political Horizon of Anxiety and Fear in the Philosophy of Thomas Hobbes

1. *From passion to politics*

Time and movement constitute the primary elements of Hobbesian physics. In *Ottica*, movement is defined as what distinguishes the body[1], while in *De Corpore* space and time are mutually understood to be the ghost of a thing that appears outside of us and is the measure of motion. Everything is movement or relationships of movement, and every change is a movement that means a modification of a spatial condition[2] and a transition to a

1 Each movement can be active or passive, but in in the same instance both of them can be seen as bodies that move or are moved. "Omnis actio est motus localis in agente, sicut et omnis passio est motus localis in patiente. Agentis nomine intelligo *corpus*, cujus motu producitur effectus in alio corpore; *patientis*, in quo motus aliquis ab alio corpore generator." T. Hobbes, *Tractatus Opticus,* in *OL*, V, p. 217. The theoretical assumption of this essay is the theory of a fundamental unitarity within Hobbesian thought and particularly between physics, passion theory and political theory. As is well-known, Hobbesian criticism has been divided on this subject. For a reconstruction of this debate see N. Malcolm, *Aspects of Hobbes* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2004), pp. 146-155.

2 "Reversus itaque ad institutum spatii definitionem hanc esse dico *spatium est phantasma rei existentis quatenus existentis*, id est, nullo alio ejus rei accidente considerato, praeterquam quod apparet extra imaginantem." Hobbes, *Elementorum Philosophiae Sectio Prima de Corpore*, in *OL*, I, p. 83. English Translation by Hobbes in 1656: "I return to my purpose, and define space thus: Space is the phantasm of a thing existing without the mind simply: that is to say, that phantasm in which we consider no other accident, but only that it appears without us." in *The English Works of Thomas Hobbes of Malmesbury*, edited by Sir W. Molesworth (London: John Bohn, 1829-1845, reprinted by Scientia Aalen, 1962), I, p. 94. (From

different time.[3]

Starting from these ideas, the following pages will highlight why the essential trait of Hobbesian anthropology should be seen as the ability to imagine the future, and on the basis of this ability, to influence both private and social behaviour.

Once we have established the importance of man's consciousness of time, we will consider the idea that within Hobbesian theory, the exploitation of the resources of others to ensure future security is a major feature of human behaviour. Then, in the third part of the chapter, we will analyse how that in modern times, both the foundation of political power and the development of science have been historically based on this desire to be assured of a certain future.

The Hobbesian man is tragic and suspicious[4]. His life revolves around the pursuit of pleasure, fuelled by anxiety about the future

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here on abbreviated to *EW*, followed by the roman numeral of volume and arabic page number).

3 "Tota ergo definitio temporis talis est, *tempus est phantasma motus, quatenus in motu imaginamur prius et posterius, sive successionem* quae convenit cum definitione Aristotelica, *tempus est numerus motus secundum prius et posterius*. Est enim ea numeratio actus animi, ideoque idem est dicere, *tempus est numerus motus secundum prius et posterius*, et *tempus est phantasma motus numerati*, illud autem *tempus est mensura motus* non ita recte dicitur, nam tempus per motum, non autem motum per tempus, mensuramus." Hobbes, *Elementorum Philosophiae Sectio Prima de Corpore*, in *OL*, I, p. 84. Hobbes's translation: "Wherefore a complete definition of *time* is such as this, *time is the phantasm of before and after in motion;* which agrees with this definition of Aristotle, *time is the number of motion according to former and latter;* for that numbering is an act of the mind; and therefore it is all one to say, *time is the number of motion according to former and latter*; and *time is a phantasm of motion numbered*. But that other definition, *time is the measure of motion*, is not so exact, for we measure time by motion and not motion by time." *EW*, I, p. 95.
On the unitarity of reality in Hobbes's philosophy and on the centrality of movement in this unitarity, see: A. Minerbi Belgrado, *Linguaggio e mondo in Hobbes* (Roma: Editori Riuniti, 1993), p.3.

4 On mistrust as an existential but also a theoretical condition in the seventeenth century see: R. Schur, *Individualismus und Absolutismus. Zur politischen Theorie vor Thomas Hobbes (1600-1640)* (Berlin: Duncker and Humblot, 1963), p. 28. On the tragedy of the baroque age and melancholy as passion characterizing the seventeenth century see: J.

and pervaded by a general distrust of his neighbour. The realization of such a dramatic state has not only been fundamental to scientific progress, but is also the well-known starting point from which the English philosopher based his idea of the political government of man and his passions, and was the gateway to modern political science.

But firstly, for a compete analysis of the Hobbesian theory of passions, it is essential to start from the foundations, that is, from a definition of the concept of *endeavour* or *conatus*.

2. *What do endeavour and pleasure have in common?*

The *endeavour* theory enables a radical simplification of the theme of the infinite plurality of passions. Faced with the impossibility of compiling a complete taxonomy of passionate states (due to their vast number and the great variation from individual to individual), but still wanting to produce a general theory, Hobbes reduced their varied multiplicity to a common element that distinguishes them as motion too small to be measured and defined it as *endeavour*. Emotions are nothing more than a continuous series of bodily movements, produced by the flow of animal spirits and sustained by a heartbeat. All such movement, both cerebral and corporal, can be simplified and reduced to a common physical matrix, a kind of minimal common denominator, namely *endeavour*. This term refers to the basic condition common to any type of natural movement.

> 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*. [5]

Endeavour is the first element[6], constituting the essential nature of

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A. Maravall, *La cultura del barroco. Análisis de una estructura histórica* (Barcellona: Ariel, 1980), pp.415-417.

5 Hobbes, *Leviathan, or the Matter, Form and Power of a Commonwealth Ecclesiastical and Civil,* in *EW*, III, p. 39.

6 The term *conatus* appears in the Latin version: "Principia haec motus parva, intra humanum corpus sita, antequam incedendo, loquendo,

each living body. Reducing voluntary or involuntary movements to an elementary matrix involves drastic simplification of both vital and emotional aspects. The centrality of *endeavour* with respect to every occurrence, both biological and cognitive, allows us to abstract from the specific character of each single passion, deducing its definition from a general theory of motion.

It is also important to note that in the Hobbesian definition *endeavour* has a substantially passive qualification. It is the origin of any movement of the body and comes as a response (attraction or repulsion) to an external stimulus, filtered by the senses. It is a tendency of infinite motion that defines every living body (and hence including the human body) that is continually modified by relationships with the outside world.

Moreover, continuing the analysis of this Hobbesian definition it is important to observe that *endeavour* is not endowed with purpose, rather, man has an intuitive apprehension of it. *Endeavour* is a simple mechanical motion within the parts of the body. It has a passive character because it is originated and directed by the object through perception.

By virtue of this passivity of *endeavour*, passions, sensations and understanding are devoid of any moral qualification and are subject to the general laws of motion and mechanics. It should also be noted that it is inevitable that there would be differences between the various types of *endeavour* but they would only be quantitative and not qualitative. That is to say, there are undoubtedly forms of life with greater or lesser intensity, differences in speed, and of varying complexity in their aggregate forms, but this does not necessarily mean that because beings are more or less able to feel and be aware of such feelings, we cannot establish a qualitative hierarchy of them.[7]

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percutiendo, caeterisque actionibus visibilibus appareant, vocantur conatus." Hobbes, *Leviathan sive de Materia, Forma, et Potestate Civitatis Ecclesiasticae et Civilis*, in *OL*, III, p. 40. On the centrality of movement in the theory of Hobbesian passions see: T. A. Spragens, *The politics of motion: the world of Thomas Hobbes* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1973), particularly pp. 163-202.

7 The definition of *conatus* as an abstract movement within space and time can be found in the 15th chapter of the *De Corpore*: "Similiter conatus ita

After *endeavour*, the definition of pleasure is the second element indispensable to the qualification of the different emotions. Following an encounter with an external object, the singular *endeavour*, that is, the vital movement that distinguishes each animated body, can react in two different ways. The encounter can trigger a movement of approach or retraction. In the first case it is called the desire of the object, whereas the vectorally opposite movement is called aversion.

> This *endeavour*, when it is toward something which causes it, is called appetite, or desire, the latter being the general name, and the other oftentimes restrained to signify the desire of food, namely hunger and thirst. And when the endeavour is fromward something, it is generally called *aversion*.[8]

To feel pleasure means to encourage and increase conative movement, that is, the active states of the moving body such as breathing, digestion, etc. When such activity occurs, the body feels

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inelligendus est, ut sit quidem motus, sed ita ut neque temporis in quo fit, neque lineae per quam fit quantitas, ullam comparationem habeat, in demostratione cum quantitate temporis vel lineae cujus ipsa est pars; quamquam sicut punctum cum pucto, ita conatus cum conatu comparari potest, et unus altero major vel minor reperiri." Hobbes, *Elementorum Philosophiae section prima de Corpore*, in *OL*, I, p. 178. Hobbes's translation: "In like manner, endeavour is to be conceived as motion; but so as that neither the quantity of the time in which; nor of the line in which it is made, may in demonstration be at all brought into comparison with the quantity of that time, or of that line of which it is a part." *EW*, I, p. 206. On the activity of *conatus* not understood solely as a mere passive expression see: J. Pietarinen, "Conatus as active power in Hobbes", *Hobbes Studies*, XIV, 2001, 1, pp.71-82. The active force of *conatus* is defined as an intrinsic ability to persist in a certain state. This potentiality is realized in the ability of *conatus* to become cause-efficient. Each conative force is always in effect without leaving any potential. On the understanding of *conatus* as being the capacity and movement in action and the difference between this approach and the philosophy of Descartes see: A. Lupoli, "Power (conatus-endeavour) in the kinetic actualism and in inertial psychology of Thomas Hobbes", *Hobbes Studies*, XIV, 2001, pp. 83-103.

8 Hobbes, *Leviathan*, in *EW*, III, p.39.

pleasure. When, however, encountering an opposing object, that which results in a reduction in *endeavour*, a weakening of vital and bodily functions occurs and sensations of annoyance or pain are felt.

The construction of man's relationships with the environment and with others is primarily guided by the pursuit of pleasure and all passions can be reduced to forms of pleasure or pain. For example, when the desired object is present, desire is referred to as love, while an aversion to the object is called hate.[9] Starting from these four passions, *desire*, *aversion*, *love* and *hate*, not only is it possible to list all the remaining passions (which are nothing more than variations of these principal passions). To desire, to love, or to enjoy, as vectorially opposed to feel aversion to, to hate, or to feel pain, are different declinations of the same movement, which takes on intensity, direction, and specific names based on particular relationships with the external object, the cause of the sensation.

3. *The imagination between past and future*

In addition to *endeavour*, which as we have observed constitutes the internal function and the external bodies intercepted by the senses which act as the immediate cause for the changes in conative intensity, there is a third fundamental element in the Hobbesian description of passions: the imagination. In fact, this function of the mind pertains to the experiential background within which the emotion is created, that is, the encounter between conative intensity and the external object. Like animals, man always retains at least part of the sensitive information previously received from the body.

9 "That which men desire, they are also said to love: and to hate those things for which they have aversion. So that desire and love are the same thing; save that by desire, we always signify the absence of the object; by love, most commonly the presence of the same. So also by aversion, we signify the absence; and by hate, the presence of the object." Hobbes, *Leviathan*, in *EW*, III, p.40.

> Imagination therefore is nothing but *decaying sense*; and is found in men, and many other living creatures, as well sleeping, as waking.[10]

Imagination is the trace of a past feeling. It brings back emotions and experiences that have happened during one's lifetime, which have been stored and represent the 'lived life'.

This ability to keep track of past experiences (ie the imagination) is justified by recalling the principle of inertia, for which any dynamic arrangement, and hence also the sensory structure modified by an encounter with an external object, tends to be stored until it is understood and modified by a different relationship.

Each *endeavour*, or any bodily structure, is always accompanied by a particular imaginative structure, that is, a set of memories and past feelings. In this way, Hobbes equates the imagination with memory, differentiating the first from the second only in relation to the degree of awareness that accompanies such a presence of past feelings.

> This *decaying sense*, when we would express the thing itself, I mean *fancy* itself, we call *imagination*, as I said before: but when we would express the decay, and signify that sense is fading, old and past, it is called *memory*. So that imagination and memory are but one thing, which for divers considerations hath divers names.[11]

The imagination is reduced to a sort of cerebral automatism that is based on past experiences (and when accompanied by awareness, is defined as memory).

In the production of new sensations, imagination plays a fundamental role because it is the experiential background on which new sensations will be felt. Imagining is an activity of the mind that 'complicates' the reception of external stimuli, producing an unprecedented trace related to memories, synthesis of qualities related to external bodies, together with associations and references from past experiences and preserved by memory.

The trace of a past encounter, an impression of an external

10 Hobbes, *Leviathan*, in *EW*, III, pp. 4-5.
11 Hobbes, *Leviathan*, in *EW*, III, pp. 5-6.

movement that has taken place but of which a kind of footprint is held back by the senses, maintains its liveliness until the body takes a different arrangement.

This kind of change can occur for internal physiological reasons (internal movements), or because other traces, which are more intense, have the ability to overlap and modify previous contents.

The imagination connects the modification of *endeavour* caused by an encounter with the external environment, with the bodily structure, the legacy of previous experiences. Imagination is this different relationship between the inner structure; caused by past experiences, now only preserved in memory and imagined, and the new modifications produced following a new encounter with the outside world, and the accommodation of the future condition. For this reason, the intensity and the individual characteristics of each passion form a relationship between the past, present and future. The imagination connects the reception of the present stimulus with the subjective experiential structure, until the memory of an action is blocked or weakened by newly experienced movements.[12]

The new sensations are always going over old terrain. Any new impression is involved in a process of synthesis. Emotions are newly felt relationships whose form is determined by the intensity of the affected body (*endeavour*) in agreement with the incidence capacity, that is, the speed of the external object 'captured' by the sense organs. The imagination has a broader emotional background compared to feelings which are really only simple attachments. It complicates the feeling by transforming it into an object of thought.[13] The two criteria used by this cognitive function when it receives an external stimulus

12 A. Napoli, "Metafisica e fisiologia dell'emotività in Hobbes", in *Hobbes oggi. Atti del Convegno internazionale di studi promosso da Arrigo Pacchi: Milano-Locarno, 18-21 maggio 1988* (Milano, F. Angeli, 1990), pp. 287. On Hobbes's idea of imagination see: also: Hobbes, *Tractatus Opticus,* in *OL,* I, p.217 e Hobbes, *Elementorum philosophiae sectio prima de Corpore,* cap. IX, e cap. XXII, in *OL*, III, pp. 106-112 e pp. 271-285.

13 Imagination refers to the power of the soul capable of forming a broader mental 'present' than the 'present' of the senses. D. D'Andrea, *Prometeo e Ulisse. Natura umana e ordine politico in Thomas Hobbes* (Roma: La Nuova Italia Scientifica, 1997), p. 36.

are temporal proximity and similarity. This means that new sensations will revoke memories associated with similar experiences.

> Quod autem in varietate hac phantasmatum alia ex aliis nascantur, et ex iisdem modo similia, modo dissimillima in mentem veniant, non sine causa nec tam fortuito fit, ut multi fortasse arbitrantur. Nam in motu partium corporis continui, pars partem sequitur per cohaesionem. Dum igitur oculos aliorumque sensuum organa ad plura objecta successive obvertimus, manente qui ab unoquoque eorum factus erat motus, renascuntur phantasmata quoties quilibet eorum motuum caeteris predominatur; praedominantur autem eodem ordine, quo in aliquo tempore jam praeterito per sensionem generata erant.[14]

The imagination is the function of the cognitive process that explains the constantly subjective nature of individual perceptions of nature and society. This also means that for each individual an emotional event is always strictly personal because the conative movements generated by external objects are always 'mediated' by the imaginative function in which the experiences of the past have been collected and acted upon. Memory and imagination work together, conditioning the reception of external stimuli and determining the specific characteristics of each feeling.

4. *Continuous changes and the singularity of experience*

Hobbes understands that without the "seam", operated between present and past imagination, it would not be possible to understand the intrinsically subjective nature of feelings.

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14 T. Hobbes, *Elementorum philosophiae sectio prima de Corpore,* in *OL*, I, p. 324. The English translation by Thomas Hobbes presents some substantial differences from the Latin version: "Now it is not without cause, nor so casual a thing as many perhaps think it, that phantasms in this their great variety proceed from one another; and that the same phantasms sometimes bring into the mind other phantasms like themselves, and at other times extremely unlike. For in the motion of any continueted body, one part follows another by cohesion; and therefore, whilst we turn our eyes and other organs successively to many objects." EW, I, pp. 397-398.

All this relevance attributed to the 'time' element is due to a second, historically more significant reason. The pages analyzed show that Hobbes essentially regards human life as 'existence', or as the inevitable time period that occurs in life. This positions physics, anthropology, politics and theology within the worldly dimension of life, that is, with existence, understood as difference, the gap between time and biological life.

This aspect will be particularly significant to understand the overall sense of Hobbesian politics. In the background of this schematic of emotional dynamics, happiness is defined not as a lasting and stable purpose, achievable in a permanent sense, but viewed as a bodily and cognitive framework, that really only occurs when a momentary desire is satisfied.

> *Continual success* in obtaining those things which a man from time to time desireth, that is to say, continual prospering, is that men call *felicity*; I mean the felicity of this life. For there is no such thing as perpetual tranquillity of mind, while we live here; because life itself is but motion, and can never be without desire, nor without fear, no more than without sense.[15]

The names of individual feelings are only abstractions, dictated by the need to differentiate, and the construction of specific considerations around each of them. The emotional flow of each individual is always changing. Because passions always come from particular movements of the body and it is part of their nature to be continually transformed, the physical and mental states of the perceiving individual, as well as any relationship with the environment, are always subject to change. This continuous change of natural and social conditions makes feelings unstable and everchanging. Hate can turn into anger, which in turn can transform into fear. Fear can change in the hope that by consolidating its strength, it can become joy.

Such a characterization of the vital condition as a continuous flow of heterogeneous perceptual states gives time a decisive function. Perceiving in essence means - in the Hobbesian model - to have

15 Hobbes, *Leviathan*, *EW*, III, p.51.

consciousness of the changes of its vital (physical and mental) body over time. All living beings are subject to constant modification, but man is the only one who remembers his past and has the ability to prefigure the experiences to come. By virtue of a complex cerebral structure, man has a concept of time that is capable of overcoming immediate circumstances. This condition is crucial not only in the Hobbesian qualification of individual existence, which is always aimed at producing a confrontation between the past and the future, but also with regard to a way of understanding social relationships.

How the changes in the perceptual sphere are determined is easily deductible from what has previously written on *endeavour* and imagination. The 'route' of such transformations comes from a twofold factor. It derives from the causality of the external objects that man encounters during his life and from the accumulation of experiences of pleasure or pain experienced in the past. When he reflects on what differentiates individual passions, Hobbes notes that any emotional condition can only be explained by reference to the history of the individual undergoing the experience. Imagination and memory play the mediating function between individual experience and the external environment.

Compared to all other animals, who only experience physical passions, man is distinguished by the fact that his (*endeavour*) desire is not confined solely to the satisfaction of immediate needs. Being endowed with a complex cognitive structure, he constantly behaves within personal contexts that enable him to seek satisfaction and pleasure not only from the body but also from the mind.

Among the various pleasures of the mind, a particularly significant one exists in relation to the definition that Hobbes puts forward, particularly in terms of his definition of political power. It is that particular pleasure of the mind which has the ability to foresee the future.

Unlike animals, the human mind has the ability to think about the future. It can move forward and extend the emotions on a spectrum of infinite possibilities. Man is able to anticipate the time to come. For this reason, passions are formed in him not only because of what he has heard and what he has experienced, but also about how he imagines what may happen. Man is the only animal to have the

mental ability to develop an idea of the future. He does not live in a temporal dimension exclusively based in the present[16], but he knows how to cognitively place his actions and emotions on a wider scope. With this ability to foresee future time, Hobbes is always in the *Leviathan*, the definition of happiness given earlier is further 'refined'.

> To which end we are to consider, that the felicity of this life consisteth not in the repose of a mind satisfied. For there is no such *finis ultimus*, utmost aim, nor *summum bonum* greatest good, as is spoken of in the books of the old moral philosophers. Nor can a man any more live whose, desires are at an end, than he, whose senses and imaginations are at a stand. Felicity is a continual progress of the desire, from one object to another; the attaining of the former, being still but the way to the latter. The cause whereof, is that the object of man's desire, is not to enjoy once only, and for one instant of time; but to assure for ever the way of his future desire.[17]

The search for happiness is a pursuit that does not experience moments of stopping or, at least, any conclusion. As you will see in the next paragraph, thinking about future happiness negates the search for any intrinsic ambivalence. Not by chance, on the desire for happiness as a desire to know and predetermine the future, Hobbes established his definition of two decisive aspects of human experience and his philosophy which are; the thirst for knowledge, on which man bases science, and social conflict, from which the need for the foundation of political power is derived.

Hobbes defines two decisive aspects of human experience in his philosophy: the desire for knowledge, where man constitutes science, and social conflict, which is the need for the foundation of political power.

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16 Recalling Ghelenian anthropology, Elena Pulcini interprets the specific temporal dimension of emotional life, consistent with the continuation of the future, recalling its origins in a lack of current resources. E. Pulcini, "Tra Prometeo e Narciso", p. 135. This interpretation seems to focus on a constant view to the future, while Hobbes more frequently refers to a natural tendency to seek pleasures of the mind.

17 Hobbes, *Leviathan,* in *EW*, III, p. 85.

5. *The pleasure of discovery*

First, at the origin of scientific knowledge, Hobbes suggested *pleasure* was the source of the ability to imagine the future. Man satisfies his *libido sciendi* by predicting causal links that have yet to reveal their effects. The mind has the ability to influence the determination of future experiences by predicting effects from knowledge of specific causes. This particular aspect of Hobbesian philosophy touches the heart of seventeenth century rationalism. There is a mental tension in man that is aligned with the rational knowledge of causal links. In this cognitive experience, man experiences his own ability to determine the future and, for this reason, feels pleasure.

Knowledge is not only related to the past but is also a prediction and therefore signifies control of the future. This potential takes on a specific value for the experience, not because man is able to find his essence (as a rational animal) but because he feels pleasure in the expectation, testing his own ability, his own power. Predicting future events increases the desire (*endeavour*) for the cerebral action itself, producing a feeling of well-being that is called mental pleasure or joy.

> Others arise from the expectation, that proceeds from foresight of the end, or consequence of things; whether those things in the sense please or displease. And these are '*pleasures of the mind*' of him that draweth those consequences, and are generally called *joy*.[18]

This pleasure is derived from the ability to predict the production of effects from current knowledge of certain premises. Joy is the deductive capacity of predicting specific phenomena from the scientific knowledge of their causes.

Mental pleasure is experienced not only when the expected effects are positive but also when they are negative. It is not, in fact, the expectation of the event, more or less fortunate, that arouses a feeling of joy, but it is enough to merely predict a certain phenomenon so that the mind can experience its power and consequently feel satisfaction. This is not necessarily due the event itself, but the ability to predict

18 Hobbes, *Leviathan,* in *EW*, III, p. 43.

it. Knowledge is rational deduction of effects from certain causes. Deduction is a pleasurable experience of mind power. The simple activity of turning one's mental eye to the future induces mental pleasure. Science is the set of tools and theories that can satisfy human curiosity. Through science, man experiences his faculties and manifests the power of his own intellect. For this reason, knowledge and science acquire value as tools capable of generating pleasure.

6. *The uncertain existence of anxiety and conflict*

However, the awareness of future time does not only generate a desire for happiness. It brings with it an intriguing ambiguity.

When man searches for pleasure which is naturally infinite, his previous experience inevitably makes him aware of the limitations of this. For this reason, the search for a future good is always accompanied by the experience of anxiety. It is the frustration that comes from the inability of knowing and determining the totality of causes and effects. This view to the future, which arises from interests such as a search for knowledge, reveals more than the possibility of thinking about science. The continual renewal of experience, the sense of precariousness evoked by this infinite mutation, the search for reassurance with the unpredictability of events, force man into a state of anxious suffering.

> […] so that every man, especially those that are over-provident, are in a state 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.[19]

Prometheus is the hero who wanted to be God, that is, to be independent from time and from external causes. The Promethean

19 Hobbes, *Leviathan,* in *EW*, III, p. 95.

man is driven by the need for knowledge to control the infinite possible necessities. However, just as he tries to attain this unattainable goal, instead of finding certainty, security and independence, he clashes with the suffering of his mortal state conditioned by nature and by others. In Hobbesian thought, anxiety is the perception of our finality.

Being aware of future time implies a maturation of awareness of one's own mortality and the feeling that comes from that awareness is anxiety.[20] Man, linking the present time to the future, awakens a level of uncertainty and exposes the tragic inevitability of his mortality. This discovery is a cause of pain. The pursuit of happiness is therefore intrinsically linked to the most painful dimension of life, namely the awareness of one's own mortality. Anxiety is the emotion that expresses the suffering of not being God but of being mortal. It is the emotion with which man discovers the sense of his own destiny in the inevitability of death.

The insecurity that arises following the awareness of not being able to determine the future induces man to pass his time in the safest and most foreseeable manner possible. If the desire for knowledge and the science that comes from it are experiences of joy that are based on the ability to predict the future, but also the uncertainty of the time to come, which can sometimes never be predicted, it can never be fully determined, it is also the origin of social conflict. The ability to predict certain effects from the knowledge of certain causes generates pleasure from knowledge. However, the Hobbesian model provides the conditions, gnosis and the anxiety that arises from the awareness that it is impossible to exhaustively know and determine what the emotions will be, which suggests that in a natural

20 Alfredo Ferrarin upholds in Hobbes the presence of possible degrees of distinction, particularly in conative desire of which there is a natural measure that can transform into anxiety for the future if it becomes excessive. This interpretation does not seem to be entirely shared because it tends to ignore anxiety as a natural and congenital condition for the Hobbesian man, as is argued in this paper. A Ferrarin, *Artificio, desiderio, considerazione di sé. Hobbes e i fondamenti antropologici della politica* (Pisa: ETS, 2001), pp. 156. The intrinsic link between anxiety and knowledge of the future as causal knowledge is discussed in the essay W. W. Sokoloff, "Politics and Anxiety in Thomas Hobbes's Leviathan", *Theory & Event*, V, 2001, 1, pp.1-14.

state man is in a constant state of conflict with himself.

From the anxiety of not being able to govern the future, all those passions become the origin of most of society's problems. They are:

> So that in the nature of man we find three principal causes of quarrel. First, competition; secondly, diffidence; thirdly, glory.[21]

These feelings are the forms that anxiety takes on once it moves into social relationships. They represent the emotional environment that enables and accompanies every possible social conflict or war.

Man is induced to seek wealth, honour and power for himself, however, the value each attributes to these goods always has a differential character: they are valued 'by difference' in comparison with others, not on their own terms. Honour, wealth, and power are sought so that their possession publicly demonstrates who the best is. For this reason, the search for glory, money and power easily condemns men to take on conflict-centred attitudes.[22]

Rivalry and pride create distrust because they are emotions that push man into a competitive attitude. Suspicion, in turn, leads to the anticipation of violence and as such is the emotional condition most capable of causing conflict.

> And from this diffidence of one another, there is no way for any man to secure himself, so reasonable, as anticipation; that is, by force, or wiles, to master the persons of all men he can, so long, till he see no other power great enough to endanger him: and this is no more than his own conservation requireth, and is generally allowed.[23]

Diffidence, pride and rivalry intertwine in a mutual relationship so that the rise of one of these emotions inevitably risks exposure to

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21 Hobbes, *Leviathan,* in *EW*, III, p. 112.

22 Honour, like power, is 'measured' by man in different ways, so that it does not have meaning in itself but only becomes relevant in relation to what is possessed or recognized by others. Macpherson highlights how value is defined in the same way as prices in the market. C. B. Macpherson, *The political theory of possessive individualism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970), p. 62.

23 Hobbes, *Leviathan,* in *EW*, III, p.111.

the others. In this picture characterized by continuous and reciprocal antagonism, individual natural power is nothing more than the ability to satisfy desires and passions. In particular, as we have already observed, accomplishing desires motivates action and every satisfaction is always commensurate with a 'reaction' in varying degrees.

For these reasons, relationships with others are always instigated due to two possible motivations. Man interacts with his neighbour either to increase his gratification, or because his health or property is being threatened. Organized on the basis of these contrasting reasons, any community can be made unstable because it is intrinsically plagued by countless contradictions and conflicts. The spasmodic pursuit of well-being and satisfaction creates relationships of dependence in which only the differential contrast between possibilities and a good outcomes can be satisfactory.

Dependence on the recognition of others and the differential measure of self-worth (also in terms of goods and power) produces anxiety, mistrust, if not open hostility to those who share the same natural or social conditions and are not motivated by similar goals but by opposite interests.

7. *The political horizon*

Curiosity prompts man to look continuously toward the future, and the constant desire to increase personal pleasure through the recognition of others places greater value on future actions rather than on those that have recently concluded. At the same time, though stimulated by the desire for happiness, this also reveals man's precariousness and his inability to control the natural world even through knowledge.

Similarly, social relationships are also involved in this intrinsic contradiction. Relationships with others are sought to increase personal pleasure, satisfaction and joy. When man builds an effective and authentic relationship with his neighbour, this too can reveal the precariousness and unreliability of existence. One man, motivated by pleasure, creates a personal bond with another, but such that this

relationship clearly illustrates their own desire for security over that of others. This dynamic of recognition, which is primarily the comprehension of the selfish and unreliable character of intention, can only create distrust and fear.

The Hobbesian framework is clear: the pursuit of pleasure and personal satisfaction leads to the emergence of feelings of anxiety due to the dependence on the judgment of others and the inability to control future scenarios in which such judgements will be made. The more we are prepared and rationally able to seek satisfaction, the more we will be warned and be able to see the same degree of impartiality and selfishness in others.

One cannot but see a substantial similarity in the individual interests that drive actions. Everyone not only seeks out relationships with each other that fulfil their own interests, but this search heightens the awareness that everyone is exclusively pursuing their own advantage.

For this reason, Hobbes warns that people who are intelligent and ambitious, rather than naive, are more dangerous to a peaceful state of nature. The greater the capacity and desire for knowledge, the greater the possibility of engendering mistrust. Mutual hostility arises as a projection of individual anxiety about attitudes, choices and behaviours.

The natural contradiction of individualism of the ends and equality of the means promotes anxiety in the anatomy of the social relationship by making the natural state constantly exposed to the risk of falling into a state of prolonged violence. The possibility of using latent, but always available, violence in men's consciousness is the nightmare of permanent war.

It should also be added that while we can attribute varying levels of this force of nature to different members of society, these deviations are never sufficient to ensure safety. A capacity of violence can exist to the point of resulting in death with such relative ease that can only increase perceived insecurity. In this growing tension, man, feeling vulnerable, is induced to attacking first. From mutual distrust, sooner or later violence will emerge, and be justified as 'acting in advance'.

Unlike previous works (*Elements of Law* and *De Cive*), in *Leviathan* the structure of the conflict takes the form of hypothetical

reasoning.[24] It is no longer the gap between interests and goals that produces war. Hobbes considers even the latent presence of dangerous conflict as representing widespread insecurity and mutual distrust. In this situation there is no other choice than to act in advance as sooner or later the situation will undoubtedly degenerate into outright war.

The reasons for distrust, which is a necessary requirement of war, are due to the contradictory tension in man between a recognition of natural equality and the competitive individualism that drives personal action. From this tension comes a feeling of anxiety, consisting of a sense of dependence and distrust for which we cannot predict the forms that will take on mutual hostility.

The unbridled individualism of the subjective viewpoint, combined with a substantial equality in the natural distribution of physical and spiritual qualities among men, creates individual anxiety to encounter natural aggression.

> Hereby it is manifest that during the time men live without a common power to keep them all in awe, they are in that condition which is called *war*, and such a war, as is of every man, against every man. For war, consisteth not in battle only, or the act of fighting; but in a tract of time, wherein the will to contend by battle is sufficiently known, and therefore the notion of '*time*' is to be considered in the nature of war; as it is in the nature of weather. For as the nature of foul weather, lieth not in a shower or two of rain, but in an inclination thereto of many days together: so the nature of war, consisteth not in actual fighting; but in the known disposition thereto, during all the time there is no assurance to the contrary. All other time is *peace*.[25]

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24 In *Leviathan*, unlike the *Elements*, conflict does not arise from the desire to take possession of what belongs to others, but takes the form of hypothetical reasoning for which it is only the thought that others may wish for that same things that we do to be a trigger for violence. Cf. F.S. Mc Nelly, *The Anatomy of Leviathan* (New York: Macmillan & Co, 1968), p. 165. Francesca Izzo also points out that in *Leviathan*, unlike the *De Cive* and the *Elements*, distrust was the central cause of conflict, an aggressive defensive reaction due to a perception of insecurity. F. Izzo, *Forme della modernità, Antropologia politica e teologia in Thomas Hobbes* (Roma – Bari: Laterza, 2005), p. 110.

25 Hobbes, *Leviathan*, *EW*, III, pp. 112-113.

Not only the pursuit of happiness and the attempt to avoid suffering, but also the conflictual nature of social relationships measures its value not in relation to the present, but to the future.

The pursuit of pleasure, particularly if it is of a mental nature, exposes individuals to concern for the future, generating anxious suffering. Starting from the anticipatory character of this type of consequence, Hobbes draws his own model of social conflict, in which war is defined not as a state of open conflict but a state of potential danger. It is the dimension of uncertainty that determines both individual suffering and, consequently, war, can be seen more as a tendency rather than as open conflict.

Just as uncertainty of the future is at the origin of not only conflict and anxiety, but also of the pursuit of happiness and pleasure of science, likewise anxiety not only leads to mutual distrust and the desire to abuse, but, if properly used, can become the foundation of a stable political order. The most powerful anxiety in terms of the future, is the fear of death.

If the fear of the future is the condition that according to Hobbes characterizes modern society, then civil power, law, rational reasoning, and political fear are the tools that history gives the human community to combat the disintegration that is inevitably produced in an era of crisis.

The widespread emergence of anxiety, which is the fear of the future, points to an historical time in which the ability of spiritual power to produce a shared sense of community that has now been lost. The emergence of the fear and distrust that emerges from it makes man constantly unhappy, and what is worse, suspicious and open to violence.

To cope with the indiscriminate violence stemming from this widespread misery, Hobbes seeks to outline a series of arguments that can justify the existence of a new political subject. It will be able to stand up to and overcome violence only if it is able to redefine individual suffering within a new order of sense. Power will no longer be a bearer of a truth on nature and history (which in earlier times was the responsibility of religion), but it will have to limit itself to politically harnessing passions and, in particular, anxiety and fear.

The fear of death and political violence are the tools held by political power to govern passions and in particular to limit the harmful effects of socially widespread anxiety.

After the wars of religion, human emotion and social relationships can no longer be managed by the same historical subjects that were the protagonists in the pre-modern world. Modern politics has inherited the connection between fear-obedience-power from the Judaic-Christian tradition and has placed it centrally in the process of building and legitimizing political structures.

The Church, through the moral doctrines taught in the schools and universities of religious orders, is no longer able to offer effective solutions to the management of emotional life and its most significant social implications. Hobbes is confronted with the change in the historical role of civil power to which, after the end of the 'kingdom of darkness' (where the Church had been the dominant power), a new political environment had come into existence where individual passions could not only be formed, but were required.

The pre-modern age however, the historic era of secularization, which begins after the end of the wars of religion, no longer justifies the legitimacy of power over the ability of institutions to be the guarantor of the Christian message. The process of destroying the principle of papal authority contributes to a weakening, if not an undoing, of the social effects of the preaching of the promise of the resurrection. The proclamation of the realm, as a victory over death, had for centuries had the option to contain the most effective individual anxiety. The public administration of this promise deployed and articulated into a complex system of awards and blame, had given the Church the chance to be ultimately the guarantor of the constituted political order.

Such an irreparable loss makes Hobbes aware that political power can no longer be based on the management of historical time in a permanent sense. To cope with this loss, the English philosopher considers an anthropology based on the idea that man is nothing more than a quantity of matter, constantly changing, but capable of managing these finite changes and aware of the irrecoupability of the present.

Power can no longer be based on the promise of a future eternity,

but on the ability to handle the endless and irreversible mutations of the present. Since this kind of change originates from feelings and emotions, power can only be effective in managing social peace if it is able to govern passions.

Hobbes tries to respond by creating an ideology of political power in which the power of the sovereign is identified as the only guarantee of social peace and personal security.

As an artificial animal, the *Leviathan* is a neutral, passion-free, so-called 'cold' point of view, focusing solely on highlighting the anthropologically relevant features of certain social behaviours that can originate in corresponding fixed and emblematic emotional situations.

He does not intend to teach men how to live together, to deliberate and choose some passions over others. He exclusively bases his evaluation on the assessment of the conflictual consequences of human emotion, the rational necessity of a shared political agreement, solely for the defence of individual life.

As Hobbes interprets joy as mere power acquisition, emotions cannot be changed, either privately or socially, because they are the consequences of blind desire. Building on an anthropological model with such a negative position, Hobbes presents state power in an exterior and 'superior' position with respect to a social fabric defined by passions. It is not a moral correction, or an inextricably lost aspiration for modern politics, but merely enables the modification of behaviours considered most damaging to the social bond, capitalizing on its political energy for self-preservation. Politics is no longer the activity in which the individual offers the best part of himself but is reduced to a simple function of socially controlling the most dangerous of perceived emotions and behaviours.

2.
PASSIONS, KNOWLEDGE AND POLITICAL POWER
Hobbes and the Teachers

1. *Thought and Power*

Which notion of *libertas philosophandi* can we trace in the *Leviathan,* assumed that this expression does not appear in the text? This is the question I will try to answer in this chapter. First of all, I propose some considerations regarding the way Hobbes presents the discussion of opinions in the "state of nature", the condition preceding the institution of political order. The premise for a better understanding of the different roles the "state power" is called for, both in the field of scientific research and in academic teaching, is to consider the features assumed by the exchange of ideas before the contract, within a relational dynamics where only the "the right of nature" ("*jus in omnia*") is effective. I will concentrate on these issues, and, in particular, on the analysis of chapter XLVI, whose title is "Of Darknesse from vain Philosophy, and Fabulous Traditions."

In order to verify the characteristics of the exchange of ideas in the "state of nature", I start from chapter VIII, where Hobbes provides the definition of virtue. Virtue is the other's recognition of a quality we own. As Hobbes writes: "Virtue generally, in all sorts of subjects, is somewhat that is valued for eminence; and consisteth in comparison. For if all things were equal in all men, nothing would be prized"[1]. Further on, Hobbes considers the intellectual virtue:

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1 Hobbes, *Leviathan*, in *EW*, III, p. 56. For a reconstruction of the notion of wit in Hobbes's philosophy and, in general, in English culture in the early modern age, see: P. Withington, "Tumbled into the Dirt: Wit and Incivility in Early Modern England"*, Journal of Historical Pragmatics*, XII, 2011, 1-2, pp. 156-177; R. D. Lund, "Wit, Judgment, and the Misprisions of Similitude", *Journal of the History of Ideas*, LXV, 2004, 1, pp. 53-74. This chapter is a revised and expanded version of "Leviathan in the

"virtues intellectuall, are always understood such abilities of the mind, as men praise, value, and desire should be in themselves." Hobbes continues: "they go commonly under the name of a *good wit*." "These vertues are of two sorts; *naturall*, and *acquired*." Natural virtues only derive from natural wit, that is "that witte, which is gotten by use only, and experience"[2].

This natural wit defines itself according to two main characteristics. Firstly, what Hobbes defines as "celerity of imagining, (that is a swift succession of one thought to another) and steedy direction to some approved end." Secondly, natural wit is also defined as "good fancy", namely the ability to establish links between things, to identify similarities and differences. In order to be effective, this ability will have to be accompanied by a "good judgment", that is a good skill in "distinguishing, and discerning, and judging"[3].

Besides the imaginative ability, which clearly consists, as it emerges from the quotation, in the strength to elaborate reasoning, discussions, inductions and deductions, intellectual virtue is judged by Hobbes in relation to its capacity to produce effects[4]. This means that the ability to imagine and judge is not the only one to create intellectual virtue, since it also needs the accomplishment of a purpose through the force of will. In order to have intellectual virtue, it is always appropriate that: "besides the discretion of times, places, and persons, necessary to a good fancy, there is required also an often application of his thoughts to their end"[5].

Since Hobbes defines intellectual natural virtues this way, we come closer to identify what livens up the scientific discourse and discussion. However, those virtues can always be increased with the use of language, individual study and scientific practice. In this case

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Classroom. State and University in Thomas Hobbes", published in *dianoia. Rivista di filosofia*, XXV, 2020, 30, pp. 137-148.

2 Hobbes, *Leviathan*, in *EW*, III, p. 56.

3 Hobbes, *Leviathan,* in *EW*, III, p. 56.

4 On the Hobbesian notion of virtue and on the difference with the Aristotelian one, see: P. Berkowitz, *Virtue and the Making of Modern Liberalism* (Princeton – Oxford: Princeton University Press, 1999), pp. 35-73.

5 Hobbes, *Leviathan*, in *EW*, III, p. 57.

they are defined as intellectual "acquired" virtues. As the natural virtue consists in the Other's recognition of our natural wit, so the acquired virtue derives from "method, culture, or instruction"[6]. It is the result of the "acquired wit", "as for, (I mean acquired by method and instruction,) there is none but reason; which is grounded on the right use of speech; and produceth the sciences."[7]. At this point, Hobbes adds that he has already discussed questions of language and science in chapters V and VI.

I cannot linger over Hobbesian definitions of language and science, so I will just recall that "Speech" is for Hobbes "the most noble and profitable invention of all other" "consisting of Names or Apellations, and their Connexion; whereby men register their Thoughts; recall them when they are past; and also declare them one to another for mutuall utility and conversation; without which" – Hobbes adds – there had been amongst men, neither Commonwealth, nor Society, nor Contract, nor Peace, no more than amongst Lyons, Bears, and Wolves[8].

Differently, always in the Leviathan, "science" is conceived as the ability "attained by industry" to ascribe names to things in the correct way. "First in apt imposing of names" "till we come to a knowledge of all the consequences of names appertaining to the subject in hand"[9]. In chapter VII science is also defined as "conditional knowledge, or knowledge of the consequence of words"[10]. Finally, in chapter IX, in order to define knowledge, Hobbes makes a distinction between two different kinds of knowledge. The first one derives from the definite experience, the "knowledge of fact"; the second one, instead, is the knowledge of the consequence of one affirmation to another" and "is

6 Hobbes, *Leviathan,* in *EW*, III, p. 56.
7 Hobbes, *Leviathan*, in *EW*, III, p. 61.
8 Among the several studies on the relevance of language in Hobbes's anthropology and on his modernity, see the essay: P. Pettit, *Made with words: Hobbes on Language, Mind, and Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008). A very useful bibliography is the following: C. Rodríguez Rodríguez, "Una guía bibliográfica para el estudio de la filosofía del lenguaje en Thomas Hobbes", in *Logos*, 2005, 8, pp. 101-109.
9 Hobbes, *Leviathan*, in *EW*, III, p. 61.
10 Hobbes, *Leviathan*, in *EW*, III, p.53.

called science; and is conditionall"[11]. "This – Hobbes continues – is the knowledge required in a philosopher; that is to say, of him that pretends to reasoning"[12].

It is true philosophy, that is science, and is therefore defined as a causal knowledge whose purpose is the description of natural phenomena, in order to make sure predictions.

2. *Fear and Knowledge*

So, after having analyzed the definition of intellectual virtues, language, philosophy, and science, it is possible to say that virtue is the other's recognition of an ability that we possess. Specifically, in the case of intellectual virtue, it consists in the other's recognition of our ability to use effectively imagination and judgment. This ability surely has a natural, or better organic fundament, though it can be certainly increased by study, that is the practice of science and philosophy. From the recognition of his own virtue, that is from his own intellectual skills, man acquires pleasure, therefore men are naturally led to increase their natural wit with study, trying to refine their linguistic and deductive abilities with a good application.

Furthermore, we cannot forget a second aspect: Hobbes thinks that human nature, due to its same physical structure, is always led to make predictions. The anxiety of the time to come (identified as the cause of religion in chapter XX) is the constitutive element of experience, since it naturally pushes man to the practice of science, to the effort of making predictions. So Hobbes writes in chapter XI: "anxiety for the future time, disposeth men to inquire into the causes of things: because the knowledge of them, maketh men the better able to order the present to their best advantage"[13].

Man is naturally oriented towards research and science and the ability to use wit is considered as a virtue, as an ability whose recognition is in the others' hands and does not find satisfaction only in the self-awareness. This means that the practice of science

11 Hobbes, *Leviathan*, in *EW*, III, p.71.
12 Hobbes, *Leviathan*, in *EW*, III, p.71.
13 Hobbes, *Leviathan*, in *EW*, III, p. 92.

is not present in human experience only as an exclusive individual and solitary exercise, but it becomes a relational field ruled by competitive logic rules.

Scientific discussion is a competitive relational field, because the original reason of its constitution is the mutual recognition of intellectual virtues. This means that as a place of human comparison, even scientific relationships are burdened with passions. Therefore, as in any other human relation, we have to conclude that even scientific exchanges are places in which passions like vainglory, fear and hope are produced, since what is at stake is the mutual recognition of being intellectually virtuous.

Yet, contrary to what happens for the battle for money or honor, the merely intellectual competition does not represent a risk for the state stability. This is what Hobbes affirms in chapter XI, where he writes that: "desire of knowledge and arts of peace inclineth men to obey a common power: for such desire, containeth a desire of leisure; and consequently protection from some other power than their own"[14].

Although the desire of having one's own virtue recognized fuels competitive and passionate dynamics, the idea that the desire of knowledge does not represent in itself a risk for the State comes back in Chapter XLVI, when Hobbes describes the conditions that in ancient times had favored scientific and philosophical progress. The reason why scientific discussion is not dangerous in itself comes from the fact that, in order to be practiced, it always needs a condition of peace, and so a State. In fact, it is not by chance that the progress of science and philosophy has often historically occurred in the presence of a powerful state, able to guarantee peace and the needed leisure for intellectual discussion. "*Leisure* is the mother of *philosophy*; and *Commonwealth*, the mother of *peace*, and *leisure*: where first were great and flourishing *cities*, there was first the study of *philosophy*"[15]. So, it has happened in India, in Persia and in Egypt, and so it has happened in Greece.

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14 Hobbes, *Leviathan*, in *EW*, III, p. 87.

15 Hobbes, *Leviathan*, in *EW*, III, p. 666. On the complexity of Hobbes's concept of leisure and its sources in English Literature see: Z. Gibbons, "Abused and Abusive Words: Hobbes on Laughter and Leisure", *English Literary History*, LXXXIII, 2016, 3, pp. 681-709.

> After the Athenians by the overthrow of the Persian armies, had gotten the dominion of the sea; and thereby, of all the islands, and maritime cities of the Archipelago, as well of Asia as Europe; and were grown wealthy; they that had no employment, neither at home, nor abroad, had little else to employ themselves in, but either (as St. Luke says, Acts 17.21.) "*in telling and hearing news"*, or in discoursing of *philosophy* publicly to the youth of the city[16].

Thus, not only philosophy doesn't appear as subversive, but its presence is the sign of a peaceful political situation in which scientific exchange can function as an additional vector of progress, as it can be deduced from the definition of philosophy at the opening of the chapter.

> By Philosophy is understood the knowledge acquired by reasoning, from the manner of the generation of any thing, to the properties; or from the properties, to some possible way of generation of the same; to the end to bee able to produce, as far as matter, and humane force permit, such effects, as humane life requireth[17].

True philosophy originates from peace and promotes progress. philosophical and scientific discussion flourishes in a peaceful context and makes men mutually unleash their competitive instinct, putting at stake only their virtue. From this side of the problem, we should probably consider Hobbes as a great supporter of *libertas philosophandi*, but, in truth, this is not the case.

From the predictive power of scientific research comes its own public utility. However, according to Hobbes, it is possible to make sure predictions only if one works within a kind of knowledge in which the use of language and consequently all definitions that compose it are unambiguous. In order to have science, that is a knowledge of the necessary implications, causes and effects, able to come to universal conclusions, a totally unambiguous use of language is needed.

Now we have come to the core of the problem. Hobbes hopes for the constitution of a place, where an effective exchange of opinions

16 Hobbes, *Leviathan*, in *EW*, p. 666.
17 Hobbes, *Leviathan*, in *EW*, p. 664.

is possible, a sort of scientific community. Here, people work, as I have already explained, within a competitive dynamics, since they want to have their intellectual virtue recognized, but are also led to science by a mental pleasure for knowledge. This field generates progress, and since scientific research needs leisure, those who are devoted to it do not represent a risk for the state stability but are rather their supporters.

However, such a confrontation must share a uniform philosophical orientation in order to promote progress; the different disciplines, from the science of bodies to the science of State, despite their differences in content, have to assume the same epistemological and methodological criteria. In order to reach a real scientific progress, it is necessary to form a community that uses the same language and shares some common epistemological assumptions.

Hobbes conceives science as a public space in which individual reasons and single research confront and show themselves to the community, which has the task to judge them, approving or censoring them. For Hobbes, the unanimity of consensus is not enough for setting up the truth. In order to have a sure outcome from the discussion of opinions, there has to be a political decision to guarantee the truth of language, otherwise it is as if the discussion worked without networks. To establish these conditions, the Leviathan has to work on language, has to ensure the uniqueness of signs, and avoid misunderstandings.

Language is the tool through which scientific statements are formed in a syntactically correct way. Since it is in the form that science exists and elaborates its results, language becomes the testbed through which scientific community verifies the results of its own research. By ensuring the uniqueness of language, the Leviathan constitutes the public space in which scientific research can take advantage of a certain freedom and can also evaluate its results. This concept is first exposed in Chapter Five, where Hobbes writes:

> And therefore, as when there is a controversy in an account, the parties must by their own accord, set up for right reason, the reason of some arbitrator, or judge, to whose sentence they will both stand, or

> their controversy must either come to blows, or be undecided, for want of a right reason constituted by nature; so is it also in all debates of what kind soever[18].

As Emilio Sergio observed, for scientific demonstration it is always necessary the moment of consensus, and it is up to politics to establish the logical-syntactic (mathematics) conditions "for the production of demonstrations free of controversies"[19].

3. *Science and Freedom*

Yet, this process of construction of a free and peaceful scientific field of discussion is not in itself a painless operation. We must distinguish between true philosophy (as already mentioned before) and false philosophy. For the latter, Hobbes cannot but highlight the historical causes that led to it.

The development of philosophical schools in Greece - as he writes in chapter XLVI - did not bring any advantage, because there was no scientific aspect in that knowledge: "The natural philosophy of those schools, was rather a dream than science, and set forth in senseless and insignificant language"[20]. According to Hobbes, such an absurdity also regards Aristotelian philosophy. As Hobbes writes:

> And I belive that scarce anything can be more absurdly said in natural philosophy, than that which now is called *Aristotle's Metaphysics*; nor more repugnant to government, than much of that he hath said in his *Politics*; nor more ignorantly, than a great part of his *Ethics*[21].

This futility becomes dangerous once the aristotelian philosophy meshes with scriptural interpretation in scholastic philosophy. And the danger increases when, in the Middle Ages, universities and religious schools started to flourish. "That which is now called an

18 Hobbes, *Leviathan*, in *EW*, III, p. 31.
19 E. Sergio, *Contro il Leviatano: Hobbes e le controversie scientifiche, 1650-1665* (Soveria Mannelli: Rubbettino, 2001), p. 37.
20 Hobbes, *Leviathan*, in *EW*, III, p. 668.
21 Hobbes, *Leviathan*, in *EW*, III, p. 669.

University, is a joining together, and an incorporation under one government, of many public schools, in one and the same town or city"[22].

As for Philosophy, Hobbes affirms:

> It hath no otherwise place, than as a handmaid to the Roman Religion: and since the authority of Aristotle is only current there, that study is not properly philosophy, (the nature whereof dependeth not on authors,) but *Aristotelity*[23].

Despite its poor scientific value, this kind of philosophy is indeed extremely dangerous for political stability and has to be controlled as much as possible. As early as in the end of the first chapter, Hobbes proposes this belief, referring to the way scholastic philosophy defines its sensitive perception, highlighting that this philosophy is founded on the fantastic identification of separate species (in this case an alleged audible species and an intelligible species)[24].

Hobbes heralds that in the course of the book he will clarify the relationships among Universities in which this kind of philosophy is taught, anticipating what has to be corrected, that is the frequent use of a meaningless language: "the frequency of insignificant speech is one"[25]. Hobbes thinks that scholastic philosophy founds its anthropology in the use of the universals.

> There is a certain *philosophia prima*, on which all other philosophy ought to depend; and consisteth principally, in right limiting of the

22 Hobbes, *Leviathan*, in *EW*, III, p. 670.

23 Hobbes, *Leviathan*, in *EW*, III, p. 670.

24 On the philosophical teaching in the English Universities of the XVIIth century see: W. Schmidt – Biggemann, "New Structures of Knowledge" and R. Porter, "The Scientific Revolution and Universities", in *A History of the University in Europe, vol. II: Universities in Early Modern Europe (1500-1800)*, ed. by H. De Ridder-Symoens (Cambridge: Cambdrige, University Press, 1996), pp.489-530 and pp.531-562; on the Oxford University see the essays by M. Feingold, "The Humanities and The Mathematical Sciences and New Philosophies", in *The History of the University of Oxford*, vol IV: *Seventeenth-Century Oxford*, ed. by N. Tyacke (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), pp. 211-357 and 359-448.

25 Hobbes, *Leviathan*, in *EW*, III, p. 3.

> significations of such appellations, or names, as are of all others the most universal[26].

These are the fundamental definitions at which not only metaphysical knowledge is built, but any other discipline. Among those universals Hobbes names: "body, time, place, matter, forme, essence, subject, substance, accident, power, act, finite, infinite, quantity, quality, motion, action, passion." Scholastic philosophy considers these concepts as they have been defined by Aristotle in the *Metaphysics*, wrongly considering the books that compose this work not in a simple way , as Aristotle had done, "Books written or placed after his natural philosophy": instead, "take them for books of supernaturall philosophy"[27].

In particular, what mostly contrasts modern science as it is intended by Hobbes is the belief sustained by scholastic knowledge that we can find: "in the world certain essences separated from bodies, which they call *abstract essences,* and *substantiall formes*"[28].

Therefore, what Hobbes refuses is the belief in the existence in nature of another reality than the physical reality of bodies. This derives from the fact that Aristotelian philosophy has been wrongly mingled with theology.

After having attacked the theory of separate essences, Hobbes reviews the mistakes regarding what he defines Aristotle's "civil philosophy." The wrong ethical positions, as well as the wrong positions of Aristotelian philosophy, are part of the same error, already observed in the critique of Metaphysics. Just like separate essences lead man to believe that eternal and non-corporeal entities exist and their reality is absolutely unprovable, similarly Aristotelian political philosophy is a knowledge whose epistemic logic is based on the unprovable assumption that objective good and evil exist. From these positions it is possible to get an idea of an objective justice to which civil law must conform.

In reality, men don't realize or refuse to admit that if they reason this way, they keep calling good and evil, fair and unfair what

26 Hobbes, *Leviathan*, in *EW*, III, p. 671.
27 Hobbes, *Leviathan*, in *EW*, III, p. 671
28 Hobbes, *Leviathan*, in *EW*, III, p. 672.

they simply prefer or attack. From this misunderstanding comes a second error: men consider a legitimate thing to define the sovereign power as tyrannical, that is the power that doesn't adjust to their expectations and desires.

From such an approach, it inevitably derives the belief for which: "And therefore this is another error of Aristotle's politiques, that in a well ordered commonwealth, not men should govern, but the laws"[29]. So, from the belief in the existence of separate essences, distinct from bodies, and in an objective truth regarding what is fair and unfair, comes, according to Hobbes, both the behavior of those who feel legitimate to criticize that power that doesn't go with his own desires, and the pretension to consider the superior law in charge.

In order to prevent this double error and to make it possible that at the same time true science and the authentic scientific discussion – for which the only reality is the reality of bodies - can develop freely, Hobbes, as already mentioned, affirms the necessity for a rigid state control on academic teaching.

> Let them be silenced by the laws of those, to whom the teachers of them are subject; that is, by the laws civil: For disobedience may lawfully be punished in them, that against the laws teach even true philosophy. Is it because they tend to disorder in government, as countenancing rebellion, or sedition? Then let them be silenced, and the teachers punished by virtue of his power to whom the care of the public quiet is committed; which is the authority civil[30].

Hobbes doesn't think that Universities and academic teaching can have freedom and autonomy of action. As it clearly emerges from the previous quotation, academic teaching and scholastic philosophy must be strictly regulated especially on the fundamentals, that are language and the metaphysical power based on the belief of separate essences. Therefore, we cannot affirm that for Hobbes *libertas philosophandi* must really be ensured.

There is a free scientific discussion that has to be ensured by the

29 Hobbes, *Leviathan*, in *EW*, III, p. 683.
30 Hobbes, *Leviathan*, in *EW*, III, p. 688.

State, since it brings progress and shares the common language of modern science and takes place within the same epistemological field. It also arranges fundamental definitions for which in any case the last word must lie with the State. Once a homogeneous linguistic field is constituted, whose fundament is the idea that nature is exclusively composed by bodies, what requires a discussion among scientists is certainly the forms and modalities of representation of natural phenomena and not their essential constitution.

Such a scientific confrontation, though being a competitive relationship and not impervious to human passions, has to be ensured by the State, not only because that competition is not in danger, but especially because it can provide a technical improvement useful for the entire humanity, deriving from that scholastic Aristotelianism.

On the opposite, Scholastic knowledge has to be censored, since it doesn't share the same fundamentals, and thinks of reality as divided in essences different in quality; it also conceives a relation between conceptual forms and reality as not simply descriptive but rather prescriptive.

On such a metaphysical idea of truth it comes out, in scholastic Aristotelianism, a political reflection in which the king's will can be criticized if it's not seen in line with a presumed model of justice. For this reason, the teaching of that knowledge must be strictly controlled and regulated.

Thus, Hobbes is not an advocate in abstraction of *libertas philosophandi* for two reasons: first of all, scientific research has to be functional to the improvement of common life and so it can never question the peace and stability of the State.

Secondly, there is a distinction that has to be prior done between true and false philosophy. Exchange and discussion are permitted only among those who choose to reflect and do some research in the field of modern science, sharing the adoption of the same language.

Vice versa, those who choose to stay in the field of Aristotelianism must be controlled, if not in their belief, certainly in all their external acts.

3.
THE FEARS OF THE SOUL
The Management of Passions and the Relationship with Power in Descartes

1. *Faced with power. Political Descartes*

In *Discours de la méthode*, Descartes affirms the apparent apolitical nature of his own philosophical investigation when he distances himself from "those meddlesome and restless characters who, called neither by birth nor by fortune to the management of public affairs, are yet forever thinking up some new reform."[1].

In order to understand the anthropological model and the idea of social relationship underlying such a claim of extraneousness towards social and political conflict, we will pause to analyse the *Discours de la méthode*, in particular the pages dedicated to provisional morality, and the treatise *Les passions de l'âme*.

In this latter work, Descartes presents the ideal of a substantial balance between rationality and emotionality. Unlike Hobbes, for whom man is unable to achieve any lasting emotional self-control, Descartes is confident in our individual ability to govern affects and, consequently, considers the social relationship as not necessarily

1 R. Descartes, *Discourse on the Method*, in *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, translated by John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoff, Dugald Murdoch, 3 vols, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), (from here on abbreviated to *PW* followed by the roman numeral of volume and arabic page number), I, p. 118. Original French edition: "ces humeurs brouillonnes et inquiètes, qui, n'étant appelées ni par leur naissance ni par leur fortune au maniement des affaires publiques, ne laissent pas d'y faire toujours en idée quelque nouvelle reformation." Œuvres de Descartes, par Charles Adam et Paul Tannery, 12 vols. (Paris, CERF1897- 1913); rev edn. by B. Rochot, P. Costabel, J. Beaude, A. Gabbey, 11 vols. (Paris, 1964-1974), VI, p. 14 (from here on abbreviated to *AT* followed by the roman numeral of volume and arabic page number).

being characterized by conflict, violence and war. Thanks to the correct use of his intellectual faculties, man can achieve a condition of serene self-satisfaction and, thus, establish peaceful and rewarding interpersonal relationships, capable of enriching him not only spiritually, but also from a strictly material point of view.

This condition of personal fulfilment, which Descartes defines in the affect of generosity (*Generosité*), is achieved by maturing an adequate understanding of the relationship existing between one's own subjective desires and the real chances of fulfilment that different expectations may have in certain natural and social contexts. This emotional condition implicitly refers to an idea of society in which conflict can be reduced to a minimum and in which it is appropriate to adopt behaviours vis-à-vis legitimate power based on recognition of the need for obedience.

It should first be noted that important sources of Descartes's reasoning were undoubtedly authors such as Giusto Lipsio, Pierre Charron and Michel de Montaigne. They in fact are important points of reference not only for the description of the characteristics of the passions, but above all, with regard to the "Cartesian" way of qualifying the link between will, affects and behaviour.

These authors reflected on the passions by proposing theories aimed at providing the reader with notions and useful tools to elaborate a personal *maitresse* of their own affects. Montaigne's *Essays*, Charron's *Saggesse* and Leipzig's *De Constantia* are works in which the narration of personal events or the analysis of moral customs is conducted in order to provide the reader (understood both as a private citizen and as a monarch) with more effective tools for self-care and conduct in daily life.

Both Montaigne and Charron consider the sage as the arbiter of passions to be a model of life. The management of passionate life is entirely entrusted to the individual who produces their own discipline and rules for managing passions. In a way that is both opposed and complementary to the individual governance of passions, political power is invested with the ability to rein in and impose order on the passions of the people.

Precisely in these authors, the attitude described above is accompanied by the development of a theory of obedience in the

political context. Almost as if circumscribing to an individual level issues regarding the domination of the passions implies a "cooling" of their political use. These works present political reflections in favour of legitimizing obedience to the established power. The scepticism of Montaigne and Charon, as well as in other respects the neo-Stoicism of Leipzig, are characterized by the fact that they trust in the individual control of passions. These theories are accompanied by the belief that political stability, peace and individual obedience are necessary conditions to allow the sage to discipline passions independently. In these authors, prudence becomes an essential trait that must be assumed both by private individuals when they have to relate to the established order, and by the power that intends to maintain the obedience of the subjects[2].

This theory of the advisability of obedience is also found in the writings of Descartes, where the natural and, consequently, also social order takes shape in relation to the degree of freedom. The greater the independence to which it is possible to aspire, the stronger self-satisfaction will become[3].

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2 On the concept of prudence in Montaigne, Lipsio and Charron, see: V. Dini*, Il governo della prudenza: virtù dei privati e disciplina dei custodi*, (Milano: Franco Angeli 2000); V. Dini, G. Stabile, *Saggezza e prudenza: studi per la ricostruzione di un'antropologia in prima età moderna*, (Napoli: Liguori, 1983), B. Fontana, *Montaigne's Politics: Authority and Governance in the Essais* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008); F. Brahami (ed. by), *Les affections sociales* (Besançon: Presses Universitaires de France- Comté, 2008); P. Slongo, *Governo della vita e ordine politico in Montaigne* (Milano: Franco Angeli, 2010).

3 "The satisfaction of those who steadfastly pursue virtue is a habit of their soul which is called 'tranquillity' and 'peace of mind'. But the fresh satisfaction we gain when we have just performed an action we think good is a passion - a kind of joy which I consider to be the sweetest of all joys, because its cause depends only on ourselves." Descartes, *The Passions of the Soul*, art. CXC, in *PW,* I, p. 396. Original French edition "La Satisfaction, qu'ont tousjours ceux qui suivent constamment la vertu, est une habitude en leur ame, qui se nomme tranquillité et repos de conscience. Mais celle qu'on acquiert de nouveau, lors qu'on a fraischement fait quelque action qu'on pense bonne, est une Passion, à sçavoir une espece de Ioye, laquelle je croy estre la plus douce de toutes, pource que sa cause ne depend que de nous mesmes." *AT,* XI, p. 471.

To increase this degree of individual freedom, it is necessary to develop an adequate knowledge of natural hierarchies, and such knowledge can only become possible through the tool of personal fulfilment.

In Descartes's vision of society, individual value is defined as a private activity. In particular, in the third part of the *Discourse on Method*, the accent is placed on free scientific research, considered the activity – at least regarding Descartes's life – which brings the greatest satisfaction. The private sphere is thus placed at the heart of personal interests. It is the ambitions and individual activities that determine the ways in which the individual must behave, both towards their neighbour and towards the established power[4]. Against the backdrop of this private collocation the vision of political power takes shape. Relations with the sovereign power must be conceived instrumentally with respect to the desire to pursue one's own interests in the social sphere. There is no universally right way to behave towards power and the laws. Each individual's political choices must be made in the light of their own goals.

For this reason, the pages and letters in which the French philosopher (often implicitly) refers to political issues or specific relations with power have been accused of moderatism.

In the provisional morality elaborated in the third part of the *Discourse on Method*, Descartes argues that, in order to obtain the maximum degree of freedom attainable in the private sphere, the man of science (although this attitude could be extended to any free professional activity), must flee any possible conflict with the established power, be it of an academic, political or ecclesiastical nature:

> The first was to obey the laws and customs of my country, holding constantly to the religion in which by God's grace I had been instructed from my childhood, and governing myself in all other matters according to the most moderate and least extreme opinions - the opinions

4 Descartes's problem is to 'free' individual life from any conditioning exercised by political power. Cf: P. Guenancia, *Descartes et l'ordre politique: critique cartésienne des fondements de la politique* (Paris, PUF, 1983), p. 36.

> commonly accepted in practice by the most sensible of those with whom I should have to live[5].

It is not in the battle against power, trying to change existing and traditionally recognized laws that man must realize his value.

The individual relationship with power thus assumes, almost by definition, a provisional nature. In the course of any life, "knowing how to relate to power" will mean adopting the continuous adjustments necessary for the pursuit of one's goals, in private or working life.

While on the one hand the man of science engaged in his own research activity is called at all times to give consent to nothing other than to what, after careful examination, appears to him as evident, as affirmed by Descartes in the second maxim of provisional morality, on the contrary, in social life, and in particular with regard to sovereign power, that same man, in order to ensure his private freedom, will instead have to assume a more relaxed attitude.

While the objective vision of the relationships of determination that distinguish personal nature can be individually achieved with the weapons of correct reasoning alone, on the contrary, it is much more difficult to actively intervene on the consolidated structures of powers and traditions. The 'gaze' on power, which can be deduced by reading the pages of Descartes, is always aimed at achieving a personal condition of calm and, where possible, well-being.[6]

A clear example of this attitude is the letter to Queen Elisabeth of the Palatinate dated January 1646 in which the invitation to prudence is clearly argued. For Descartes, obeying is an indispensable condition for a quiet life:

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5 Descartes, *Discourse on the Method*, in *PW,* I, p. 122. Original French edition: "La première était d'obéir aux lois et aux coutumes de mon pays, retenant constamment la religion en laquelle Dieu m'a fait la grâce d'être instruit dès mon enfance, et me gouvernant en toute autre chose suivant les opinions les plus modérées et les plus éloignées de l'excès qui fussent communément reçues en pratique par les mieux sensés de ceux avec lesquels j'aurais à vivre." *AT*, VI, p. 22.

6 For an analysis of the relationship between Descartes's life and the political conditions of mid-seventeenth century Europe, see the essay by B. Barret-Kriegel, "Politique-(s) de Descartes?", *Archives de Philosophie*, LIII, 1990, pp. 371-388.

> For me, the maxim that I have observed most in all the conduct of my life has been to follow only the common path and to believe that the principal fi nesse is to avoid using fi nesse. The common laws of society, which all tend to make people treat each other well, or at least not to do any ill to each other, are, it seems to me, so well established that whoever follows them honestly, without any dissimulation or artifice, leads a much happier and more assured life than those who seek their own utility by other routes, though, in truth, they succeed sometimes through the ignorance of other men and by the favor of fortune. But it happens much more often that they fail and that in thinking to establish themselves, they ruin themselves. It is with this ingenuity and this frankness, which I profess to observe in all my actions, that I also profess particularly to be, etc[7].

Obedience is thus configured as a "factual truth", and as such, only valid as long as the power gives it force.

While he is unscrupulous in his desire to revolutionize the principles of science and metaphysics, he however clearly rejects any kind of political ambition, especially if pursued with the weapons of disobedience and rejection. His hostility towards the hegemonic philosophy in the culture of his time is matched by his trust in tradition, as a guarantee of the justice of the law.

If from the reflections on obedience we move on to analyse the few words expressed by Descartes on the modes of action and behaviour that must be attributed to the sovereign, we will also find in them

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7 *The Correspondence Between Princess Elisabeth of Bohemia and René Descartes*, edited and translated by L. Shapiro (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), p.132. Original French edition: "Et pour moi, la maxime que j'ai le plus observée en toute la conduite de ma vie, a été de suivre seulement le grand chemin, et de croire que la principale finesse est de ne vouloir point du tout user de finesse. Les lois communes de la société, lesquelles tendent toutes à se faire du bien les uns aux autres, ou du moins à ne se point faire de mal, sont, ce me semble, si bien établies, que quiconque les suit franchement, sans aucune dissimulation ni artifice mène une vie beaucoup plus heureuse et plus assurée, que ceux qui cherchent leur utilité par d'autres voies, lesquels, à la vérité, réussissent quelque fois par l'ignorance des autres hommes, et par la faveur de la fortune; mais il arrive bien plus souvent qu'ils y manquent, et que, pensant s'établir, ils se ruinent." Descartes to Princess Elizabeth, January 1946, in *AT*, IV., p. 357.

a marked line of continuity with what he proposes for individual control. Descartes, in fact, calls for caution, considered as a possibility of stabilizing command and retaining power. 'Being prudent' is the attitude that fully embodies the Cartesian way of understanding action and politics, and not only when Descartes himself has to make choices. Even in the few theoretical references to political problems that can be found in his works and correspondence, prudence and conservatism are the peculiar traits of the French philosopher's own way of conceiving both the purpose of legislative activity and the typical methods of government action[8].

Reflecting on power, Descartes identifies the end of sovereign action in stability and peace. At least on this point, his view is similar to that of Hobbes. In fact, Descartes completely reduces the possibility of solving political problems to the personal qualities of the king.

The letter to Princess Elisabeth on Machiavelli's *The Prince* is among the most significant documents in this regard.[9] The French philosopher does not seem to espouse a precise political position, nor adhere to a totally contingent idea of political action. The prince must be interested in maintaining power, and this can only be achieved by pursuing a policy that has as its objective the establishment of justice

8 On prudence as a possible explanation of the Cartesian reluctance to explicitly formulate theses and concepts of political content, despite a probable knowledge of the relevant issues of the seventeenth-century debate, cf. R. Polin, "Descartes et la philosophie politique", in AA.VV, *Mélanges A. Koyré, II. L'aventure de l'esprit*, (Paris: Hermann, 1964), pp. 381-399.

9 Among the political writings one cannot fail to mention the letter to Princess Elisabeth of September 1646 in which Descartes expresses his opinion on Machiavelli: *AT*, IV, pp. 485-494. On this letter, see: F. Baldassarri, "Descartes e il Principe. Il declino della politica nell'ordine della ragione", *Intersezioni*, XXXIV, 2014, 3, pp. 361-379; G. Sanhueza G. and R. Salinas J., "Descartes, lector de Maquiavelo", *Teoria*, 2014, 4, pp. 83-103; G. Canziani, "La politica nelle lettere di Descartes a Elisabetta, Chanut e Brasset", in *La biografia intellettuale di René Descartes attraverso la* Correspondance, a cura di J.R. Argmogathe e al. (Napoli: Vivarium, 1998), pp. 493-526; S. Guidi, "Il potere delle passioni. Descartes antropologo politico", *Lo sguardo. Rivista di filosofia*, 13, 2013, pp.85-105.

and peace. These goals can only be achieved if the sovereign is able to reign loyally to the law and the people:

> Thus I disapprove of the maxim of chapter 15 which claims that, as the world is very corrupt, it is impossible that one will not ruin oneself if one always wants to be a good man, and that a prince, in order to maintain himself, must learn to be wicked when the occasion requires it. […] But thinking that a good man is he who does everything true reason tells him to, it is certain that the best thing is always to try to be one. [10].

Descartes resolves the intrinsic characteristics of the command function in the analysis of the sovereign's personality.

Not only does the legislative function coincide with the person of the prince and with his value. Descartes feels no need to reflect on the dynamics of legitimation that must belong to power, settling on a position that still tends to superimpose and identify the principle of sovereignty and the actual activity of government with the person of the prince, without introducing any criteria of further legitimacy, and, moreover, without feeling the need to guarantee any representation. The prince, with the personality, the sense of justice and the possibilities of command that he possesses, is opposed to the people, described as always fickle, naive and, as such, destined to easily become the victim of deception.

The sovereign must govern with rationality, but not so that reason can become – as it would in Spinoza – the instrument for the creation of a democratic and stable condition. Reason and justice are understood as qualities that must belong to the personality of the sovereign, so that he may stand above in a condition of superiority,

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10 Descartes to Princess Elizabeth, September 1646, in *The Correspondence Between Princess Elisabeth of Bohemia and René Descartes*, p.142. Original French edition: "Ainsi je désapprouve la maxime du chapitre 15: Que, le monde étant fort corrompu, il est impossible qu'on ne se ruinne, si l'on veut estre toujours homme de bien; et qu'un prince, pour se maintenir, doit apprendre à être méchant, lorsque l'occasion le requiert; […] Mais, pensant qu'un homme de bien est celui qui fait tout ce que lui dicte la vraie raison, il est certain que le meilleur est de tâcher à l'être toujours." *AT,* IV, p. 490.

and from this position be respected and obeyed by the people.

The sovereign must not act rationally in order to implement just laws (Descartes explicitly states that people and sovereign have different ideas of justice. Rational governance can allow the sovereign to show himself honest and valiant and, as such, worthy of privileges. At the same time, the people will be able to accept subordination to sovereign authority only if they recognize an intrinsic value in it.

Descartes distances himself from Machiavelli's realism by not being willing to include cunning among the requisites for those who find themselves exercising some form of political government. The power of the 'astute king' is easily in danger of perishing.

On the contrary, reason and justice are described as useful tools for maintaining a lasting government.

> For in the end the people suffer all that one can persuade them is just and are offended by all they imagine to be unjust. The arrogance of princes, that is to say, the usurping of some authority or some rights or some honors the people do not think are deserved, is odious to them only because they consider it a kind of injustice[11].

Rationally recognizing the objective limits of reality is an indispensable property that must not only belong to the individual who intends to achieve a satisfactory governance of passions, but must become an intrinsic characteristic of the behaviour and attitude of those who share important governing responsibilities. A letter to Elisabeth dated 22 February 1649 testifies that – for Descartes – the recognition of the limits of dependence that bind us to reality is to be considered an indispensable tool for the sovereign who governs public affairs. The subject of the letter is the Peace of Westphalia,

11 Descartes to Princess Elizabeth, September 1646, in *The Correspondence Between Princess Elisabeth of Bohemia and René Descartes* Original French edition: "Car enfin le peuple souffre tout ce qu'on lui peut persuader être juste, et s'offense de tout ce qu'il imagine d'être injuste; et l'arrogance des Princes, c'est-à-dire l'usurpation de quelque autorité, de quelques droits, ou de quelques honneurs qu'il croit ne leur être point dûs, ne lui est odieuse, que pour ce qu'il la considère comme une espèce d'injustice." *AT*, IV, p. 491.

which sanctioned only a partial restitution of the kingdom of the Palatinate to the Stuart family:

> I can only say, in general, that when it is a question of the restitution of a state which is occupied or disputed by others who have power in hand, it seems to me that those who have only equity and the right of men pleading for them ought never to count on obtaining all they hope for. They have much better reason to thank those who enable them to be given some part of it, no matter how small it is, than they have to wish ill to those who retain the rest of it. Even though no one would say it was wrong for them to dispute their right as much as they can while those who have power deliberate on it, I think that once these conclusions are reached prudence obliges them to express that they are content, even if they are not so, in order to maintain their standing. They also ought to thank not only those who have given them something but also those who did not destroy them completely, and by this means to acquire the friendship of each of them, or at least to avoid their hate[12].

It has already been observed that the rational recognition of the power relations in force is an indispensable function of rationality if we are to achieve individual control of private affects. The letter just cited demonstrates that not only should this quality be exercised in the sphere of interpersonal relationships, but can and must necessarily also be translated into political activity. The sovereign, who is once

12 *The Correspondence Between Princess Elisabeth of Bohemia and René Descartes*, p. 178. Original French edition: "je puis seulement dire, en général, que, lorsqu'il est question de la restitution d'un Etat occupé ou disputé par d'autres qui ont les forces en main, il me semble que ceux qui n'ont que l'équité et le droit des gens qui plaide pour eux, ne doivent jamais faire leur compte d'obtenir toutes leurs prétentions, et qu'ils ont bien plus de sujet de savoir gré à ceux qui leur en font rendre quelque partie, tant petite qu'elle soit, que de vouloir du mal à ceux qui leur retiennent le reste. Et encore qu'on ne puisse trouver mauvais qu'ils disputent leur droit le plus qu'ils peuvent, pendant que ceux qui ont la force en délibèrent, je crois que, lorsque les conclusions sont arrêtées, la prudence les oblige à témoigner qu'ils en sont contents, encore qu'ils ne le fussent pas; et à remercier non seulement ceux qui leur font rendre quelque chose, mais aussi ceux qui ne leur ôtent pas tout, afin d'acquérir, par ce moyen, l'amitié des uns et des autres, ou du moins d'éviter leur haine: car cela peut beaucoup servir, par après, pour se maintenir." *AT*, V, p. 284.

again identified not as a function, but as a person, endowed with passions, interests and reasoning skills, must know how to use, in the government of public affairs, the same principles and qualities that characterize any personal behaviour aspiring to self-satisfaction.

By comparing the aforementioned letters to Elisabeth, both on the *Prince* and on the results of the Peace of Westphalia, with *obedient* behaviour, promoted in the pages of the *Discourse on Method* dedicated to promissory morality, we can grasp the unity and coherence of the Cartesian model of rationality when it is applied in different fields.

In the first place there are the specific, personal relationships, always contingent in nature, entertained by Descartes, but the reasoning can be extended to any private citizen (one could say to any *bourgeois*), with the constituted power. These relationships are marked by the objective conditions in which one finds oneself operating, and must be organized with opportunism and prudence in order to obtain freedom and protection for one's work, which in the specific case of Descartes is work of an intellectual nature.

In addition to the personal level, however, in Descartes's reflections and in particular in some letters to Elisabeth, a second model of political action can be glimpsed, albeit implicitly.

In these pages, Descartes, albeit implicitly, hypothesizes that the same rationality which the intellect must apply in the administration of passions can be "borrowed" from political action. In this perspective, even the prince is called to act rationally to better preserve himself and his power.

Descartes does not reject the effectual plan of Machiavelli's reflections, but, while noting the fickleness of the people's moods, considers loyalty to power a consequence of the prince's ability to be just and magnanimous. He distances himself from the Machiavellian model, because he considers it more important, in order to preserve power, that sovereign action is fair and rational, rather than adept at judging the relationship between circumstances and purpose.

Grasping the political meaning of Descartes's reflections and recognizing it as analogous to the theories of prudence of the authors mentioned above therefore means taking seriously (and not reading only as a mere opportunistic choice) the declared intention

for wanting morality to be provisional. Seen in this light, the rules of conduct presented in the third part of the *Discours* are intended as a set of indications to be adopted on a permanent basis, and the adjective *provisional* is considered as identifying the need to adapt to the impositions of the political power without remaining excessively "intransigent" in public stances.

In an attempt to illustrate the logic and contents of Descartes's position, we will focus on that plexus of affects that in the treatise *Les passions de l'âme* define the emotion of fear. We will firstly reconstruct the general features of the Cartesian position on passions, then we will try to highlight the characteristics of fear and, subsequently, we will analyse the relationship with the model of representative rationality, proposed, again in this work, as working to correct unregulated affectivity.

Unlike Hobbes, but also Spinoza, fear is not the passion identified as the basis for political obedience. For Descartes the individual is able to master their passions and even fear, but this does not in any way mean weakening the assertion of the need for obedience. Indeed, in some respects, the Cartesian model shows an even stronger meaning of this constraint, since obedience to power, to any power as long as it is constituted, represents a necessary, albeit not sufficient, condition for the pursuit of happiness.

Only once it has been verified that reason may control all the nuances of fear will it be possible to adequately understand the reasons justifying Descartes's prudence and the virtuous model of generosity.

2. *Passions as representations of the soul*

With reference to the subject which they are predicate, passion and action always occur in a simultaneous, reciprocal and differentiated way.

> What is a passion with regard to one subject is always an action in some other regard[13].

In order for an action to be carried out, it is always necessary for a person to act. For this action there will be a reciprocal and corresponding passion, which however must have another subject of attribution. Action and passion are two distinct ontological conditions which occur simultaneously; although mutually necessary, they originate from the relationship of two different subjects.

If this is the general definition, we need to understand what Descartes means when he specifically defines the passions of the soul.

Unlike Aristotle's definition, whereby passion was a simultaneous affection of the soul and the body (through this homogenization the philosopher from Stagira distanced himself from the Platonic definition), in *The Passions of the Soul* Descartes predisposes an idea of passion referring exclusively to the soul.

Already in the *Third* and *Sixth Meditation*, "feeling" was defined as an act of thought. In the *Third Meditation* we read:

> I am a thing that thinks: that is, a thing that doubts, affirms, denies, understands a few things, is ignorant of many things, is willing, is unwilling, and also which imagines and has sensory perceptions [14].

In the *Sixth Meditation*, the inclusion of "feeling" among thought activities is even more explicitly stated:

> So in order to deal with them more fully, I must pay equal attention to the senses, and see whether the things which are perceived by means of

13 Descartes, *The Passions of the Soul,* in *PW*, I, p. 327. Original French edition: "Que ce qui est Passion au regard d'un sujet, est toujours Action à quelque autre égard." *AT*, XI, p. 327.

14 Descartes, *Meditations in First Philosophy*, in *PW,* II, p.24. Original Latin edition: " Ego sum res cogitans, id est dubitans, affirmans, negans, pauca intelligens, multa ignorans, volens, nolens, imaginans etiam et sentiens." *AT*, VII, p. 34

> that mode of thinking which I call 'sensory perception' provide me with any sure argument for the existence of corporeal things [15].

Also in the definition given in Art. XXV of *The Passions of the Soul*, the same concept of passion as a condition of the soul returns:

> Now all our perceptions, both those we refer to objects outside us and those we refer to the various states of our body, are indeed passions with respect to our soul, so long as we use the term 'passion' in its most general sense; nevertheless we usually restrict the term to signify only perceptions which refer to the soul itself[16].

In the activity of thinking, the mind can act or suffer. Thoughts are representations resulting from the activity of the thinking substance. At this point we need to distinguish between the different types of actions of the soul, to subsequently verify, within this hierarchy, the characteristics and functions that belong to the passions.

The soul can represent different types of perceptions. Descartes distinguishes between an active thought, which he defines as volition and consists of an action of the mind, and a passive thought, which depends exclusively on the pure receptive activity of bodily stimuli and is called passion. The mind therefore perceives its own voluntary acts. As Descartes himself observes:

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15 Descartes, *Meditations in First Philosophy*, in *PW,* II, p.51. Original latin edition: "et quia haec percipio meliùs sensu, a quo videntur ope memoriae ad imaginationem pervenisse, ut commodiùs de ipsis agam, eâdem operâ etiam de sensu est agendum, videndumque an ex iis quae isto cogitandi modo, quem sensum appello, percipiuntur, certum aliquod argumentum pro rerum corporearum existentiâ habere possim." *AT*, VII, p. 74

16 Descartes, *The Passions of the Soul*, art. XXV, in *PW*, I, p. 337-338. Original French edition " Or encore que toutes nos perceptions, tant celles qu'on rapporte aux objets qui sont hors de nous, que celles qu'on rapporte aux diverses affections de nostre corps, soient veritablement des passions au regard de nostre ame, lors qu'on prend ce mot en sa plus generale signification: toutefois on a coustume de le restreindre à signifier seulement celles qui se rapportent à l'ame mesme." *AT*, XI, pp. 347-348.

> But because this perception is really one and the same thing as the volition, and names are always determined by whatever is most noble, we do not normally call it a 'passion', but solely an 'action'[17].

All thoughts directly produced by the soul are voluntary acts, while passions are representations, passive conditions of the mind, forms of understanding, the direct cause of which is the mind when it is subject to external conditioning.[18]

The soul formulates voluntary ideas when it perceives actively and without relating to the body. Such ideas are purely intelligible objects such as the ideas of God and mathematical entities. Depending on the will, they must be considered as actions and not as passions. When it thinks through the body, however, the soul imagines, that is, it "uses"

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17 Descartes, *The Passions of the the Soul*, art. XIX, in *PW*, I, p. 336. Original French edition: "Toutefois, à cause que cette perception et cette volonté ne sont en effect qu'une mesme chose, la denomination se fait tousjours par ce qui est le plus noble; et ainsi on n'a point coustume de la nommer une passion, mais seulement une action." *AT*, XI, p. 343.

18 Descartes, *The Passions of the Soul,* art. XVII, in *PW*, I, p. 335: "Having thus considered all the functions belonging solely to the body, it is easy to recognize that there is nothing in us which we must attribute to our soul except our thoughts. These are of two principal kinds, some being actions of the soul and others its passions. Those I call its actions are all our volitions, for we experience them as proceeding directly from our soul and as seeming to depend on it alone. On the other hand, the various perceptions or modes of knowledge present in us may be called its passions, in a general sense, for it is often not our soul which makes them such as they are, and the soul always receives them from the things that are represented by them." Original French edition: "Apres avoir ainsi consideré toutes les fonctions qui appartienent au corps seul, il est aysé de connoistre qu'il ne reste rien en nous que nous devions attribuer à nostre ame, sinon nos pensées, lesquelles sont principalement de deux genres: à sçavoir, les unes sont les actions de l'ame, les autres sont ses passions. Celles que je nomme ses actions, sont toutes nos volontez, à cause que nous experimentons qu'elles vienent directement de nostre ame, et semblent ne dependre que d'elle. Comme, au contraire, on peut generalement nommer ses passions, toutes les sortes de perceptions ou connoissances qui se trouvent en nous, à cause que souvent ce n'est pas nostre ame qui les fait telles qu'elles sont, et que tousjours elle les reçoit des choses qui sont representées par elles." *AT*, XI, p. 342.

bodily representations learned through sensitivity. Imagination is a function of the soul through which the mind recomposes in a more or less conscious and voluntary way mnestic and representative "materials" that were initially drawn from sensitive knowledge.

There are different forms of imagination. There are images on which the will is actively exercised[19], but there is also imagination of organic origin, such as seen in daydreams, to which the will does not contribute at all or does so only minimally.[20] Although they are passions of the soul in all respects, Descartes does not deal with them in detail.

In addition to ideas, generated autonomously by the will (ideas or images) and completely involuntary imaginative representations (hallucinations and dreams), we find among the remaining perceptions the feelings and passions of the soul and body. By feelings we mean the perceptions of external objects, while passions are the conditionings suffered by the soul every time it receives

19 Descartes, *The Passions of the Soul*, art. XIX, in *PW*,I, p. 335: "Our perceptions are likewise of two sorts: some have the soul as their cause, others the body. Those having the soul as their cause are the perceptions of our volitions and of all the imaginings or other thoughts which depend on them." Original French edition: " Nos perceptions sont aussi de deux sortes, & les unes ont l'ame pour cause, les autres le corps. Celles qui ont l'ame pour cause, sont les perceptions de nos volontez, & de toutes les imaginations ou autres pensées qui en dépendent." *AT*, XI, p. 343.
Descartes, The Passions of the Soul, art. XX, in *PW*, I, p. 336: "When our soul applies itself to imagine something non-existent - as in thinking about an enchanted palace or a chimera - and also when it applies itself to consider something that is purely intelligible and not imaginable – for example, in considering its own nature - the perceptions it has of these things depend chiefly on the volition which makes it aware of them." Original French edition: "Lors que nostre ame s'applique à imaginer quelque chose qui n'est point, comme à se representer un palais enchanté ou une chimere; et aussi lors qu'elle s'applique à considerer quelque chose qui est seulement intelligible, et non point imaginable, par exemple, à considerer sa propre nature: les perceptions qu'elle a de ces choses dépendent principalement de la volonté qui fait qu'elle les aperçoit." *AT*, XI, p. 344.

20 Descartes*, The Passions of the Soul*, art. XXI, in *PW,* I, p. 336. *AT*, XI, pp. 344-345.

a significant change from the body.[21] Passions of the body are conditionings arising from the relationship with the outside, which affect the internal organs, modifying the quantity and speed of the spirits.

Finally, there are passions of the soul. They coincide with a condition of passivity beyond voluntary control.[22] The proximate cause of these feelings is not the soul, but the body, either on the basis of a specific condition (health or disease), or as a mediator of perceptions generated by external objects. In Article XXVII they are defined as follows:

> 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[23].

Passions are changes, emotions of the soul corresponding to a particular movements of the internal and external organs. Perceptual conditions of the "I think", or thoughts, not produced autonomously by the will, but always associated with particular movements

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21 Descartes, *The Passions of the Soul*, art. XXIII, in *PW*, I, p. 337, *AT*, XI. p. 346.

22 Descartes, *The Passions of the Soul*, art. XXV, in *PW*, I, p. 337:"The perceptions we refer only to the soul are those whose effects we feel as being in the soul itself, and for which we do not normally know any proximate cause to which we can refer them. Such are the feelings of joy, anger and the like, which are aroused in us sometimes by the objects which stimulate our nerves and sometimes also by other causes." Original French Edition: "Les perceptions qu'on raporte seulement à l'ame, sont celles dont on sent les effets comme en l'ame mesme, et desquelles on ne connoist communement aucune cause prochaine, à laquelle on les puisse raporter. Tels sont les sentimens de joye, de colere, et autres semblables, qui sont quelquefois excitez en nous par les objets qui meuvent nos nerfs, & quelquefois aussi par d'autres causes." *AT*, XI, p. 347.

23 Descartes, *The Passions of the Soul*, art. XXVII, in *PW*, I, pp. 338-339. Original French edition: "Des perceptions, ou des sentimens, ou des émotions de l'ame, qu'on raporte particulierement à elle, et qui sont causées, entretenuës et fortifiées par quelque mouvement des esprits." *AT*, XI, p. 349.

of animal spirits. While the first article of the *Passions* posits an interconnection between passion and action, now this alternation is specifically declined in terms of a relationship. Passion always presupposes an action exercised by the body. In fact, nothing is more closely linked to the soul. By virtue of this proximity, nothing acts with greater immediacy. What is action in the soul, is passion in the body and, conversely, what is action in the body will be passion in the soul. *Res cogitans* and *res extensa* are distinct substances but close to each other. This means that the occurrence of an action in one corresponds to the production of a passion in the other. Every action of the body will be a passion of the soul, just as the occurrence of any act of voluntary thought is bound to induce the body to make some changes. It is thanks to this unity that particular physical upheavals may be felt as passions. Similarly, there is no passion of the soul that does not correspond to a particular bodily action/condition. The passions of the soul are representations that are formed as a result of significant physical changes, communicated through the pineal gland. This is how we should interpret the affirmation, repeated on several occasions, whereby it is the movement of the spirits that constantly fuels the passions.

The predication of the concept of passion as a function of the soul can be deduced from the substantial distinction between *res cogitans* and *res extensa*. Since there is a real difference between soul and body, everything that concerns man, both as an organ and as a function, must also refer to the soul, according to a distinct and similar meaning. In this way, we achieve a definition of passion of the soul understood as a passive conditioning resulting from a particular relationship between bodily structure and the outside world. The passion of the soul is a form of knowledge, a thought that is not evident, as it is involuntary, and as such is not completely controllable. It is a representation that is particularly affected by the mode of functioning and the health status of the body.[24] Since the

24 "Nature also teaches me, by these sensations of pain, hunger, thirst and so on, that I am not merely present in my body as a sailor is present in a ship, but that I am very closely joined and, as it were, intermingled with it, so that I and the body form a unit." *Meditations on First Philosophy*, in *PW*, II, p. 56. Original Latin edition: "Docet etiam natura, per istos sensus

soul acts and suffers through the production of thoughts, it is active when it produces thoughts independently of the bodily condition, while it remains passive when thoughts arise as reactions (passions) to particular physical conditions.

While rejecting the Aristotelian idea of a passion entirely unbalanced towards the body[25], Descartes also remains equidistant from the Platonic position, because he emphasizes the indispensable need for bodily stimulus to produce any passionate condition.

Although close, the substances remain distinct. Since there is a real difference between extended and thinking substance, it is not possible to establish a direct causal link between passion of the body and perceptions of the soul. *Res cogitans* and *res extensa* are different substances and for this reason a direct communication between bodily condition and the perception of this condition in the soul is not possible.

It is a question of understanding how the body can cause passions in the soul with its action, since it is logically contradictory to have a causal relationship between substances that have nothing in common. As is well known, the solution of this "translation" is entrusted to the function performed by the pineal gland.

Any movement of the muscles and any variation relating to the sense organs occur in the body thanks to the stimuli conducted by the nerves, very thin channels that connect the different parts with each other and with the outside world[26]. Animal spirits run through the nerves. These are the thinnest part of the blood, and their movement is due to the action of the heart, which, being warm inside, continually rarefies the spirits that pass through it[27]. Once

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doloris, famis, sitis etc., me non tantùm adesse meo corpori ut nauta adest navigio, sed illi arctissime esse conjundum et quafi permixtum adeo ut unum quid cum illo componam." *AT*, VII, p. 81.

25 According to Aristotle, "Passions are forms embedded in matter." Cf. Aristotele, *De Anima*, I, 1, 403 a 29.

26 Descartes, *The Passions of the Soul*, art. VII, in *PW*, I, p. 330, *AT*, XI, pp. 331-332.

27 Descartes, *The Passions of the Soul*, art. VIII, in *PW*, I, p. 331: "While we are alive there is a continual heat in our hearts, which is a kind of fire that the blood of the veins maintains there." Original French edition: "pendant que nous vivons, il y a une chaleur continuelle en nostre cœur, qui est une

the blood has increased in volume, due to the heat of the heart, it cannot be contained at the original site. So, after passing through the various cavities of the heart, it leaves to head for the brain in as rectilinear a direction as possible[28].

However, not all the blood that flows into the upper parts of the body makes it into the brain. Since there are some very narrow passages, only the most agitated and thinnest parts of it enter the cavities of the brain, while the rest come back. Subsequently, once "filtered" by the brain, the spirits pass through the nerves to all the remaining organs. Between the two hemispheres is the pineal gland[29], which is where the body (*res extensa*) contacts the mind (*res cogitans*). By crossing the pineal gland, the spirits "communicate" to the soul the changes in shape and speed undergone in passing through the lower parts of the body.

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especе de feu que le sang des venes y entretient, et que ce feu est le principe corporel de tous les mouvemens de nos membres." *AT*, XI, p. 333.

28 Although Descartes repeatedly praised William Harvey's *De motu cordis* (see the letter to Beverwijck of 5 July 1643), he disagrees with the English doctor regarding the origin of the movement of the blood. Unlike Harvey, Descartes does not attribute the ability to move blood to the contraction of the heart (systole). He instead thought blood circulation was due to the increase in blood volume caused by the passage through the heart, identified as the place where an innate heat would originate (*calor innatus*). The capacity of the heart to generate heat and, in this way, to allow human life, is a theme that Descartes may have drawn from Greek physiology, and in particular from writers such as Galen, Hippocrates and Aristotle himself. G.A. Lindeboom, *Descartes and Medicine*, (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1978), pp. 68-72. On the reception of Harvey's *De motu cordis* in Descartes, cf. R. Toellner, "The Controversy between Descartes and Harvey regarding the Nature of Cardiac Motions", in *Science, Medicine and Society in the Renaissance. Essays to honor Walter Pagel*, ed. by A.G. Debus (London: Heinemann, 1972), vol. II, pp. 73-89.

29 The pineal gland was already discussed in ancient medicine and physiology. It is also dealt with by Galen, who, however, does not attribute to it any function as a mediator or "door" for the entry of animal spirits into the brain. Descartes finds this meaning, whereby the gland is understood as an organ controlling the influx of animal spirits, also in Vesalius. On this aspect, see: G.A. Lindeboom, *Descartes and Medicine*, pp. 82-83.

It must also be added that animal spirits are not governed exclusively by the thrust of the heart or the soul[30]. Also external objects that present themselves to the sense organs can modify their speed and volume.

Variations in the quantity and speed of spirits within the organs are often caused by feelings. This term refers to the distinct perceptions of external objects (natural bodies, or human actions) communicated through the sense organs.

Through the passage in the pineal gland, animal spirits allow the soul to picture a particular state of the body. The passage of spirits in the gland coincides with the transmission of information relating to bodily condition. Receiving this information leads the soul into a passionate situation that is always contingent and particular.

The qualitative, but symmetrical and corresponding leap between soul and body is defined as an association. The soul is passive and perceives its own emotional condition *corresponding* to a certain body structure[31].

The "I think", however, is not limited to passively recording changes in the body, but possesses the ability to exercise, through the gland, a direct action on the speed and direction of the spirits[32].

As already mentioned, Descartes places at the centre of his reflection the idea that the individual must become acquainted with nature by making a disciplined use of reason. The intellect has the ability to develop clear and distinct ideas, thus separating the true from the false. Will is the ultimate function of intellectual

30 Descartes, *The Passions of the Soul*, art. VII and art. XII, in *PW*, I, p. 330 and pp. 332-333; *AT*, XI, pp. 331 and p. 337.

31 Jean-Marie Beyssade defined emotional feeling as the "third primitive notion", intermediate between the physical symptoms of the body, the reflection of pure intellect and the action exercised by these as will. On this concept, to consider which Beyssade recalls Merlau-Ponty's idea of "embedded thought", Descartes in his latest work would try to construct a real science of man as a sort of "psychology." J.-M. Beyssade, "La Classification cartésienne des Passions", in *Histoire et Structure: à la mèmoire de Victor Goldschmidt*, dir. par J. Brunschwig, C. Imbert, A. Roger (Paris: Vrin, 1985), pp. 257-260.

32 Descartes, *The Passions of the Soul*, art. XXXII, in *PW*, I, p.340; *AT*, XI, pp. 352-353.

activity as it is the ability to distinguish from among different mental representations (imaginations, sensations, memories and clear and distinct ideas) those that reproduce the objective reality of nature in a realistic and adequate way.

The correct use of intellect and will allows us to control our passions and, consequently, to adopt functional behaviours for maintaining a condition of psycho-physical well-being and self-, moral and intellectual satisfaction.

The definition of this gnoseological model, from which a definite idea of nature and natural relationships derives, runs through Descartes's entire philosophical production in a coherent, constant way.

The *Rules for the Direction of the Mind* and the *Discourse on Method* define which characteristics must be proper to reasoning so that intellectual activity may leave behind prejudices, accumulated in the course of one's personal experience, to devote itself to the understanding of principles, values and methods of a new idea of knowing.

The *Metaphysical Meditations* lay down the gnoseological and ontological premises of the new idea of science.

The gnoseological scheme, adopted by the philosophy of the Schools and hegemonic until the mid-seventeenth century, are in a sense 'overturned'. While previously it was the objectivity of nature that was considered the foundation of truth and the stability of knowledge, in the Cartesian scheme, on the other hand, it is thought and the modalities through which it is exercised that assume the responsibility of distinguishing natural objectivity and the truth of representation.

To complete this picture, to the definition of which Descartes dedicates his life as a scholar, in the *Passions*, his last work before his death, he studies the possibility of applying the new philosophical approach to affects, a method of perception of reality which, unlike rational activity, is not voluntary. Mental activity is made up of heterogeneous functions. In some of them the mind remains passive, as it is markedly influenced by the impulses transmitted by the senses. Other representations, on the other hand, arise from the mind when it is able to think about nature independently. These clear and distinct ideas are true and always voluntary.

The *Metaphysical Meditations* clearly distinguish knowledge, which arises as a result of the encounter with the natural world, from voluntary and rational knowledge. Starting from the distinction between these two forms of mental activity, Descartes deduces the real distinction between *res cogitans* and *res extensa*. The trajectory of the reflections laid out in this work is all too well known. In the *First Meditation*, all natural knowledge is revoked in doubt, except for the activity of thinking when exercised in doubt. Subsequently, the distinction between *res cogitans* and *res extensa* would be sanctioned, inscribing the certainty of knowing in the absolute transcendentality of cogitative activity.

In the history of philosophy it is nothing new for intellectual knowledge to be considered superior to that of the senses arising from the immediate relationship with nature and matter.

With regard to a generic agreed preference for intellectual knowledge, however, Descartes places a "real difference" of an ontological nature between thought and extension. A qualitative distance is placed between the two substances, capable of justifying and "guaranteeing" the eminence of the spiritual condition with respect to the body (the latter already found in classical and medieval culture).

Unlike previous traditions, however, the originality of Cartesian philosophy consists in the fact that from such a model of eminence of the cognitive-spiritual element compared to the natural extension and the body there derives a conception of knowledge centred on the elaboration of processes of idealization and computation, aimed at producing predictions.

The body and the senses are the element of separation between the subject and the outside world, and the information they provide does not guarantee truthfulness. The certainty of human existence is placed in thinking activity alone. Starting with this certainty, the entire cognitive flow develops – according to a radial movement – which then identifies its basis in "pure" thinking activity.

Not only is the evidence of the existence of the ego based on the activity of thought, but the entire natural world can only be known through the objectification that is operated on it by the intellect. Only in thinking and in the production of representations can man achieve

adequate and satisfying natural knowledge. The truthfulness of sensitive knowledge can only be achieved at the end of the reflective path and, in particular, after having demonstrated the existence of God, also on the basis of the mental representation of divine perfections.

In the *cogito*, reality becomes representation, more or less voluntary, mediated by mental activity. The cessation of any possibility of an intrinsic relationship between matter and form derives from the real distinction of substances. It is not possible to produce a purification process of sensitive ideas aimed at purifying them of the "material shell" and freeing them from abstract purity. All ideas, if this is what we are talking about, are exclusive products of the intellect.

The real idea is the tool man possesses to relate to nature. The objective nature of ideas, as the only reliable tool making it possible able to tap into reality, causes the mind to establish a constructive relationship with the information coming from the senses, to the point of making it possible to implement forecasts. The activity of rationalization, insofar as it is endowed with the ability to develop representations and models through which to organize the knowledge of nature, assumes the function of a subject transcending the natural order:

> I now know that even bodies are not strictly perceived by the senses or the faculty of imma gination but by the intellect alone[33].

In the *Second Meditation* Descartes prepares a model of knowledge based on objectification, in which he clearly defines the separation between the self and the world.

The possibility of the falsification of knowledge coming from the senses, together with the foundation of the individual identity on "I think", makes it possible to establish a clear demarcation between nature and *cogito*. Nature can only be known through ideas. The material world remains external, separated from the thinking activity

33 Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, in *PW*, II, p. 22. Original Latin edition: "mihi nunc notum sit ipsamet corpora, non proprie a sensibus, vel ab imaginandi facultate, sed a solo intellectu percipi." *AT*, VII, p. 34

whose ability to objectify becomes the technique through which it is possible to know the world.

The description of the "piece of wax" is an example of how to understand the relationship between cognitive intentionality and natural reality. It remains amorphous in itself and continually elusive, and only the thinking activity may be able to define its extensive qualities.

Placing the truth integrally within knowledge, leaving matter and nature in an external and separate location, makes it possible to effect a real gnoseological revolution. Mental activity is no longer a natural product, but becomes a tool for classifying nature "confined" to an external and distant position.

In turn, the soul is not free from natural conditioning. External objects, learned through the senses, are at the origin of a series of sensitive representations in the mind. Among these, in addition to images arising from the senses, the soul also produces other mental representations different to clear and distinct ideas: memories, dreams, mental fantasies and passions. The latter – as will be seen in the following sections – are representations formed following the encounter between sensitivity and experience. They denote a mental affection strongly conditioned by the body and resulting from a particular natural and social positioning. Passions are not voluntary and as such do not possess the ability to adequately represent natural reality. However, affects significantly condition behaviour, and for this reason they are particularly relevant in determining the social relationship and qualities of the subjective perception of this condition.

3. *Forms of fear*

Probably on the basis of Ludovico Vives's approach in *De anima et vita*[34], Descartes, in his classification of the passions presented in *Les passions de l'âme*, proposes a clear simplification of the defining

34 G. Rodis-Lewis, "Introduction", in Descartes, *Les Passions de l'âme* (Paris: Vrin, 1991), pp. 24-29.

framework already in use in the scholastic environment. Six types of primitive passions are thus distinguished: Wonder, Love, Hate, Desire, Joy and Sadness, while "all the others," he writes in article LXIX, "are made up of some of these six, or else are types thereof".[35] For Descartes, the two passions that define the sphere of fear, namely apprehension (*Crainte*) and fear proper (*Peur*) are both particular declinations of desire[36]. Before verifying the differences between these two types of affect, it is therefore a question of confronting the Cartesian qualification of desire.

In article LXXXVI, desire is defined as "an agitation of the soul caused by the spirits, which disposes the soul to wish, in the future, for the things it represents to itself as agreeable."[37] Article LVII also identifies the close relationship between desire and future, since Descartes had specified that one always desires to either "we desire to acquire a good which we do not yet possess or to avoid an evil which we judge may occur. "[38]

Unlike Tommaso, who distinguished between two different types of desire (concupiscible and irascible), for Descartes, adopting a similar line to Hobbes, the nature of desire is always qualitatively the same and only a vectorial distinction makes it possible to distinguish between desires and aversions. Secondly, it should also

35 Descartes, *The Passions of the Soul*, art LXIX, in *PW,* I, p. 353. Original French edition: «et que toutes les autres sont composées de quelques unes de ces six, ou bien en sont des especes.» AT, vol. XI, p.380

36 Denis Kambouchner, *L'homme des passions: commentaires sur Descartes,* 2 vols (Paris, Albin Michel, 1995), vol. I, p. 180 stresses that apprehension is preliminary to fear to the extent that one cannot be afraid of something towards which one has not previously felt apprehension.

37 Descartes, *The Passions of the Soul,* art. LXXXVI, in *PW*, I, p. 358. Original French edition: "une agitation de l'ame, causée par les esprits, qui la dispose à vouloir pour l'avenir les choses qu'elle se represente estre convenables." *AT*, XI, p. 392.

38 Descartes, *The Passions of the Soul,* art. LVII, in *PW*, I, p. 350. Original French edition: "Car non seulement lors qu'on desire acquerir un bien qu'on n'a pas encore, ou bien eviter un mal qu'on juge pouvoir arriver, mais aussi lors qu'on ne souhaite que la conservation d'un bien, ou l'absence d'un mal: qui est tout ce à quoy se peut estendre cette passion: il est evident qu'elle regarde tousjours l'avenir." *AT*, XI, p. 375.

be noted that, differently from the anthropology of *Leviathan*, in which the *conatus* was defined in substantially passive and neutral terms, Cartesian desire (*Désir*) presents a substantially positive qualification that is anything but irrelevant. In fact, it is qualified as an intrinsic tendency, typical of any human being, in search of what appears to be convenient.

With respect to this positive qualification of desire, how are hope and apprehension defined? If the nature of desire is qualitatively homogeneous, the distinction between hope and apprehension, as well as between love and hate, is identified on the basis of the characteristics attributed by the intellect to the desired object and the objective conditions in which the desire is expressed. If I hope to enjoy a future good and I consider that the circumstances will be favourable to such fruition, then I will experience feelings of hope. If, on the other hand, I foresee having to deal with adverse circumstances, which make the possibility of success remote, then I will experience feelings of apprehension. In art. LVIII, Descartes wrote that "when we go beyond this and consider whether there is much or little prospect of our getting what we desire, then whatever points to the former excites hope in us, and whatever points to the latter excites anxiety (of which jealousy is one variety)."[39].

A similar argument can be made for an object that is despised and unwanted. If I consider future circumstances as favourable to the occurrence of evil, then I will feel apprehension, while if I think that future circumstances will be such as to avert any danger, I will nurture hope. Descartes refers to this in article LXXXVII, where, dealing with the decision to reduce the desire for good and the aversion to evil to a single drive, he writes: "I note only this difference, that the desire we have when we are led towards some good is accompanied by love, and then by hope and joy, whereas when we are led to get away from the evil opposed to this good, the

39 Descartes, *The Passions of the Soul*, art. LVIII, in *PW*, I, p. 351. Original French edition: "Mais quand on considere, outre cela, s'il y a beaucoup ou peu d'apparence qu'on obtiene ce qu'on desire, ce qui nous represente qu'il y en a beaucoup, excite en nous l'Esperance, & ce qui nous represente qu'il y en a peu, excite la Crainte, dont la Ialousie est une espece." *AT*, IX, p.375.

same desire is accompanied by hatred, anxiety and sadness (which causes us to judge the evil inimical to ourselves)."[40]

When he feels apprehension, man always accompanies his desire also with an evaluation of the objective condition in which the desire is expressed. The desire to avoid an evil, as well as to achieve a good, will always be more or less supported by the observation of the presence or absence of objective difficulties capable of hindering their eventual realization. For Descartes, apprehension is presented as a particular declination of desire that occurs when it is considered difficult to avoid an evil or achieve a good.

Going even more analytically into the Cartesian text it can be seen that, while from the purely theoretical point of view the apprehension of incurring evil is equal to the apprehension of not obtaining a good, it is quite significant of the substantially *positive* trait impressed by Descartes on his own notion of emotion to observe that both in the definition just cited (art. LXXXVII) and in article CLXV, once it is clear what is meant by hope and apprehension, the philosopher of passions drops any possible reference to aversion to a future evil, to concentrate exclusively on the qualification of desire as the fruition of good; almost as if to foreshadow an emotional background aimed at the pursuit of happiness, rather than worrying about avoiding sadness.

In addition to the definition of hope and apprehension, Descartes also deals with three other passions that complete the terminology of fear: cowardice (*Lascheté*), fright (*Espouvente*) and real fear (*Peur*).[41] Compared to apprehension (*Crainte*), whose characterizing elements are – as we have seen – desire combined with a certain idea of what might occur in the future, cowardice, fright and fear are three

40 Descartes, *The Passions of the Soul*, art. LXXXVII, in *PW*, I, p. 359. Original French edition: "I'y remarque seulement cette difference, que le Desir qu'on a, lors qu'on tend vers quelque bien, est accompagné d'Amour, et en suite d'Esperance et de Ioye; au lieu que le mesme Desir, lors qu'on tend à s'éloigner du mal contraire à ce bien, est accompagné de Haine, de Crainte & de Tristesse: ce qui est cause qu'on le juge contraire à soy mesme." *AT,* XI, p. 393.

41 In *Les Passions*, Descartes deals with the forms of fear first in article CLXV and then in articles CLXXIV, CLXXV and CLXXVI..

affective conditions in which the time gap separating the present from the occurrence of the event is greatly reduced. The term *peur*, in particular, is used to describe disorientation, mental confusion and the ensuing physical paralysis, resulting from the perception of a dangerous condition. Characterized by particularly violent but rather rare symptoms, *peur* is used to define that emotional state intermediate between apprehension and fright, the latter understood as the kind of fear that catches us by surprise. In paragraphs XXXV and XXXVI, Descartes illustrates an example that helps us understand the relationship between these different emotional states. Immediately after arguing about the relationship between soul and body and, in particular, after dwelling on the relative functions performed by the pineal gland, the perception that occurs when a frightening animal runs in our direction is described.

> If, in addition, this shape is very strange and terrifying - that is, if it has a close relation to things which have previously been harmful to the body - this arouses the passion of anxiety in the soul, and then that of courage or perhaps fear and terror, depending upon the particular temperament of the body or the strength of the soul, and upon whether we have protected ourselves previously by defence or by flight against the harmful things to which the present impression is related.[42]

Anxiety, fear and terror follow each other in rapid succession as the danger becomes more and more imminent, thus generating increasingly intense bodily reactions[43]. All three of these affective conditions are opposed to courage, which consists in the ability to

42 Descartes, *The Passions of the Soul*, art. XXXVI, in *PW*, I, p. 342. Original French edition: "Et outre cela, si cette figure est fort estrange & fort effroyable, c'est à dire, si elle a beaucoup de raport avec les choses qui ont esté auparavant nuisibles au corps, cela excite en l'ame la passion de la crainte, & en suite celle de la hardiesse, ou bien celle de la peur & de l'espouvante, selon le divers temperament du corps, ou la force de l'ame, & selon qu'on s'est auparavant garenti, par la defense ou par la fuite, contre les choses nuisibles ausquelles l'impression presente a du raport." *AT*, XI, p. 356.

43 On the body in Cartesian philosophy and in particular with regard to its function in the dynamics of passion, see also M. Spallanzani, "Passioni dell'anima, espressioni del corpo. Note su Descartes e Le Brun", in

overcome apprehension, or to implement a series of actions capable of modifying a situation in which the impossibility of realizing a desire is felt, or the possibility of suffering damage is considered highly probable. To carry out a courageous action, it is necessary to feel hope rather than apprehension. Hope, in fact, nourishes courage by pushing to action; vice versa, apprehension inhibits it. While courage allows us to face difficulties or situations of danger, cowardice and fear are emotions that fuel the inability to react to difficulties.

> Timidity is directly opposed to courage. lt is a listlessness or coldness which prevents the soul from bringing itself to carry out the tasks which it would perform if it were free from this passion. And fear or terror, which is opposed to boldness, is not only a coldness, but also a disturbance and astonishment of the soul which deprives it of the power to resist the evils which it thinks lie close at hand. [44]

After providing the definition (art. CLXXIV), in the next two articles (CLXXIV and CLXXIVI), Descartes wonders about the possible usefulness of cowardice and fear. If they are included in the spectrum of human affects, it must be assumed that they perform some function. Cowardice is recognized as having a protective role with respect to dangerous situations. For fear and fright, on the other hand, no use, either private or social is given. "In the case of fear or terror," writes Descartes in article CLXXVI, "I do not see that it can ever be praiseworthy or useful."[45].

Atlante delle passioni, a cura di S. Moravia (Bari: Laterza 1993), pp. 47-77.

44 Descartes, *The Passions of the Soul*, art. CLXXIV in *PW*, I, p. 392. Original French edition: "La Lascheté est directement opposée au Courage, & c'est une langueur ou froideur, qui empesche l'ame de se porter à l'execution des choses qu'elle feroit, si elle estoit exempte de cette Passion. Et la Peur ou l'Espouvante, qui est contraire à la Hardiesse, n'est pas seulement une froideur, mais aussi un trouble & un estonnement de l'ame, qui luy oste le pouvoir de resister aux maux qu'elle pense estre proches". *AT*, XI, p. 462.

45 Descartes, *The Passions of Soul*, art. CLXXVI, in *PW*, I, p. 392. Original French edition: "Pour ce qui est de la Peur ou de l'Espouvante, je ne voy point qu'elle puisse jamais estre loüable ny utile. " *AT*, XI, p. 463.

After fear and cowardice, the last emotional condition included in this constellation is horror, defined in article LXXXV. Unlike cowardice and fear, which are considered specifications of apprehension, with which, moreover, they share a series of physical symptoms, horror is a specification of hatred. The derivation from this feeling means that horror is a particularly violent affective condition, capable of producing total immobility in man and the inhibition of any ability to react. A real condition of panic. Horror is not triggered by an immediate condition of danger but is, rather, the reaction to an object, an action or a person, which is considered evil.

> Two kinds of hatred arise in the same way, one relating to evil things and the other to things that are ugly; and the latter may be called 'repulsion' or 'aversion', so as to set it apart. [46]

The encounter with wickedness is a harbinger of hatred because it brings to mind that condition of extreme danger which is imminent death. In article LXXXIX, we read that:

> On the one hand, repulsion is ordained by nature to represent to the soul a sudden and unexpected death. Thus, although it is sometimes merely the touch of an earthworm, the sound of a rustling leaf, or our shadow that gives rise to repulsion, we feel at once as much emotion as if we had experienced a threat of certain death. This produces a sudden agitation which leads the soul to do its utmost to avoid so manifest an evil. It is this kind of desire that we commonly call 'avoidance' or 'aversion'[47].

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46 Descartes, *The Passions of Soul*, art. LXXXV, in *PW*, I, p.358. Original French edition: "Et de là naissent en mesme façon deux especes de Haine, l'une desquelles se rapporte aux choses mauvaises, l'autre à celles qui sont laides; & cete derniere peut estre appellée Horreur, ou Aversion, affin de la distinguer." *AT*, XI, p. 392.

47 Descartes, *The Passions of Soul*, art. LXXXIX, in *PW*, I, p. 360. Original French edition: "A sçavoir: l'Horreur est instituée de la Nature pour representer à l'ame une mort subite & inopinée: en sorte que, bien que ce ne soit quelquefois que l'attouchement d'un vermisseau, ou le bruit d'une feüill tremblante, ou son ombre, qui fait avoir de l'Horreur, on sent d'abord autant d'emotion, que si un peril de mort tres-evident s'offroit aux sens. Ce qui fait subitement naistre l'agitation qui porte l'ame à

Repulsion is a feeling whose frequency and intensity are high in subjects particularly affected by the fear of death. This kind of men suffer to such an extent that even objects and noises, at least commonly considered to be of a completely different nature, have the ability to suggest the thought of death to such minds, even with a certain intensity.

4. *Reason and fear*

Once the forms in which apprehension, fear and horror are presented in the Cartesian text have been traced, it is advisable to check what indications the author offers regarding the chances of moderating these kinds of affects. It is important to state that man is not always able to combat apprehension and fear. In some circumstances, certain movements of the spirits, capable of triggering these emotions, are almost inevitably produced in the body. As in the case of the example mentioned in the aforementioned paragraphs XXXV and XXXVI, when we see an animal running towards us at full speed, we can hardly prevent ourselves from feeling fear. Equally undeniable is the fact that fear does not manifest itself to everyone in the same way. In article XXIX, Descartes writes that:

> The same impression which the presence of a terrifying object forms on the gland, and which causes fear in some people, may excite courage and boldness in others. The reason for this is that brains are not all constituted in the same way. Thus the very same movement of the gland which in some excites fear, in others causes the spirits to enter the pores of the brain which direct them partly into nerves which serve to move the hands in self-defence and partly into those which agitate the blood and drive it towards the heart in the manner required to produce spirits appropriate for continuing this defence and for maintaining the will to do so[48].

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employer toutes ses forces pour eviter un mal si present. Et c'est cete espece de Desir, qu'on appelle communement la Fuite ou l'Aversion." *AT*, XI, p. 360.

48 Descartes, *The Passions of the Soul*, art. XXXIX, in *PW*, I, p. 343. Original French edition: "La mesme impression que la presence d'un objet

The passionate condition of each one of us changes in relation to body structure and temperament, but, above all, it is the habits, to which the mind and body are trained that determine the ways one reacts to passions.

Descartes identifies two available avenues to strengthen the ability to control fear and apprehension. In the first place, it is possible to contain these passions by consciously resorting to an opposing feeling. For example, reacting to fear by recalling hopes capable of limiting despair and panic to the spirit. This appeal to hope can only be of a "purely" instinctual character, since it consists in the "simple" conflict between passion and passion. This is the case cited in article XLVIII, in which, referring to a typical case of the "chivalrous" moral code, fear is judged in relation to infamy and ambition. This article reads:

> Thus, when fear represents death as an extreme evil which can be avoided only by flight, while ambition on the other band depicts the dishonour of flight as an evil worse than death, these two passions jostle the will in opposite ways; and since the will obeys first the one and then the other, it is continually opposed to itself, and so it renders the soul enslaved and miserable[49].

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effroyable fait sur la glande, et qui cause la peur en quelques hommes, peut exciter en d'autres le courage et la hardiesse: dont la raison est que tous les cerveaux ne sont pas disposez en mesme façon; et que le mesme mouvement de la glande, qui en quelques uns excite la peur, fait dans les autres que les esprits entrent dans les pores du cerveau, qui les conduisent, partie dans les nerfs qui servent à remuër les mains pour se defendre, et partie en ceux qui agitent et poussent le sang vers le cœur, en la façon qui est requise pour produire des esprits propres à continuër cette defence, et en retenir la volonté." *AT*, XI, pp. 358-359. On this topic cf.:F. Bonicalzi, *Passioni della Scienza. Descartes e la nascita della psicologia*, (Milano: Jaca Book, 1990), pp. 31-33.

49 Descartes, *The Passions of the Soul,* art. XLVIII, in *PW*, I, p. 347. Original French Edition: "Ainsi lors que la peur represente la mort comme un mal extreme, et qui ne peut estre evité que par la fuite, si l'ambition, d'autre costé, represente l'infamie de cette fuite, comme un mal pire que la mort: ces deux passions agitent diversement la volonté, laquelle obeïssant tantost à l'une, tantost à l'autre, s'oppose continuellement à soy mesme, et ainsi rend l'ame esclave et malheureuse". *AT*, XI, p. 367.

Although it can be effective, in some circumstances, to respond to passion with passion, this type of defence represents an involuntary reaction and, as such, is always inevitably characterized by a certain degree of uncertainty. For this reason, not only can it not be a defence strategy that can be used constantly, but it is completely ineffective for the purpose of increasing the ability to control and self-awareness.

The alternative to this kind of reaction is to use the will as a direct tool for controlling emotional impetus. Fear, like any passion, as a condition of mental passivity, can be regulated by the direct action of the will, which is thus called in to perform the function of self-control. The will, however, cannot block or modify the passion alone but, assisted by a correct use of *attention*, must always join forces with reason. Resorting to rationality means knowing how to use the strategic capacity of knowledge in order to evaluate situations which are potentially harbingers of apprehensions and, in this way, to avoid danger; or, if this is unavoidable, to take the necessary countermeasures to remain affected, or worse damaged, as little as possible, for example by postponing the moment of taking action. In this regard, in article CCXI, entitled *A general remedy against the passions*, we read:

> When the passion urges us to pursue ends whose attainment involves some delay, we must refrain from making any immediate judgement about them, and distract ourselves by other thoughts until time and repose have completely calmed the disturbance in our blood. [50]

Thus, it will be possible to prepare a reaction that is as adequate as possible to the consequences of the action one intends to undertake: "when it impels us to actions which require an immediate decision," continues Descartes, "the will must devote itself mainly

50 Descartes, *The Passions of the Soul*, art. CCXI, in *PW*, I, p. 403. Original French edition: "Et lors que la Passion ne persuade que des choses dont l'execution souffre quelque delay, il faut s'abstenir d'en porter sur l'heure aucun jugement, et se divertir par d'autres pensées, jusques à ce que le temps & le repos aient entierement appaisé l'emotion qui est dans le sang". *AT*, XI, p. 487.

to considering and following reasons which are opposed to those presented by the passion, even if they appear less strong."[51]

Through a correct use of reason and a balanced combination with the will, it is therefore possible to achieve greater self-awareness and a more stable control of passions. Although the force of the passions often remains overwhelming, reason and will are functions predisposed by nature to control the impulses of the instincts. This control can be implemented through the ability to separate an emotion from its consequences. For this to happen it is necessary to practice separating the movements of blood and spirits from the thoughts to which they are usually linked.

While anticipatory reflection is a valid strategy to control passions, however, to anticipate them, a second important ally of reason is essential: habit. Without a life organized according to rules of behaviour capable of preserving the body and mind from tumultuous passions, it is impossible for the will to avail itself of a correct use of rationality. In addition to the different physical constitution and the knowledge that can facilitate individual foresight, it is the habits, first of all that of reflection, that differentiate the ways of responding to passionate input. Character, shaped by the different experiences lived, confer on each person particular ways of reacting. Again in art. CCXI, Descartes writes that:

> That is, when they feel themselves in the grip of fear they will try to turn their mind from consideration of the danger by thinking about the reasons why there is much more security and honour in resistance than in flight[52].

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51 Descartes, *The Passions of the Soul*, art. CCXI, in *PW*, I, p. 403. Original French edition "Et en fin lors qu'elle incite à des actions touchant lesquelles il est necessaire qu'on prene resolution sur le champ, il faut que la volonté se porte principalement à considerer et à suivre les raisons qui sont contraires à celles que la Passion represente, encore qu'elles paroissent moins fortes". *AT*, XI, p. 487.

52 Descartes, *The Passions of the Soul*, art. CCXI, in *PW*, I, p. 404. Original French Edition: "c'est que, lors qu'ils se sentiront saisis de la Peur, ils tascheront à detourner leur pensée de la consideration du danger, en se representant les raisons pour lesquelles il y a beaucoup plus de seureté et plus d'honneur, en la resistance qu'en la fuite." *AT,* I, p. 487.

The physiological reason why habit turns out to be a decisive characteristic for the individual qualification of passion, is due to the fact that the more animal spirits pass through certain conduits, rather than others, the more they will be facilitated to repeat the same movement, experiencing less friction in those bodily places and, consequently, easier transition[53]. Thus, the rational management of affects can be consolidated only if it is used frequently[54].

As far as concerns the possibility of individually controlling certain emotional states, Descartes represents an alternative to the Hobbesian solution. The *Treatise on the Passions* proposes a model of government of the passions whose possibility is denied in *Leviathan*. For the English philosopher, man is dominated by uncontrollable passions which, inevitably, push him into conflict. For Descartes, however, it is possible to develop a relationship between intentions, passions and actions functional to the harmonization of personal satisfaction and social peace. While for Hobbes passions dominate reflection and individual action, Descartes, on the other hand, believes that an emotional life is possible which, even regardless of external conditions, can still become satisfying. Hobbes's political thought was consistent with an anthropological model in which desire is placed at the centre of emotional production and theoretical activity is interpreted exclusively as an abstractive function of refinement of the desiring drive. Conversely, the Cartesian model draws from the distinction between *res cogitans* and *res extensa* a clear demarcation between emotionality and the individual possibility of distinction.

On habit in Descartes see: J. M. Gabaude, *Liberté et raison: La liberté cartésienne et sa réfraction chez Spinoza et chez Leibniz,* 3 vols, (Toulouse: Association des publications de la Faculté des Lettres et Sciences humaines de Toulouse, 1970), vol. 1, pp. 240-247 and Bonicalzi, *Passioni della Scienza*, pp. 44-49.

53 On the physiology of animal spirits see: M. Di Marco, "Spiriti animali e meccanicismo fisiologico in Descartes", *Physis*, XIII, 1971, 1, pp. 21-70.

54 On the notion of use of the self in Descartes's philosophy and on the close relationship between the psychosomatic condition of the individual and the possibilities available to him to control passions, see: D. Des Chenes, "Using the Passions", in M. Pickavé and L. Shapiro, *Emotion and Cognitive Life in Medieval and Early Modern Philosophy*, (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2012), pp. 176-192.

These differences in the framework of human nature also prelude a different conception and definition of the relationship between the individual, society and politics. In the Cartesian view, the "war of all against all" leaves room for a less conflictual idea of society, at least apparently. This different tone in the way of portraying interpersonal relationships determines a different assessment of the limits of power. While Hobbes entrusts the Leviathan function with the complete political control of passions, in Descartes the idea emerges that political power should not enjoy an unlimited right to intervene in individual affairs. Hobbes considers it impossible to effectively manage affects, personally, by means of the tools of rationality and will. Descartes responds to this insufficiency by developing a model of control which still operates from the "outside", but is private and not political.

Based on an anthropological framework in which man is represented as weak in the face of the strength of his passions, Hobbes rules out the hypothesis of a rational and personal 'internal government' of passions. While maintaining the principle that passions must be regulated and managed by a higher body in order to obtain peace, however, the English author attributes this instance not to individual capacity, but to *Leviathan*, the artificial individual, a figure that is not human, but an impersonal and wholly political function. Descartes, on the other hand, thinks about the government of passions by setting up a model aimed at personal self-control.

By relating Cartesian anthropology and the idea of social relationship arising from it to the same aspects already studied in *Leviathan*, the following pages do not intend to elaborate an unverifiable and implicit Cartesian political theory, but to try to grasp the political meaning of the theoretical revolution elaborated by Descartes, in particular with regard to the relationship between the genetic processes of formation of subjectivity and the personal use of passions.

5. *Generosity and political life*

Once the analysis of the Cartesian meaning of fear and apprehension has been completed, after having taken into consideration the possibilities and modalities of governing the passions, the time has come to ask ourselves what social behaviour derives from that model of personal control, based on rationality, balanced use of will and healthy habits[55]. We will firstly look at the way in which Descartes presents the social relations of the generous man and, only subsequently, at the relationship of subordination with the established power. It is immediately necessary to clarify that, unlike Hobbes, fear is not a particularly significant feeling, neither to explain what rationality is immanent in social relations, nor to justify the need to subordinate oneself to the established power[56]. For Descartes, both establishing a relationship of peace and not war with others, as well as recognizing the need to obey the sovereign and the laws, are achievements which man can be induced to pursue more by the desire to improve his personal condition than from the fear of avoiding some disadvantage.

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55 On the political meaning of the model of rational government of the passions elaborated by Descartes in *The Passions* and on the proximity of this model to neo-Stoicism, see V. Kahn, "Happy Tears. Baroque politics in Descartes's Passions de l'âme", in *Politics and the Passions, 1500-1850,* ed. by V. Kahn, N. Saccamano, D. Coli (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton UP, 2006), pp. 93-110.

56 The literature on fear as a political passion in Hobbes is extensive, and I will limit myself to mentioning among the most recent works: R. Santi, "Metus Revealed. Hobbes on Fear", *Agathos. An International Review of the Humanities and Social Sciences*, II, (2011), 2, pp. 67-80. M. Jakonen, "Thomas Hobbes on Fear, Mimesis, Aisthesis and Politics", *Distinktion. Journal of Social Theory*, XII, 2011, 2, pp. 157-176; C. S. McClure, "Hell and Anxiety in Hobbes's *Leviathan*", *The Review of Politics*, LXXIII, 2011, 1, pp. 1-27; P. Dockès. "Hobbes, la peur et le lien social", in *Libertés et libéralismes: formation et circulation des concepts*, sous la direction J.L. Fournel and J.J.Potier (Lyon: ENS éd., 2012), pp.45-66; C. Ginzburg, "Rileggere Hobbes oggi", in *Paura, reverenza, terrore* (Milano, Adelphi, 2015), pp. 51-80; and D. D'Andrea, "Curiosità, linguaggio e ansia. L'uomo del Leviatano tra differenza antropologica e forme di soggettività", *dianoia. Rivista di filosofia*, XXV, 2020, 30, pp. 45-65.

The generous man knows, one reads in article CLIII, "that nothing truly belongs to him but this freedom to dispose his volitions"[57].

It is precisely this awareness that leads him to adopt a behaviour that is not hostile but willing to appreciate the qualities of others. When one's desire is moderate and guided by reason, it is possible to find in the relationship with others the opportunity to fulfil oneself, thus establishing virtuous relationships, capable of increasing *self-love*[58].

First of all, generous men never take an overly judgmental attitude towards others, but tend to be understanding. They:

> That is why such people never have contempt for anyone. Although they often see that others do wrong in ways that show up their weakness, they are nevertheless more inclined to excuse than to blame them and to regard such wrong-doing as due rather to lack of knowledge than to Lack of a virtuous will.[59]

This attitude of openness is also combined with the tendency to adapt one's affection to the degree of perfection attributed to other entities. In particular, man will feel affection towards what he judges to be inferior, such as animals, friendship towards his fellowmen and devotion to God. Again in Art. CLIV, Descartes writes

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57 Descartes, *The Passions of the Soul,* art. CLIII, in *PW*, I, p.384. Original French Edition: "qu'il connoist qu'il n'y a rien qui veritablement luy appartiene que cette libre disposition de ses volontez". *AT*, XI, p. 446. On Generosity in Descartes see: J. Chantal, "La gratitudine in Descartes e in Spinoza"*,* in *Rivista di filosofia neoscolastica*, CXII, 2020, 2, pp. 513-524.

58 On the ethical value of some passions, including generosity, see: M.J. Kisner, "Descartes on the Ethical Reliability of the Passions. A Morean Reading", *Oxford Studies in Early Modern Philosophy*, 8, 2018, pp. 39-67.

59 Descartes, *The Passions of the Soul,* art. CLIV, in *PW*, I, p.384. Original French Edition: "C'est pourquoy ils ne mesprisent jamais personne; et bien qu'ils voyent souvent que les autres commettent des fautes, qui font paroistre leur foiblesse, ils sont toutefois plus enclins à les excuser qu'à les blasmer, et à croire que c'est plustost par manque de connoissance, que par manque de bonne volonté, qu'ils les commettent." *AT*, XI, p.446.

> For the more noble and generous our soul is, the more we are inclined to render to each person that which belongs to him; thus, not only do we have a very deep humility before God, but also we are not reluctant to render to each person all the honour and respect due to him according to his position and authority in the world, and we have contempt solely for vices[60].

In Descartes's elaboration both the natural order and the social hierarchy are based on the degree of freedom available to each living being.

Against the backdrop of this qualification of individual satisfaction, the vision of political power also takes shape. As we have already seen, among Descartes's numerous writings, direct references to political issues are on the whole rather limited, but nevertheless precious. In particular, in the treatise on the passions, some terms, although implicit, are useful for understanding the relationship between the individual's actions in society and feelings of generosity and self-satisfaction.

Similarly to what is said about the relationship with others, the relationship with power must always be regulated in function of personal advantage. In the vision of society proposed by Descartes, the idea of self is always defined in the context of the private sphere. It is personal ambitions and individual activities that affect the ways in which the individual must behave towards the established power. In particular, at the beginning of this paper, to introduce the problem of the relationship between Descartes and power, we mentioned the third part of the *Discours de la Méthode*, in which free scientific research is judged to be the most rewarding activity (here Descartes's reference to his own life is evident). In order to obtain the maximum degree of freedom achievable in the private sphere, the man of science – but this attitude can be extended to any

60 Descartes, *The Passions of the Soul,* art. CLXIV, in *PW*, I, pp. 388-389. Original French edition: "Car d'autant qu'on a l'ame plus noble et plus genereuse, d'autant a t'on plus d'inclination à rendre à chacun ce qui luy appartient; et ainsi on n'a pas seulement une tres-profonde Humilité au regard de Dieu, mais aussi on rend sans repugnance tout l'Honneur et le Respect qui est deu aux hommes, à chacun selon le rang et l'autorité qu'il a dans le monde, et on ne mesprise rien que les vices." AT, XI, pp. 455-456.

free professional activity – must avoid any possible conflict with the established power, be it academic, ecclesiastical or civil.

The relationship with the established power is conceived as exclusively aimed at obtaining protection, in order to find oneself in a position to carry out one's private activity in the best possible way. There is therefore no universally "right" way of behaving towards the sovereign and the laws, but political choices must always be adopted in the light of the purposes that each intends to pursue in his own individual sphere. For this reason, the "provisionality" exhibited in the pages of the *Discours* is anything but destined to be replaced with rigid ethical rules of behaviour, to be adopted even if faced with an unshakeable power, such as sovereign power, whose immutability and rigidity are analogous to the necessity that governs the natural world[61].

It is not in the battle against power to change existing and traditionally recognized laws that man is called to realize his value. The individual relationship with power assumes, almost by definition, a provisional nature. In the course of any life, "knowing how to relate to power" will mean adopting the continuous adjustments necessary for the pursuit of one's individual goals. While on the one hand the man of science, engaged in his own research activity, is called upon at all times to consent to nothing other than what, after careful examination, may appear evident to him, on the contrary, in public life, and in particular towards sovereign power, that same man, in order to see his own private freedom guaranteed, must, on the other hand, assume a more casual attitude and be more willing to obey.

While the objective vision of the relationships of determination that distinguish personal nature can be individually conquered with the weapons of correct reasoning alone, thus allowing government of the passions, on the contrary, it is much more difficult to actively affect the consolidated structures of powers and traditions. Obedience

61 On provisional morality in the face of power and on the analogy between political absolutism and natural necessity, see: A. Negri, *Descartes politico o della ragionevole ideologia* (Milano: Feltrinelli, 1970), p.113-115. On the political significance of the Cartesian philosophy of the passions, see also D. Komesnik-Antoine, *Descartes. Une politique des passions* (Paris: PUF, 2011).

is configured as a "de facto truth", having force only as long as power gives it force. In conclusion, we can see that in Descartes's thought, there is both unscrupulousness in wanting to revolutionize the principles of science and metaphysics, and, on the other hand, it seems clear, a decision to reject any type of dispute with regard to political power, especially if conducted with the weapons of disobedience and rejection.

4.
FEAR, TIME AND REASON IN SPINOZA'S ETHICS

1. *The grammar of passions in Ethics: conatus and law of nature*

To understand the salient features of the Spinozian theory of passions and, consequently, the discussion of fear, it is necessary, as was done for Hobbes, to start with "desire". In Spinozian terms: *conatus*.

Defined in physical terms as a determined amount of movement and stillness, in *Ethics* (as in *Leviathan*), it constitutes the root of all passions. Compared to the Hobbesian approach, what differentiates Spinoza's position is rather the metaphysical framework, more articulated and complex, from which this force is deduced. In the first part of *Ethics*, starting with the definition of *causa sui*, Spinoza defines the totality of being as substance, meaning with it the perfect coincidence of infinite essences and existences, which, in Spinoza's vision, coincide perfectly. Substance has been defined as eternal, infinite and the cause of itself. It is described as an infinite productive movement of finite and determined beings with respect to which it also places itself in the position of efficient and immanent cause. The attribution of self-causality to the substantial being and the qualification of divine causality through the properties of efficiency and immanence form a framework of the natural totality such that it is presented as being continuously and eternally productive of "reality"[1].

Like all the remaining parts of nature, man too is a particular,

1 *E* I, def. I, Prop. XVI, XVII and XVIII. The abbreviations of the Spinoza's works are listed below: *E* = *Ethica*; *TTP* = *Tractatus theologico-politicus*; *TP* = *Tractatus Politicus*; For quotes from Ethics: prop. = propositio; dem. = demonstratio; schol. = scholium; coroll. = corollarium; def. =

determined effect of this productive being, in whose nature he participates through the attributes of thought and extension. As is known, unlike Descartes, Spinoza does not distinguish the natural being into extended substance and thinking substance, and does not posit a real difference, but only an attributive one, between mind and body. The mind and the human body are *modes* of the same substance. For this reason, the mind is defined as the idea of the body, while the body is the objective content of that idea which is the mind[2].

The substance in its movement of self-causation transmits to the bodies a certain amount of its own infinite power that is applied and declined in a singular way as a force aimed at persistence and the increase of its being. This means that every part of nature (in Spinoza's terms, "every finite mode" of substance) distinguishes its essence by virtue of a determined, but continually changing degree of self-conserving effort, called *conatus*. The *conatus* is a self-conserving force that expresses itself in a determined relationship of movement and stillness. This relationship consists of an energy that always tends, albeit in changing circumstances, towards self-affirmation. As a persevering force, the *conatus* acts as a pure movement without implying contradiction. However, nature is a complex network of bodies and minds, each with its own self-preserving effort. This means that the infinite movement in which every individual effort is distinguished can maintain its inertial tendency until it encounters other forces capable of modifying its trajectory and intensity.

In *Ethics*, the concept of *conatus* is defined between the fourth and eighth propositions of the third part. The first proposition denies the possibility for any mode to present itself with an inherently contradictory nature:

> Things are of a contrary nature, i.e., cannot be in the same subject, insofar as one can destroy the other[3].

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definitio; ax. = axioma; post. = postulatum; lem. = lemma; aff. def. = affectum definitio; praef. = praefatio; app. = appendix.

2 *E* II, Prop. XIII.

3 *E* III, prop. V, in *CW*, Spinoza, *Collected Works*, edited and translated by Edwin Curley, Complete Digital Edition, 2 vols, (Princeton, Princeton

The self-caused totality declines with respect to the singular mode as the impossibility of naturally tending towards self-destruction. In the next proposition this negative definition is couched in positive, affirmative terms.

> Each thing, as far as it can by its own power, strives to persevere in its being. [4]

The concept of *conatus* originates from substance's ability to be the cause of itself, and this self-causality proper to totality also defines the essence of each mode that participates in the being of the substance as its own effect[5]. *Conatus* had been defined by Hobbes as a simple abstraction with respect to matter which, through this concept, was resolved into its elementary components of stillness and movement. Even in the definition of *Ethics*, the *conatus* is presented as a relationship of movement and stillness. The deduction, however, based on infinite substantial unity gives the Spinozian concept a less neutral and more productive meaning, both from a quantitative and qualitative point of view. The real is produced in infinite forms: in thoughts, bodies and in a multiplicity of other ways that man does not know. Each body defines its essence as perseverance in being. Through this effort the body participates and realizes, as a part, the substance which, in turn, is the totality of being[6].

If Spinoza's concept of *conatus* resembles Hobbes's definition on

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University Press, 1985), I, p. 710. (From here on abbreviated to *CW*, followed by the roman numeral of volume and arabic page number). Original Latin Edition: "Res eatenus contrariæ sunt naturæ, hoc est, eatenus in eodem subjecto esse nequeunt, quatenus una alteram potest destruere." In Spinoza*, Opera,* ed. by C. Gebhardt, 4 vols (Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1925)*,* II, p. 145. (From here on abbreviated to *G*, followed by the roman numeral of volume and arabic page number).

4 *E* III, prop. VI, *CW,* I, p. 710. Original Latin edition: "Unaquæque res, quantum in se est, in suo esse perseverare conatur". *G*, II, p. 146.

5 *E* III, prop. VII, *CW*, I, p.710: "The striving by which each thing strives to persevere in its being is nothing but the actual essence of the thing". Original Latin edition: "Conatus, quo unaquæque res in suo esse perseverare conatur, nihil est præter ipsius rei actualem essentiam". *G,* II, p. 146.

6 On the relationship between essence and substance, see R. Bordoli, *Baruch Spinoza: etica e ontologia. Note sulle nozioni di sostanza, di*

the physical level, on the other hand, it shares with Descartes's desire the same qualitative matrix, in that it implies the notions of persistence and resistance to dispersion. Each part of nature defines its essence as the desire to be, as much as possible, an expression of the infinite quality and quantity of nature. For this reason we can affirm that an element of positive reality absent, or deliberately denied, in Hobbes's definition persists in Spinoza's concept of *conatus*. Conflict, resistance opposed by the interests of others, but also the possibility of meeting one's neighbour to establish relationships of unity and friendship by sharing common perspectives and goals, are characteristics that emerge once one passes from the definition of the single *conatus* to observe substantial unity as a set of multiple modes. The amount of movement that distinguishes the essence of the body is basically infinite. However, each *conatus* enters into a relationship with other natural individualities which, in turn, can facilitate or hinder their existential trajectory. Although born as a quantity of energy tending to infinity, each mode declines its essence in the "encounter-clash" with other movements that also insist on persistence. Being part of a multiplicity of relationships and a succession of encounters, which can be vectorially contrary or favourable, determine the nature of each finite entity. Once described from the internal point of view as conative perseverance, the substance ceases to be presented in *Ethics* as a unitary and homogeneous explication of power, and becomes, rather, the scenario of infinite contradictions and conflicts.

The single axiom of the fourth part provides the logical and ontological condition underlying this scheme:

> There is no singular thing in nature than which there is not another more powerful and stronger. Whatever one is given, there is another more powerful by which the first can be destroyed. [7]

In this way, the deductive logical support necessary to represent

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*essenza e di esistenza nell'*Ethica (Milano, Edizioni Angelo Guerini, 1996).

7 *E* IV, *ax*., *CW*, I, p. 771. Original Latin edition: "Nulla res singularis in rerum natura datur, qua potentior, & fortior non detur alia. Sed quacunque data datur alia potentior, a qua illa data potest destrui". *G*, II, p. 210.

the natural being as a horizon of absolute precariousness and conflict is provided. In this way, the trend, introduced in the third part of the *Ethics*, is amplified, consisting in the transformation of the modal horizon into a place of permanent and reciprocal struggle. The axiom describes first of all a law ("There is no singular thing in nature than which there is not another more powerful and stronger.") which is subsequently specified as a heterogeneous field of reciprocal possibilities (" Whatever one is given, there is another more powerful by which the first can be destroyed."). This opens up a scenario of infinite, possible clashes with unpredictable outcomes, albeit always governed by necessary laws.

Similarly to Hobbes's state of nature, also the natural relationships described in the *Ethics*, within which human nature with its passions will take shape, are presented as a war of all against all. Compared to Hobbes, Spinoza accentuates the natural character of this conflict, attributing the main reason not to the passionate conformation, but to the fact that any individuality is always constituted as a determined relationship of movement and stillness. Natured nature is a system of forces placed in a relation of reciprocity. What constitutes the essence of every being is none other than the force with which it perseveres in existence and is determined at every moment in the relationship with the neighbouring parts of nature[8]. Man too, as a mode of substance, formed by matter and extension, forms his own essence on the basis of relationships, natural or social, maintained with what is different from himself. Thus we find the same logic whereby each body in nature deviates its own trajectory as a consequence of the obstacles encountered in the course of its movement.

That is, once the picture widens from the individual to the set of relationships, the *conatus* is no longer conceived as a simple effort to persevere in being. It is understood as *energy* that opposes everything that tries to modify it and tends to unite with the modes with respect to which it is in a vectorially homogeneous position. In this way it

8 The dual aspect, internal, as an effort to persevere in existence, and external, as a continuous redefinition in relations with other modes, characterizing the essence of the *conatus*, is discussed by F. Zourabichvili, *Spinoza, une physique de la pensée*, (Paris: PUF, 2002), pp. 106-107.

becomes one force among many: indifferent and neutral in itself, condescending to what is favourable to it and contrary to what hinders it. Each mode is the expression of a determined energy and, as such, is induced to conflict, or to unite, with the other modes depending on whether these oppose its expressive capacity or strengthen its intensity, sharing the same vector direction. Depending on whether it is a predicate of the mind or of the body, the *conatus* is referred to in two different ways. If the self-preserving force is referred to the body, it will be called *appetitus*, while if it is attributed to the mind it will be called *cupiditas*.

If we pass from the natural world to the observation of the human world, applying the same logic, it is clear that social relations form the affects, which change in each individual and take on ever new traits according to the conative variations of the body and of the mind. Like any living being, man also distinguishes his essence as a *conatus*. If this *conatus* encounters movements with similar purposes and intentions, this relationship will result in an increase and, consequently, an affect or passion of joy will be produced:

> By Joy, therefore, I shall understand in what follows that passion by which the Mind passes to a greater perfection[9].

If, on the contrary, the conative effort occurs in unfavourable circumstances, it will be opposed and, consequently, will decrease in intensity. This difference will end up coinciding with the emergence of an affect of sadness.

> And by Sadness, that passion by which it passes to a lesser perfection.[10]

We are sad every time that the vital impulse, the force in which our essence consists, diminishes, while we feel joyful when this

9 *E* III, schol. prop. XI in *CW*, I, 712. Original Latin edition: "Per Lætitiam itaque in sequentibus intelligam passionem, qua Mens ad majorem perfectionem transit." *G*, II, p. 149.

10 *E* III, schol. prop. XI in *CW*, I, p. 712. Original Latin edition: "Per Tristitiam autem passionem, qua ipsa ad minorem transit perfectionem." *G*, II, p. 149.

conative impulse grows.

All the remaining affects are specifications of the two main feelings of joy and sadness, but their classification makes use of the inclusion of a second coordinate: the environmental conditions in which each effort of perseverance occurs. The environment and external relations called upon to specify the conative nature are conceptualized by Spinoza using the term "external cause". This category gathers all the circumstances external to the individual structure of the *conatus*, which are found to enter into a relationship with the latter, so significantly that it changes its intensity. Thus there is a series of uses of the term *cause* understood as what motivates, modifies and qualifies an affect of joy or sadness, in such a way as to cause its specific declination.

In the scholium of Proposition XIII, the external cause is used in a first, broad form, generically comprehensive, to illustrate the circumstances that turn the affects of joy and sadness into love and hate:

> *Love* is nothing but *Joy with the accompanying idea of an external cause*, and Hate is nothing but *Sadness with the accompanying idea of an external cause*. We see, then, that one who loves necessarily strives to have present and preserve the thing he loves; and on the other hand, one who hates strives to remove and destroy the thing he hates. But all of these things will be discussed more fully in what follows.[11]

Depending on the particular nature of the external cause, the different forms that hatred and love may assume are specified. In other words, there is a kind of communicability of type between cause and effect:

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11 *E* III, schol. prop. XIII, in *CW*, I, p.714. Original Latin edition: "Ex his clare intelligimus, quid Amor, quidque Odium sit. Nempe *Amor* nihil aliud est, quam *Lætitia, concomitante idea causæ externæ*, et *Odium* nihil aliud, quam *Tristitia, concomitante idea causæ externæ*.Videmus deinde, quod ille, qui amat, necessario conatur rem, quam amat, præsentem habere, et conservare; et contra, qui odit, rem, quam odio habet, amovere, et destruere conatur. Sed de his omnibus in seqq. prolixius." *G*, II, p. 151.

> Therefore, the nature of each passion must necessarily be so explained that the nature of the object by which we are affected is expressed. […] So also the affect of Sadness arising from one object is different in nature from the Sadness stemming from another cause. The same must also be understood of Love, Hate, Hope, Fear, Vacillation of mind, etc. Therefore, there are as many species of Joy, Sadness, Love, Hate, etc., as there are species of objects by which we are affected.[12]

It must be borne in mind that the *conatus* is not identical in everyone, but assumes different forms according to the constitution of the individual. For this reason, in turn, external causes must always be linked with different personal characteristics. The *conatus* is not a simple reaction to external stimuli. Each man accompanies the various environmental conditions in which he finds himself living and working with a series of affects, formed on the basis of the traces left in the memory by previous experiences.

The legacy of experiences, which form the specific ways of reacting to external stimuli, is referred to in *Ethics* with the term "internal cause". In the scholium of proposition XXX of the third part, the internal causes are divided into two categories. They can consist of personal actions, filtered by the judgment given by others, and in this case passions such as Glory or Shame will arise; or they can derive directly from self-evaluation: then feelings such as self-satisfaction or underestimation of oneself will be produced[13].

It has already been highlighted that passions are always generated as a result of the encounter between the *conatus*, which represents the essence of each person, and the external conditions that this effort can facilitate or prevent. The outcome of each conflict is always regulated according to a necessary logic. This means that

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12 *E* III, dem. prop. LVI, *CW*, I, p. 756. Original Latin edition: "Natura igitur uniuscujusque passionis ita necessario debet explicari, ut objecti, a quo afficimur, natura exprimatur.[…] Sic etiam Tristitiæ affectus, qui uno objecto oritur, diversus natura est a Tristitia, quæ ab alia causa oritur; quod etiam de Amore, Odio, Spe, Metu, animi Fluctuatione, etc. intelligendum est: ac proinde Lætitiæ, Tristitiæ, Amoris, Odii, etc. tot species necessario dantur, quot sunt species objectorum, a quibus afficimur." *G*, II, p.p 184-185.

13 *E* III, schol. prop. XXX, *CW*, I, p. 726.

the infinite variations to which the *conatus* may be subject are never accidental or impromptu, but are the result of conflicts, of power relations, underlying necessary laws. As with all natural phenomena, the ways in which the encounters between interests and passions are organized are also governed by laws. The necessary nature of interpersonal relationships is found to be a consequence of the sameness of necessity and freedom proper to the substantial being. The structure of the modal relationships through which the being of the substance is produced is always necessary. The fact that natural phenomena, such as emotionality, sometimes seem to obey chance depends exclusively on our inability to correctly decipher the natural need. Each event is subsumed within a general framework, which over-determines it, giving it regularity and uniformity. The laws of nature define a framework of rules against which infinite and particular relations of cause and effect must be placed, deduced as specific applications of universal rules. From the sameness of necessity and freedom, laid down in the first part of the *Ethics*, and from the efficient nature of divine causality derives the fact that the relationships between finite modes, from which the variations in intensity of the *conati* arise, are always regulated by precise rules of determination. The set of causal links through which the encounters and conflicts between heterogeneous natural identities take place determine those variations of intensity that coincide with "our passions".

As has already been anticipated, Spinoza means by *law of nature* the set of general and necessary laws governing causal relationships (i.e. the conflict between internal and external causes). Chapter IV of the *TTP* is dedicated to the definition of this concept.

> A law which depends on a necessity of nature is one which follows necessarily from the very nature *or* definition of a thing [14].

The law of nature includes all the physical laws by which the relations between the parts are organized, regardless of whether

14 *TTP*, cap. IV, *CW*, II, p.1350. Original Latin edition: "Lex, quæ a necessitate naturæ dependet, illa est, quæ ex ipsa rei natura sive definitione necessario sequitur;" *G*, III, p. 57.

these are simple bodies, animal beings, or men. The law of nature is characterized by some fundamental properties.

It is universal and inviolable[15]. In the *TTP*, the possibility of miracles is denied. They consist of nothing other than an act of suspension of the law by the will of God, who through the miracle manifests his power to men. On the contrary – according to Spinoza – it is the law of nature, with its own binding validity that testifies to divine power and perfection. After universality and legality, the third characteristic of the law of nature is eternity[16]. Like rational knowledge and unlike imagination, which, conversely, is always defined in relation to certain conditions of time and space, the law of nature is eternally valid, regardless of the contingency in which, from time to time, it expresses itself.

Finally, and this is the most significant aspect, at least in terms of ethical consequences, the knowledge of this law coincides for men with the achievement of maximum happiness.

> Finally, we see that the highest reward for observing the divine law is the law itself, viz. to know God and to love him from true freedom and with a whole and constant heart, whereas the penalty for not observing it

15 *TTP*, cap. IV, *CW*, II, p. 1355: "If now we attend to the Nature of natural divine law, as we have just explained it, we shall see: I. that it is universal, or common to all men, for we have deduced it from universal human nature;". Original Latin Edition: "Si jam ad Naturam legis divinæ naturalis, ut eam modo explicuimus, attendamus, videbimus, I. eam esse universalem, sive omnibus hominibus communem; eam enim ex universali humana natura deduximus;". *G*, III, p. 61.

16 *TTP*, cap. IV, *CW*, I, p. 1355: "II. that it does not require faith in historical narratives, no matter what, in the end, those narratives are. For since this natural divine law is understood simply by the consideration of human nature, it is certain that we can conceive it just as much in Adam as in any other man, just as much in a man who lives among others as in a man who lives a solitary life". Original latin edition: "eam non exigere fidem historiarum, quæcumque demum eæ fuerint, nam quandoquidem hæc Lex divina naturalis ex sola consideratione humanæ naturæ intelligatur, certum est, nos eam æque concipere posse in Adamo, ac alio quocunque homine, æque in homine, qui inter homines vivit, ac in homine, qui solitariam vitam agit". *G,* III, p. 61.

> is the privation of these things and bondage to the flesh, or an inconstant and vacillating heart.[17]

Spinoza believes that only a few men will achieve knowledge of the laws of nature, because the dominion of the passions is too strong. For this reason, it will be necessary to introduce positive law, which will have to bind the remaining part of humanity to peace. However, the meaning, both ethical and universalistic, attributed to knowledge of the law of nature, positively connotes Spinozian anthropology. The small number of those who may really succeed in knowing the law of nature, and, thanks to this knowledge, be able to accept the need for the natural order, is due to the difficulty of overcoming the partiality inherent in the "imaginative gaze". The original natural condition would be positive in itself, if man obeyed it by making use of reason. The first perception of the real is, however, always mediated by the imaginative faculty, and this gives rise to an original misunderstanding of the law, destined to persist until appropriate corrections are made.

At least initially, man is led to misunderstand the natural law. This misunderstanding is due to the specific structure of immediate cognitive perception: the imagination. In the next section we will see the characteristics of this kind of knowledge and try to explain the reasons why it plays such an important role in the definition of passions.

2. *Origin of the passionate "misunderstanding": imagination and will*

In the previous section it was observed how in *Ethics* the origin of passions is explained by recalling the elementary movements of expansion and contraction of the *conatus*. Joy coincides with the

17 *TTP*, cap. IV, *CW*, II, p. 1356. Orginal Latin edition: "Denique videmus summum legis divinæ præmium esse, ipsam legem, nempe Deum cognoscere, eumque ex vera libertate, et animo integro et constante amare, poenam autem, horum privationem, et carnis servitutem, sive animum inconstantem, et fluctuantem". *G,* III, p. 62.

increase in desire that distinguishes each personal individuality. On the contrary, when the movement of persistence in being suffers an intensive involution, affects of sadness and hatred emerge[18]. It was then highlighted that the conative movements, and the natural and social conflicts which originate from them, always underline the law of nature, defined by Spinoza as universal, inviolable and eternal. At this point, before facing the *passion fear* directly, it is necessary to return to affective movements to verify what happens on the level of knowledge every time the *conatus* expands or contracts.

According to Spinoza, an affect is always a condition that affects the mind and body simultaneously. Sadness, joy, hate, love, jealousy, resentment are emotions that express a particular condition of physical health together with a specific form of the perception of reality.

As has already been noted, Spinoza defined mind and body as modes of the same substance, distinguished only formally according to the attributes of thought and extension. In every situation, mental condition and bodily structure, although diversified from the phenomenal point of view, are substantially identical. As in Descartes's *The Passions of the Soul*, also for Spinoza, in any emotion, the body is at the origin of the idea of self called mind. In turn, however, the mind thinks, making use of the body, as the first instrument and object of representation. This means that the ideas that each person forms of themself and of their relationship with others depend in the first place on the relationship between their physical makeup and the outside world. The functioning of the body and the changes made to it by the environment contribute to forming the specific knowledge that in *Ethics* is defined as images. Symmetrically, however, the mind's ability to be active and therefore (as will be seen shortly) to perfect imaginative ideas also affects the health of the body.

While continuing, in the wake of the Cartesian model, to distinguish personal identity as an aggregate of mind and body, Spinoza thus

18 On the relationship between joy, intuition and intuitive knowledge, see S. Charles, "Le salut par les affects: La joie comme ressort du progrès *éthique* chez Spinoza", *Philosophiques*, XXIX, 2002, 1, pp. 73-87.

complicates the relationship of reciprocity. In *The Passions of the Soul*, passion was defined as an action of the body on the soul, to correct which it was necessary for the soul to regain an active condition, counteracting the indications spontaneously generated by the body. The elaboration of representations capable of illustrating the possible consequences of future actions, together with an effort of the will aimed at holding back instinctual reactions, constitute the actions through which it is possible to regain control of the passions.

In *Ethics*, however, the relationship between mind (significantly Spinoza no longer employs the concept of soul insofar as it is not actually distinct) and body takes on a connotation that can be seen in terms of simultaneity[19]. Whenever the conative instinct contracts, a condition of suffering is triggered, manifesting itself in a particular physical condition, accompanied by a specific idea of oneself. Similarly, when we experience a feeling of joy or love, we see an improvement in physical health and the maturation of a more realistic idea of the relationship between subject and outside world. Since mind and body express the same nature, formally distinguished according to different attributes, if, following an encounter with an external cause, the body undergoes a change in its essence (*conatus*), a similar change will also occur in the mind. Furthermore, the same logic can also be applied in the opposite direction, so that, in some cases, the production of ideas or images can cause emotional changes.

To understand the properties of Spinoza's concept of passion, we need to examine the different ways in which the individual can learn about relations with the outside world. Each of these forms of knowledge will in fact coincide with a particular emotional condition and with a degree of bodily health. After having explained the physical movement of determining the affects through the concepts of *conatus* and the law of nature, it is now a question of changing the point of observation of passions. We need to leave the objective analysis of natural relationships and go on to examine how

19 E. Giancotti, "Sul concetto spinoziano di Mens", in *Studi su Hobbes e Spinoza*, a cura di D. Bostrenghi e C. Santinelli (Napoli: Bibliopolis, 1995), pp. 357-400.

affects appear subjectively to the individual. Having highlighted the functional characteristics of emotional processes, it is necessary to examine the forms in which passions manifest themselves to consciousness. Only in this way can we verify – as we did in previous chapters for Hobbes and Descartes – how the individual and political power can influence individual and collective emotional states.

In *Ethics*, the first form of knowledge is always the imagination, which corresponds to an affective condition of passivity. The proper nature of imaginative knowledge is misunderstanding. Some passions of the body and some images of the mind consist of an increase in the intensity of the *conatus*, while others coincide with its weakening. In the first case, we will have images and passions of joy and love, while in the second, feelings of sadness and hatred will be produced. Even if the former are preferable to the latter, when the mind imagines it is always passive; conversely, it persists in an active state when it rationally knows the causes for the production of a particular emotional condition[20].

There are three properties of imaginative knowledge and passions: *contingency*, *immediacy* and *synthesis*.

The first characteristic that distinguishes images and passions is the *space-time contingency*. Being determined more by external circumstances than by the subjective capacity for rational knowledge, passions and images are always "daughters" of time and space. The time and place in which they occur decisively define the characteristics of passionate knowledge. The imagination always has an *ideological* trait. It is the daughter of its time and of the social, political and cultural conditions in which it is produced. From this point of view, it is thus clear why religion is indicated in the *TTP* as the form of imaginative knowledge par excellence.

The second trait of imaginative knowledge and passionate experience consists of immediacy. Passions of the body and images always present an instinctual conformation, arising from the first

20 R. Crippa defined Spinozian "passion" as alienation, as the subjection of the mind to what is other with respect to oneself. Cf. R. Crippa, *Studi sulla coscienza etica e religiosa del Seicento: le passioni in Spinoza* (Marzorati, Milano 1965), p. 78.

encounter with reality, not at all meditated. Passion always has something *automatic* and sudden about it. It cannot be stopped, it is formed in a rapid, sudden manner by the immediate adherence to external reality. Given the particular family or social conditions in which the individual finds himself, the emergence of passions cannot be avoided, and due to the speed with which they are produced, they always elude control, at least initially. Due to the *immediate* form of their origin, the individual will only have two ways of working on the passions: either fundamentally restructuring the environmental conditions in which affects are generated, adopting *lifestyles* with which to try to isolate himself and thus fight passions, or processing them *ex post*, by means of rationalization.

Finally, passions (always understood according to the amphibious configuration of bodily conditions accompanied by a certain image of the relationship between the self and the world) inevitably produce representations of a *synthetic* nature, whereby the external world is always filtered and interpreted on the basis of experience. The human mind perceives what is other with respect to itself through the affections of *its own* body[21]. This means that the senses provide a representation in which the objects represented are as if crushed and overdetermined by the experience that is superimposed on them. For this reason, the imaginative vision is never – according to Spinoza – objective. It never leads to a *realistic* vision[22]. For this reason, when imagining, the mind creates a synthesis between the self and the

21 *E* II, prop. XXVI, *CW*, I, p. 675: "The human Mind does not perceive any external body as actually existing, except through the ideas of the affections of its own Body." Original Latin edition; "Mens humana nullum corpus externum, ut actu existens, percipit, nisi per ideas affectionum sui Corporis." *G*, II, p.112.

22 *E* II, dem. prop. XXVIII, *CW*, I, p. 676: "For the ideas of the affections of the human Body involve the nature of the external bodies as much as that of the human Body, and must involve the nature not only of the human Body and must involve the nature not only of the human body [NS: as a whole], but also of its parts; for the affections are modes with which the parts of the human Body, and consequently the whole Body, are affected." Original Latin edition: "Ideæ enim affectionum Corporis humani, tam corporum externorum, quam ipsius humani Corporis naturam involvunt, nec tantum Corporis humani, sed ejus etiam partium naturam involvere debent;

external world. The imaginative faculty does not organize sensations and mnemonic material according to the causal and objective order in which it is produced. Rather, it tends to a continuous confusion between what belongs to the inner sphere and what, instead, belongs to the external, objective and counterposed world. It does not make the correct distinction between its individual strength and the causes that change its intensity, but, on the contrary, perceives reality as external and counterposed to itself, since it is unable to recognize itself as part of it.

Imagination is the most immediate knowledge of the outside world. It maintains a direct link with the senses, and as such is the first form that the mind assumes in its relationship with the outside world. When he imagines, man personalizes objective reality; he processes and interprets it exclusively through his own experience, relating it to his desires and fears. Everything is filtered by subjectivity, without any awareness that this may alter the reality that we find ourselves encountering. The objective world is constantly mediated by emotional frameworks, sedimented in the idea of the self. Each singular phenomenon, perceived through the senses, is related to previous experiences, without any awareness that this process inevitably causes alteration.

The notions produced by the imagination contain within themselves an element of strong contradiction, due to the fact that, while being largely characterized by the personal and historical perspective in which they are generated, they tend, instead, to present themselves in a universal form[23]. This is because the subject is usually unable to reflect on the always "intentional" nature of any gaze on the world. An example of this kind of knowledge is all the representations produced in traditional religion. They do not recognize nature as an organism operating in a mechanical, impersonal way, regulated solely by the indifference of the law of nature. Religion, on the other hand, sees nature as created by God and made available for human needs.

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affectiones namque modi sunt, quibus partes Corporis humani, et consequenter totum Corpus afficitur." *G*, II, p. 113.

23 On the notion of universal and transcendental as products of imaginative knowledge, see *E* II, app. and *E* II, schol. prop. XXXIII.

In the language of metaphysics, the anthropocentric and imaginative vision has given rise to finalism, i.e. the idea that every natural phenomenon has a purpose towards which it tends and for which it was created. With the final cause, man has projected his way of thinking onto nature[24]. Since he always moves with a view to an end, the natural order also appears to him to be nothing more than an infinite series of ends.

> It follows, *secondly*, that men act always on account of an end, viz. on account of their advantage, which they want. Hence they seek to know only the final causes of what has been done, and when they have heard them, they are satisfied, because they have no reason to doubt further. [25]

From a historical point of view, therefore, imaginative knowledge is considered to be the specific mode of perception of reality that was the foundation of the "idea of the world" produced in monotheistic religions and in classical metaphysics (Aristotelian and scholastic). Both of these sets of beliefs in fact place man at the centre of the natural universe and interpret the improvement of human existence as the ultimate goal, towards which both divine intervention and the natural order cooperate.

The factor, however, that most conditions the sensitivity and relationship between the person and the cosmos in imaginative knowledge, also considered as the original cause of both religion and metaphysics, is identifiable with the voluntarist illusion of human action.

In the imagination, man relates every fact of reality to his own experience and, for this reason, is led to superimpose his desires on

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24 The protective mechanisms intrinsic to imaginative knowledge is discussed in A. Zaninetti, "L'importance du mécanisme de projection imaginatif au sein de la démarche éthique spinozienne", *Philosophiques*, XXIX, 2002, 1, pp. 99-105.

25 *E* I, app., *CW,* I, p. 512. Original Latin edition: «Sequitur *secundo*, homines omnia propter finem agere; videlicet propter utile, quod appetunt; unde fit, ut semper rerum peractarum causas finales tantum scire expetant, et, ubi ipsas audiverint, quiescant; nimirum, quia nullam habent causam ulterius dubitandi». *G*, II, p. 78.

the absolute indifference of reality. In this way, man misunderstands and reverses the relationship with reality. We are under the illusion that it is reality that depends on thoughts, desires or will, ignoring the fact that, on the contrary, it is the emotions that arise from the causal "mechanisms" intrinsic to the natural order. The *voluntarist illusion*, of which Spinoza writes in the first part of the Ethics, condemns man to self-blame, whenever reality proves impervious to human desires and expectations. In this way, the individual is bound to feel responsible for his own dependence (impotence), developing an attitude that oscillates between illusory narcissistic arrogance and depressive anxiety[26].

Since man is a part of nature, which cannot exist or act without the other parts, the force with which he perseveres in existence is limited and overcome by the power of external causes. To achieve a condition of greater well-being it is not enough to implement a "simple" effort of the will. The latter is only the form that inadequate ideas take, unable to recognize the need of nature. Any philosophy of will is bound to fall victim to the illusion that it can change nature, and bend its course to personal needs[27].

For Spinoza, the path of liberation that must be undertaken is quite different. Not obstinacy, the tenacious effort to implement one's wishes through direct intervention on external circumstances. *Ethics* is a critical theory of the "behaviourist" sequence, whereby a goal is first established, and then a strategy is put in place to pursue it. Any effort of the will is in vain, because the power of exteriority always overwhelms the possibilities of the individual. Even obstinacy in pursuing goals is a useless waste of vital energy that can easily turn into a feeling of frustration.

If we compare these indications on the illusions of imaginative knowledge to Descartes's theory, we can see why Spinoza radically rejects the Cartesian strategy of controlling passions, centred

26 On the concept of human impotence, see F. Mignini, "Impuissance humaine et puissance de la raison", in *Spinoza, puissance et impuissance de la raison*, dir. par Chr. Lazzeri, Presses Universitaires de France, Paris 1999, pp. 39-61.

27 On the intrinsic imbalance of imaginative knowledge, see C. Santinelli, *Mente e corpo: studi su Cartesio e Spinoza*, (Urbino: QuattroVenti, 2000).

precisely on the control of will and mental representations. In the previous chapter we saw how Descartes mentions two tools given to man to control passions: representation of the consequences and use of the will to inhibit behaviour. Man can represent reality by reflecting on the consequences of his actions and in this way direct the will to control actions, when these have repercussions on the outside world. The will must support the representations by engaging in the censorship of verbal and physical actions performed too impulsively.

According to Spinoza, Descartes's proposal cannot but prove to be illusory. Representation is always a product of the imagination and as such can only be based on confusion and misunderstanding. Among the limits of imaginative knowledge, Spinoza includes the inability to distinguish the evolution of things, due to the fact that every truth is brought back to the eternal present of experience[28]. Controlling our behaviour through the will, which should make use of the imaginative representation of the consequences of our actions, is illusory, because imaginative knowledge, delegated to the "construction" of representations, always takes on an immediate and excessively personal nature. If the mind relies exclusively on the illusion of the will, consciousness will always be *influenced* by images and passions.

How then to free oneself from the slavery of affects? Especially in a real context where the human capacity for effective intervention seems to be reduced to a minimum. What we will try to highlight in the following pages is the fact that, assuming a Spinozian perspective, in order to change emotions it is necessary not to set up mechanisms for controlling affects and passions, but to engage in individual and collective projects of liberation.

To achieve this goal, it is necessary to move on the dual and simultaneous level of knowledge and use of the self. Just as mind and body are forms of the same personal unity (as modes of the same

28 *E* II, prop. XXXI, *CW*, I, p.678: "We can have only an entirely inadequate knowledge of the duration of the singular things which are outside us." Original Latin edition: "Nos de duratione rerum singularium, quæ extra nos sunt, nullam, nisi admodum inadæquatam cognitionem habere possumus." *G*, II, p. 115.

substance), similarly it is necessary for the process of understanding one's emotional condition to be developed in parallel with the practice of the affects of joy and love.

In order not to become victims of a passionate and imaginative gaze on reality, it is necessary, according to Spinoza, to reduce the subjectivist illusion and "make room for reality". This can only be done by acting on the dual front of knowledge and action. It will be necessary to create a "*practical philosophy*" aimed at avoiding all relationships in which our emotions are destined to suffer, trying to replace them with encounters that may be, to the greatest extent possible, occasions for creating relationships of joy and love. Furthermore, in order to free oneself from the slavery of passions, it will be necessary to correct the falsehoods of the subjective representations produced by the body, every time that it finds itself affected and powerless in the face of the outside world. This will be possible only by making way for an objective knowledge of reality. Accepting reality, developing adequate knowledge of it and modulating our desires on it.

Recognizing the objective reality of natural relationships means in Spinozian terms being able to pass from the former to the latter kind of knowledge by making use of the recognition of common notions. Acquiring the awareness that "the events of the *conatus*", in the course of which passions are formed, are inherent in the relationships of dependence that bind man to all the other parts of nature: rationally accepting that our passionate condition is determined within a series of circumstances that only minimally depend on our capacity for knowledge and influence.

However, the most important thing to know is that in order to achieve this kind of awareness, which will manifest itself in an intuitive understanding of the relationship between singularity and totality, it is necessary to work on oneself, pursuing at the same time the study of nature and society and existential planning.

Since mind and body are forms of the same identity, a false knowledge of reality produces a condition of mental and physical suffering. To transform this passivity into the achievement of greater well-being, it is advisable not only to study the objective reality of natural relationships from a scientific point of view, but also to strive

to achieve in one's daily experience an emotional condition in which – albeit from a point of view still entirely inscribed in imaginative knowledge – man will find himself experiencing feelings of joy and love and not (or at least only minimally) of suffering and fear. The sad passions, coinciding with a condition of weakening of the *conatus*, afflict not only the body, but also the reasoning. Joyful passions, by strengthening the well-being of the body, help the mind to better understand the relationship between personal identity and objective circumstances. In order to pass from imaginative affection to an adequate knowledge of reality, coinciding with a condition of psycho-physical serenity, it will be crucial not only to apply oneself in study, but also to strive to "plan", individually and together with others, experiences of joy and love.

3. *Resisting passivity*

The Ethics invites the reader to know and accept the needs affecting existence. The goal is to be able to adopt a *lifestyle* that makes it possible not to surrender to passions: to passivity, boredom and fear. Although unavoidable, it is still better to experience joyful rather than sad passions, because they will allow us to practice rationality. In the following pages, we will reconstruct the path of emancipation from the passions proposed by Spinoza. Imagination and rationality will be set against each other to bring out the main characteristics of the two *existential models* implicitly connected with these forms of knowledge. One, *imaginative*, inevitably a harbinger of an existence at the mercy of passions; the other, *rational*, capable on the contrary of generating in the most diverse circumstances that desire for persistence in existence (*conatus*), of which the individual essence consists. Reference will also be made to the relationship between rationality and intuition and their mutual implication, while not addressing in detail Spinoza's treatment of the *conoscentia sub specie aeternitatis*. Subsequently, the different forms of knowledge will be compared with the passion fear, in order to outline the characteristics of the behaviour patterns arising from these relationships.

As noted in the previous sections, in Spinoza's philosophy the

passions derive from the mind's inability to formulate an adequate idea of the relationship between the ego and the world[29]. On the other hand, comprehending reality rationally means knowing the causes of the phenomena generated in it. Without a proportionate view of the causal relationships within which the subject is determined, mind and body *suffer*. Using Spinozian terminology, it can be said that, in this case, the body experiences a passion, while the mind imagines[30].

Images are distinguished by the fact that they do not adequately represent either the perceived objects or the relationships between these objects and the knowing subject. As with affects, imaginative knowledge is also marked by the compulsion to repeat. The properties of the object are confused with other elements coming from the experiential baggage of the imagining subject.[31] Perceived objects are always organized on the basis of a subjective reading.[32]A previously unexperienced perceptual stimulus is always instinctively

29 *E* III, *prop.* I, in *CW,* I, p. 703: "Our Mind does certain things [acts] and undergoes other things, insofar as it has adequate ideas, it necessarily does certain things, and insofar as it has inadequate ideas, it necessarily undergoes other things." Original Latin edition: "Mens nostra quædam agit, quædam vero patitur, nempe quatenus adæquatas habet ideas, eatenus quædam necessario agit, et quatenus ideas habet inadæquatas, eatenus necessario quædam patitur." *G*, II, p. 140.

30 *E* II, *prop*. XXVI, in *CW*, I, p. 675: "The human Mind does not perceive any external body as actually existing, except through the ideas of the affections of its own Body." Original latin edition: "Mens humana nullum corpus externum, ut actu existens, percipit, nisi per ideas affectionum sui Corporis." *G*, II, p. 112.

31 *E* II, *prop*. XVI: in *CW*, I, p. 666: "the idea of any mode in which the human body is affected by external bodies must involve the nature of the human body and at the same time the [30] nature of the external body." Original Latin edition: "Idea cujuscunque modi, quo Corpus humanum a corporibus externis afficitur, involvere debet naturam Corporis humani, & simul naturam corporis externi."*G*, II, p. 103.

32 *E* II, *prop*. XVI, *coroll*. 2, in *CW*, I, p. 666: "It follows, second, that the ideas which we have of external bodies indicate the condition of our own body more than the nature of the external bodies". Original Latin edition: "Sequitur secundo, quod ideæ, quas corporum externorum habemus, magis nostri corporis constitutionem, quam corporum externorum naturam indicant; quod in Appendice partis primæ multis exemplis explicui". *G,* II, p. 104.

welcomed within a mental set-up, formed by the accumulation of past experiences.[33]For this reason, the image of a perceived object is always personal, that is, different in each man, although similar in men who have had common experiences.[34] This constant referring to oneself, typical of the passionate and imaginative condition, not only determines insufficient understanding of the need for natural relationships, but, from an ethical point of view, leads to disproportionate self-responsibility. When he imagines, or is in the grip of his own passions, man is induced to consider reality as dependent on itself, ignoring the fact that, on the contrary, it is always experience that is conditioned.[35]

In their imagination, men end up considering affects and ideas not as effects of the relationship with the outside, but as internal conditions, governable by the will, understood as the free activity of the mind.[36] This way of thinking inevitably leads to confine man either in a persevering state of sadness and self-contempt, or in a condition of narcissistic pride.[37] Such feelings arise every time that one finds oneself having to note, together with the moral duty to master oneself, also one's scarce ability to influence the behaviour

33 *E* II, *prop*. XVIII, in *CW*, I, p. 668: "If the human Body has once been affected by two or more bodies at the same time, then when the Mind subsequently imagines one of them, it will immediately recollect the others also." Original Latin edition: "Si Corpus humanum a duobus, vel pluribus corporibus simul affectum fuerit semel, ubi Mens postea eorum aliquod imaginabitur, statim et aliorum recordabitur." *G,* II, p. 106.

34 The imaginative dynamics leads to the formation of universal concepts. *E* II, *prop*. XL, *schol*. 1. On the subjunctive nature of the imagination and on the relations existing between this kind of knowledge, personal affects and interests, see D. Bostrenghi, *Forme e virtù dell'immaginazione in Spinoza*, (Napoli: Bibliopolis, 1996), pp. 96-97. On the ambiguous nature of the image, which in itself contains nothing false, and on the profound differences between Descartes's and Spinoza's conception of image: L. Vinciguerra, *Spinoza et le signe: la genèse de l'imagination* (Paris: Vrin, 2005) in particular pp. 185-190.

35 This phenomenon, whereby imaginative knowledge knows by making use of associative processes aimed at recalling past experiences to explain present perceptions and those without precedents, is described in *E* I, *app*.

36 *E* III, *prop*. II, *schol*.

37 *E* IV, *prop*. LVII, *schol*.

and thinking of others. Passivity and helplessness increase the perception of dependence on external reality. The more the degree of personalization increases, that is the "load" of subjective elements in understanding one's relationship with the world, the more the sense of individual responsibility increases and with it the consequent construction of a static and therefore *fragile* emotional structure in the face of life's inevitable setbacks.

To free oneself from a view of nature conditioned by one's past, it is necessary to understand that individual natural events always obey universal law. But this is only possible if the mind is able to fix its attention on *common notions*[38]. The path to take is described with precision by Spinoza in *Ethics*.

First of all – as mentioned in the appendix of the first part of the *Ethics* – we need to renounce will. It is not enough to behave with obstinacy to avoid the slavery of the passions; it is not enough to make a tenacious effort to make one's wishes come true. *Ethics* offers a *critical theory* of the sequence by virtue of which first a goal is identified and then a strategy is implemented to pursue it. Any voluntary effort is in vain, because the power of exteriority is always overwhelming with respect to the individual's possibilities and freedom. Stubbornness in pursuing goals is actually a useless waste of vital energy, often destined to turn into a feeling of frustration. Renunciation of the will brings with it the awareness that conative variations, that is to say the formation of the emotional event, are largely linked to an external reality that constantly eludes our ability to control it. At certain times in life, feelings of sadness cannot be avoided. For example: when a disease weakens our body, or when we are grieved by the loss of a loved one, it is impossible not to suffer. In these cases, we are subjected to the necessity of the law of nature and are unable to avoid the external forces that induce our progressive weakening. Similarly, at other times we may be prey to unexpected joys, due to a particular arrangement of external forces, once again completely independent of our will.

38 On the intelligibility of the law of nature in Spinoza's philosophy, see S. Zac, *Philosophie, théologie, politique dans l'oeuvre de Spinoza* (Paris: Vrin, 1979), p. 196.

The accidental nature of chance must never, however, become an alibi to justify our passivity; indeed, even the most unfortunate circumstances may be a valid opportunity for weakening to result in an increase in the effort for self-preservation and, through this, the ability to resist the ups and downs of fate.

If the encounter with the external world can produce sadness, joy or fear in different situations, this depends in part on objective circumstances, and in part on our degree of awareness. Despite the adversity produced by external causes, it is always possible for the individual to adopt a different *strategy*, which is still capable of strengthening the conative effort.[39] The knowledge of nature, of the causal network that composes it, provides the possibility of triggering this strengthening mechanism. Being rational allows us to transform passions into affects. In this transformation, liberation from the slavery of the passions is achieved and, consequently, fear resolved. This in fact is the sense to be given to the claim that knowledge of the law of nature coincides with the maximum happiness of man. In the following pages we will try to reconstruct the path of liberation from the passions, starting with the first reception of reality in the imagination, up to the possible re-elaboration of affects through the work of rational knowledge.

4. *Conatus and common notions*

The functioning of reason is quite different from the imagination. It operates on information provided by the senses, reconfiguring their immediacy. It is possible to transform passions, recognizing as necessary what was previously judged only possible or contingent. Knowing emotions rationally means being able to verify the power relationships from which they arose, thus bringing them back into the context of the laws of nature that determined them.

Rational knowledge changes the relationship between the individual and nature in a qualitative sense. External circumstances,

39 For the concept of *conatus* strategy, see the now classic essay by L. Bove, *La strategie du conatus: affirmation et resistance chez Spinoza* (Paris: Vrin, 1996).

and the individuals who find themselves operating in them, cease to be seen in exclusive reference to interests and passions, but are included in the authentic identity of which their emotional structure and behaviour consists. Only rational knowledge of others' efforts at self-preservation can make the form and character of natural and social relations emerge. Compared to the narcissistic and partial acquisition of the imagination, the rational gaze on passions constitutes a broader scenario, able to consider affects not in absolute terms, or in exclusive reference to one's own emotional states and purposes, but as conditioned by the multiple relationships entered into with nature. While the encounter of our body with the external world is understood by the imagination in a completely self-referential, personal way, rationality, based on common notions, acknowledges the partial nature of individuality, always convergent or divergent with respect to otherness.

The acquisition of common notions allows the mind to free itself from the mere passive and self-centred reception of external stimuli and to enter into active communication with the natural power of the substance that continuously *produces and reproduces* itself. Recognizing the commonality between our efforts towards preservation and that of the other parts of nature facilitates *adequate knowledge* of the tension between drives and external causes.

In *Ethics*, by adaptation we mean the ability to know how to place a phenomenon in the causal spectrum that produced it and in the effects that derive from it. Knowing one's affective condition adequately means being aware of the specific, objective and necessary, natural and social conditions in which emotions are generated, and knowing how to evaluate the effects that must/may derive from our personality and our behaviour. Common notions, understood as always adequate perceptions of the elements of identity between the parts, constitute the essential *structural condition* for the mind's achievement of an active position, that is, one that produces adequate ideas.

While common notions represent the general or structural conditions of true knowledge, adaptation is the concept used to render the understanding of the particular position of the known object, deduced from the understanding of the notions. Adaptation is a certain cut, a portion of knowledge that, individually considered, is

always the expression of a modal unit fighting for the improvement of its existence.[40]

Common notions define the nature of the *field*, logical and physical, in which modal existence is exercised, as a determined relationship of movement and stillness, persevering in existence. The concept of adequation on the other hand, indicates the true idea of a specific causal relationship. We have highlighted how knowledge of common notions makes it possible to develop the awareness of being part of that forest of *conati*, which is produced in a network of causes and effects (described in the single axiom of *Ethics* IV), within which every emotion is formed. Compared to this general sense of the natural order, shown by the notions, the adequate idea instead defines a specific relationship in which the natural order is determined and identified. Adequate knowledge proceeds to decipher the effects starting with the knowledge of their causes, and concluding with the establishment of a realistic gaze, focused on the spaces of active potential, intrinsic to any modal relationship. Human freedom as practical life is achieved in the realization of this rational knowledge. The acquisition of this awareness, the overcoming of imaginative knowledge and the consequent achievement of adequate knowledge, also generate per se an active and joyful condition of the mind.[41]

40 Inadequacy – highlighted Cristina Santinelli (*Mente e corpo*, p. 186) – is finding oneself in the dark; it is a lack of light, a shadowy area. On the contrary, "the adequate idea, similarly to light in Caravaggio's painting, becomes a gaze that flees the shadows, dispels the darkness of non-knowledge, and discovers a fragment of truth in the flow of existence."

41 On this particular aspect of the knowledge of necessity understood as the ability to produce a joyful emotional attitude, and, in particular, on the assonances and dissonances with respect to Stoic ethics, see: F. De Brabander, "Phychotherapy and Moral Perfection: Spinoza and the Stoics on the Prospect of Happiness", in *Stoicism: Traditions and Trasformations,* eds by S.K. Strange, J. Zupiko, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 198-213, and in particular pp. 206-207.

5. *From rationality to intuition*

Finally, the adequate understanding of oneself and one's own emotional states does not only require the action of reason, but is completed in the third kind of knowledge. The second kind of knowledge is formed by starting with a re-elaboration of the data of the imagination through the recognition of common notions in them. Similarly, intuition must also be understood as derived from the second kind of knowledge. To be known rationally, the mode must not only be understood in the causal relationships that determine it but must be placed in reference to the whole substance with its attributes. Just as the transition to the second kind consists in an intuitive recognition of the elements structuring the images, common to the part as well as to the whole, in the second kind of causal knowledge, man intuits the participation of himself as a mode of the totality that determines him.

Knowledge of the second kind thus introduces that of the third kind, in the sense that it allows us to recognize ourselves as part of the substance.[42]In knowledge of the third kind, the mind acts retrospectively on rational knowledge, inscribing the things it knows within a unitary horizon and allowing the transition from a passive to an active condition.[43]

Reason knows each object in its causal structure and in this way achieves the essence of the object. In turn, the intuitive knowledge of each mode allows understanding of the object not in exclusive reference to the finite modes that cause it, but through its deduction from the attribute, favouring recognition of the immanence of the substance as a totality to the individual parts . The passage of the mind from passivity to activity consists in this recognition of the part's participation in the whole. It intuitively senses that

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42 *E* V, *prop*. XXIV. According to Filippo Mignini, *Ars imaginandi: apparenza e rappresentazione in Spinoza* (Napoli: Edizioni Scientifiche Italiane, 1981), p. 142, the relationship between imagination, the second type of knowledge and intellect is conceived by Spinoza on the model of the human eye. On this topic, see R. Diodato, *Sub specie aeternitatis: luoghi dell'ontologia spinoziana* (Milano: CUSL 1990), p. 160.

43 *Spinoza, E* V, *prop*. XXVI.

it is part of the substance and conceives its *affects* as *effects* of nature. Reason knows the modes in the determined relationships that they entertain with other modes, intuition allows us to grasp the participation and unity of the part and the whole.

From the practice of reason, which knows single causes and single effects, the mind achieves the intellectual intuition of God, which gives uniformity to all previously known causal sequences through the second kind of knowledge and allows the transformation of the mind from a passive and determined mode into an active and constitutive part of the sequence itself. The opacity of the images can thus change into the crystalline clarity of suitable ideas. When man possesses adequate ideas of his own affections, he is defined as an *adequate cause* of passions, and this is synonymous with virtuous behaviour. In any circumstance, man can adopt one of two positions: active or passive. He will be active every time that he can be considered an adequate cause of his affections; otherwise, he will be forced to suffer passions. Knowing things according to truth acquires its own ethical significance as a direct experience of new affects.[44] Through the production of adequate ideas, the mind establishes affective orders of an active and joyful nature, managing to redeem its own passionate condition. This is possible because the adequate idea understands the object of knowledge starting from its own active essence. Through the production of adequate ideas, the mind establishes a possible gap between the passionate order, in which the body is continually caught, and a "possible" order, which is formed on the basis of the real and conative power immanent in each mode, when this is adequately known by the intellect.

Compared to other important contemporary treatises, his identification of the adequate recognition of the real character of relationships with the subsequent production of joyful affects profoundly differentiates Spinoza's qualification of the link between thought and affects. The identification of rational, conscious and voluntary activity as a function delegated to the

44 On the methods of affective causation of the active mind that knows adequately, see M. G. Lombardo, *La mente affettiva di Spinoza.* Teoria delle idee adeguate. (Padova: Il Poligrafo, 2004), pp. 123-141.

control of passions was in the seventeenth century a feature common to various philosophical orientations; in particular neo-Stoicism, but also Cartesianism. In both Cartesian and Neo-Stoic thinking about passions, reason and will are placed in an external position with respect to the sphere of passion and are assigned a "cooling" function, aimed at preventing the passions from gaining control of emotional life. Within these traditions, the wise man is identified with the *cold man*.

In Spinoza's philosophy, however, passion is the form of man's immediate relationship with the environment that neither the will nor an a priori conception of rationality can effectively correct and control. Indeed, like any other passion, the will is nothing more than the product of a mystified (being excessively self-centred on the subject) interpretation of the possibilities of interaction between the individual and context. Emotions are not considered alterations of the soul, disturbances that man is called upon to correct by restoring a condition of "normality":[45] In *Ethics*, by virtue of the mind-body equivalence, adequate knowledge consists in an affect of joy, and only by achieving this active emotional condition can man, by contrast, reduce his own suffering. Rationality is joy, because it fights by transforming the passive nature of affects, allowing affectivity to move from the partial plane of passions to a level of participation which is more intense and of more calibrated ordering in the natural being.

6. *Fear in Ethics*

At this point, after analysing the concept of *conatus* and the forms of knowledge in *Ethics*, in line with the approach taken in the previous chapters for Hobbes and Descartes, we will focus on fear in *Ethics*. Also for Spinoza, in fact, this passion, more than others, allows us to test the possibilities of liberation from the passions entrusted to rational knowledge.

45 On Spinoza's attitude, defined as humble, towards passions and on the original trait that characterizes him with respect to the philosophical culture of the time, see R. Bodei, *Geometria delle passioni*, pp. 22-29.

What are the characteristics of "Spinozian fear"? What differences can be found in the description of this affect compared to what Descartes wrote? To what extent can Hobbes be considered the source of Spinoza? Finally, what strategies for overcoming this passion are proposed in *Ethics*? Will these questions be answered in the coming, final, pages?

As in *The Passions of the Soul*, also in *Ethics*, we find both the meanings of fear already identified by Descartes: apprehension, a widespread affect, similar to anxiety, usually indicated with the term *timor*, (that is the passion that Descartes calls *crainte*, and real fear, more similar to fright, for which Spinoza uses the term *metus* (and which, instead, Descartes had called *Peur*). To these we must add pusillanimity (*pusillanimitas*), an emotion that recalls Cartesian cowardice (*Lascheté*). For the moment we will pass over what Spinoza means by apprehension (we will return to the analysis of this concept later), preferring to circumscribe our analysis to Spinoza's notion of fear.

In the second scholium of proposition XVIII of the third part, this affect is contrasted with hope, defined as: "an inconstant Joy which has arisen from the image of a [10] future or past thing whose outcome we doubt"[46]. At the opposite *metus* is "an inconstant Sadness, which has also arisen from the image of a doubtful thing.[47]

Spinozian fear differs from Cartesian fear in several respects. In the first place, the reference to desire is attenuated in favour of an identification of the feeling as a *sad* and *inconstant passion*. This aspect can certainly be explained by recalling the fact that all passions

46 Spinoza*, E* III, p. XVIII, schol. II, in *CW*, I, p. 718. Original Latin edition: "Spes namque nihil aliud est, quam inconstans Lætitia, orta ex imagine rei futuræ, vel præteritæ, de cujus eventu dubitamus". *G*, II, p. 155.

47 Spinoza*, E* III, p. XVIII, schol. II, in *CW*, I, p. 718. Original Latin edition: "Metus contra inconstans Tristitia, ex rei dubiæ imagine etiam orta". *G,* II, p. 155.
Similarly, in the definitions of the affects that conclude the third part, fear is described as: "an inconstant Sadness, born of the idea of a future or past thing whose outcome we to some extent doubt". Spinoza*, Ethica*, III, Aff. Def. XIII, *CW*, I, p. 755. Original Latin edition: "Metus est inconstans Tristitia, orta ex idea rei futuræ, vel præteritæ, de cujus eventu aliquatenus dubitamus". *G*, II, p.194.

are for Spinoza modifications of the *conatus* and, therefore, originate from desire. However, the removal of the explicit reference to the desirous act appears to be anything but irrelevant because it is also accompanied by less precision in indicating the causes of passion. Descartes – as has been observed – had elaborated a sort of complex case study which included both the apprehension of evil and that of not achieving a possible advantage. By defining the cause of fear only as an "image of a doubtful thing", however, Spinoza remains more generic. Fear is not the emotional consequence of a specific act of desire but rather a feeling of uncertainty that is both *unstable* and *permanent*. In *Ethics*, fear is qualified as an environmental emotion, a specific colouring of the mind, a constant and continuous backdrop against which expectations and memories are formed.

Undoubtedly, this sentiment recalls Cartesian fear, even if in the description given in *Les Passions* the temporal connotation was not as relevant. In particular, it is the *importance given to the time factor* that represents the original element of Spinoza's definition. In Descartes too, apprehension, as a specification of desire, was connected with thinking about the future. In the aforementioned article LVII, with regard to this passion, Descartes had stated that: «they lead us to look much more to the future than to thepresent or the past»[48]. However, time becomes even more essential in *Ethics* due to the fact that it is also extended to the past. In Spinoza's philosophy, fear is an inconstant feeling (as it often occurs paired with hope) of sadness, arising from a certain interpretation of what has been or what will be. Being afraid means thinking imaginatively, that is, without any certainty, but in a completely personal way, of both the past and the future.

When we are victims of passions, we know according to the first kind of knowledge: imagination. This means that understanding the world is based on the experience of the self, thus implementing a real process of *subjectivization* of reality. Imaginative understanding,

48 Descartes, *The Passions of the Soul*, art. LXVII, in *PW,* II, p. 350. Original French edition: "Mais, affin de les metre par ordre, je distingue les temps, & considerant qu'elles nous portent bien plus à regarder l'avenir que le present ou le passé, je commence par le Desir". *AT*, XI, pp.474-475.

personal and non-objective, of the past is projected onto future expectations, thus helping to determine them. Thus, the continuous alternation of fear and hope in the individual creates a sort of real *existential craving*. The strength of this emotional situation emerges in proposition XII of the fourth part, in which Spinoza writes: "An affect toward a thing which we know does not exist in the present, and which we imagine as possible, is more intense, other things equal, than one toward a contingent thing."[49] It is as if the temporal distance that separates us from what has happened, or from what will happen, instead of attenuating fears and hopes, instead works as a *sounding board*, as also reaffirmed in the demonstration that follows the aforementioned proposition XII, where Spinoza states: "Insofar as we imagine a thing as contingent, we are not affected by any image of another thing that posits the thing's existence."[50]

7. *Echoes of Hobbes in Spinoza's view of fear*

In the previous section we saw that there are essentially two traits characterizing Spinoza's view of fear. First of all, a significant accentuation of the connection between the generation of fear and the perception of time and, secondly, the characterization of fear and hope as indistinct and permanent emotions, on whose development the imaginative perception of lived experiences has the greatest impact. At this point, a comparison with Hobbes's *Leviathan* will make it possible to observe in this text an important source for Spinoza concerning also these aspects.

It is not the definition of fear found in *Leviathan* that is relevant for our understanding of how Spinoza is original with respect to

49 Spinoza*, Ethica*, IV, p. XII, in *CW*, I, p. 778. Original Latin edition: "Affectus erga rem, quam scimus in præsenti non existere, et quam ut possibilem imaginamur, cæteris paribus, intensior est, quam erga contingentem".*G*, II, p. 174.

50 Spinoza*, Ethica*, IV, p. XII, dem., in *CW*, I, p. 778. Original Latin edition: "Quatenus rem ut contingentem imaginamur, nulla alterius rei imagine afficimur, quæ rei existentiam ponat: sed contra quædam imaginamur, quæ ejusdem præsentem existentiam secludunt". *G*, II, p. 218.

Descartes[51]. In Chapter VI it is defined as "Aversion, with opinion of hurt from the Object›". In the English edition, Hobbes uses the term *fear*, while in the Latin edition he uses the word *metus*[52]. In other places in the text, such as in Chapter II, the use of *fear* in the English edition corresponds to the use of the term *timor* in the Latin edition. Therefore, not only does Hobbes not distinguish between fear and apprehension, using the words *fear*, *metus* and *timor* indifferently, but in Chapter VI, where this feeling is considered in greater analytical depth, there is no reference to perception of the past or the future.

What, on the other hand, seems to project a profound influence on the temporal qualification of *metus* in *Ethics*, is the condition of anxiety that Hobbes deals with in Chapter XII and which we dealt with in the first chapter. As has been written, anxiety (*anxietas* in the Latin translation) is described as a particular type of fear, the effect of different needs: it can follow from the awareness of the fact that « it is impossible for a man, who continually endeavoureth to secure himself against the evil he fears, and procure the good he desireth"[53];

This continuous desirous tension, projected onto the future and aimed at the achievement of a specific goal, triggers an excessive stimulation of desire that is *detached* from the specific object to be *disseminated* in a sort of indefinite movement[54]. The fall into this area of indeterminacy gives rise to an ambivalent condition in which the increase of pleasurable excitement, following conative increase, corresponds to a sense of painful frustration, evoked by the inability to direct the will to a specific goal. The effort to ensure a pleasant and happy condition of life, not only in the present but, above all, in the future, imposes continuous and frustrating stresses on desire. Thus, in the flow of experiences, there is a growing sensation of the

51 In the following pages we do not discuss the relevance of fear in Hobbes's political thought. Among the numerous essays that deal with this aspect, I limit myself to mentioning: C. Ginzburg, *Rileggere Hobbes oggi*, pp.51-80.

52 Hobbes, *Leviathan*, in *EW*, III, p. 43.

53 Hobbes, *Leviathan*, in *EW*, III, p.95.

54 In *Leviathan*, anxiety is the product of an "expansion of the horizon of experience" which "forces one to stay in a state of guard", "a condition that poisons existence." D. D'Andrea, *Prometeo e Ulisse,* p. 54.

volubility of memories, desires and joys. We become increasingly aware of the provisional nature of emotions. We learn that what we feel is always temporary and transitory[55].

Due to the changing nature of experiences, man is induced to devalue current emotions, distracting himself from them and, instead, paying increasing attention to the feelings arising from predictions. The pursuit of happiness thus becomes a race that knows no let-up: "Felicity", writes Hobbes, "is a continual progress of the desire."[56]. Desire as such always seems destined not to be satisfied in the present, which is why it turns into preoccupation for the future. There is an *original insatiability*, decisive in Hobbes's anthropology, which makes men, especially those who reach out too far with thought, similar to Prometheus. Similarly to the Greek hero, whose *liver* was eaten by eagles that the condemned man was forced to see coming from afar, "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".[57]. Promethean man is induced by the need for knowledge and fear of the future to strive to control the infinite necessities of life. However, just as he tries to achieve this unattainable ideal, instead of obtaining certainty and independence, he is forced to confront the suffering of his own mortal condition, always dependent on the nature and choices of others. Anxiety consists in the perception of one's own finitude; it is the result of this awareness. Conceiving the present in relation to the future, man, as tragically mortal, constantly lives in a dimension of uncertainty[58]. This condition is the emotion par excellence in

55 The transience of any sensation is also reiterated in Chapter VI, where Hobbes writes: "And because the constitution of a man's body is in continual mutation; it is impossible that all the same things should always cause in him the same appetites, and aversions: much less can all men consent, in the desire of almost any one and the same object". Hobbes, *Leviathan*, in *EW*, III, pp.80-81.

56 Hobbes, *Leviathan*, in *EW*, III, pp. 85

57 Hobbes, *Leviathan*, in *EW*, III, p. 95.

58 On the imaginative nature of the perception of time in Hobbes, cf. G. Gorham, "Hobbes on the Reality of Time", in *Hobbes Studies*, XVII, 2014, pp. 80-103.

Hobbesian anthropology, which makes the "passing of time" the decisive element for the knowledge of passions and affects.

Thus described, anxiety in *Leviathan* presents some significant similarities with fear in Spinoza. While this is in fact a kind of restlessness, born from the inability to control the future, similarly, Spinoza defines as a condition of sadness, the result of the insecurity felt in the presence of *time that is not present*, future or past. Not only fear (*metus*), understood as a feeling of time, but also the Spinozian notion of apprehension (the investigation of which was suspended in the previous section) can be compared to Hobbes's anxiety. Also in *Ethics*, apprehension (*timor*) does not define an emotion other than fear. Furthermore, unlike Descartes, this affect is not distinguished from fear either by intensity or by virtue of the temporal distance that separates perception from what is causing it. Rather, in the Spinozian philosophy of passions, fear *completes* and identifies a specific aspect of the definition of fear. In the scholium of proposition XXXIX of the third part this feeling is defined as follows:

> Further, this affect, by which a man is so disposed that he does not will what he wills, and wills what he does not will, is called Apprehension, which is therefore nothing but fear insofar as a man is disposed by it to avoid an evil he judges to be future by encountering a lesser evil (see P28). [59]

The dispositional attitude that arises from a condition of fear is defined as apprehensive. We are guided by apprehension when we make a choice, which in itself is not desirable, but considered necessary to remedy a mistake made, or to avoid what are presumed to be the bad consequences of our actions. From this point of view, apprehensive behaviour consists of a particular torsion of the conative tension. Growing up in fear, those who feel apprehension

59 *E* III, prop. XXXIX, schol., in *CW*, I, p. 732. The English word Timidity, used by Edwin Curley, is replaced here by the word Apprehension. Original Latin edition: "Timor, vocatur, qui proinde nihil aliud est, quam metus, quatenus homo ab eodem disponitur, ad malum, quod futurum judicat, minore vitandum. *G*, II, p. 170.

will always be accompanied by a feeling of sadness. For Descartes, apprehension was a sort of perception of insecurity deriving from the awareness that a specific desire could not be realized. In Spinoza fear consists of a particular sadness, generated by the choice of the lesser evil. An attitude and behaviour of this type may sometimes appear prudent, that is to say, offer the illusion of leading to virtuous actions. In the demonstration following definition XLVIII, Spinoza denies this hypothesis, writing that:

> And even if it can happen that a greedy, ambitious, or apprehensive man abstains from too much food, drink, and sexual union, still, Greed, Ambition, and Timidity are not opposites of gluttony, drunkenness, or lust.[60]

The distinction between apprehensive behaviour and the practice of virtue is also reiterated in proposition LXIII of the fourth part, which reads:

> He who is guided by Fear, and does good to avoid evil, is not guided by reason.[61].

This trait for which fear can play an effective – albeit not virtuous in itself – function of regulating individual and collective behaviours, is closely connected to Spinoza's vision of religious experience. In the preface of the *TTP*, we read: "The reason, then, why superstition arises, lasts, and increases, is fear." [62]

Thesis reaffirmed in the scholium of proposition LXIII, in which Spinoza writes:

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60 *E* III, def. XLVIII, expl., in *CW*, I, p. 763. Original Latin edition "Et tametsi fieri potest, ut homo avarus, ambitiosus, vel timidus a nimio cibo, potu, et coitu abstineat, Avaritia tamen, Ambitio, et Timor luxuriæ, ebrietati, vel libidini non sunt contrarii. "*G*, II, p. 203.

61 *E* IV, prop. LXIII, in *CW*, I, p. 817. "Qui Metu ducitur, et bonum, ut malum vitet, agit, is ratione non ducitur." *G*, II, p. 214.

62 *TTP*, praf., 4, in *CW*, II, p. 1288. Original Latin Edition: "Causa itaque, a qua superstitio oritur, conservatur, et fovetur, metus est."*G*, III, p. 6.

> "The superstitious know how to reproach people for their vices better than they know how to teach them virtues, and they strive, not to guide men by reason, but to restrain them by Fear, so that they flee the evil rather than love virtues."[63]

Precisely this aspect naturally makes us think of Hobbes, who after having outlined an anthropology in which there is constant reference to anxiety, understood as the emotion of finitude, affirms, again in chapter XII, that in history, the practice of religion and theological knowledge have been the areas, respectively of experience and thought, dedicated to reassuring man in the light of his insecurity "regarding the time to come"[64].

8. *In the face of apprehension. Descartes and Spinoza: a comparison*

After having considered the characteristics of apprehension and fear in *The Passions of the Soul* and in *Ethics*, once the influence that "Hobbesian anxiety" exerts on Spinoza's definition of fear has been highlighted, and having identified the salient aspects of rational knowledge and intuition, we need to ask ourselves what margins of freedom remain for the individual when he is *acted on* by passions and, in particular, by fear. To answer this question, we will look at the complex relationship between emotionality and reason, first by referring to Descartes, and subsequently to Spinoza.

Common to both positions is an awareness that man can rarely oppose apprehension and fear. Under certain circumstances, these emotions will inevitably be generated in the body. In article XXXVI Descartes notes that, although it is often inevitable to feel fear, when one is not completely immobilized, it is possible to respond by resorting to *courage*, thus making it possible to control one's

63 *E* IV, prop. LXIII, schol., in *CW*, I, p. 817. Original Latin Edition "Superstitiosi, qui vitia exprobrare magis, quam virtutes docere norunt, et qui homines non ratione ducere, sed Metu ita continere student, ut malum potius fugiant, quam virtutes ament, nil aliud intendunt, quam ut reliqui æque, ac ipsi, fiant miseri," *G*, II, p. 257.

64 Hobbes, *Leviathan*, in *EW,* III, p. 94.

emotional state thanks to the combination of will and rationality. To *govern fear*, *rationality*, understood as anticipated reflection (*premeditation*), is called upon to devise solutions to avoid danger or to respond effectively to it. Only the balanced use of reason can allow us to achieve a clear vision of ourselves and of the circumstances in which we are called to act, but in order for this to result in the adoption of a specific behaviour, the correct use of reason must be supported by *willpower*. The illustration of this kind of response to fear is found in article CCXI, in which, in order to oppose impetuous passions, Descartes advises us to "be careful" before acting, avoiding making "instant decisions" dictated by instinct[65]. Thirdly, in order to stabilize the will and allow for the correct use of reason, Descartes focuses on the indispensability of the individual's adoption of a series of habits that help maintain the highest possible degree of mental and physical health. Without the implementation of virtuous and disciplined behaviour, the will is not placed in a position to properly avail itself of rationality. Again in paragraph CCXI, Descartes writes: "That is, when they feel themselves in the grip of fear they will try to turn their mind from consideration of the danger by thinking about the reasons why there is much more security and honour in resistance than in flight". [66].

Although not all men are able to assume a balanced emotional attitude, when this happens, this means that the soul, by appealing to its own willpower and its own rational abilities, succeeds, by virtue of the real difference that distinguishes it from the body, to remain *active* and *immune* from passionate disorder.

At this point it is possible to draw some conclusive considerations

65 Descartes, *The Passions of the Soul*, art. CCXI, in *PW*, I, p. 404. Original French Edition: "Mais ce qu'il me semble que ceux qui sont accoustumez à faire reflexion sur leurs actions peuvent tousjours, c'est que, lors qu'ils se sentiront saisis de la Peur, ils tascheront à detourner leur pensée de la consideration du danger, en se representant les raisons pour lesquelles il y a beaucoup plus de seureté & plus d'honneur, en la resistance qu'en la fuite." *AT*, XI, p. 487

66 *Ibi*. On the role and function of habit in Descartes's philosophy, see J. M. Gabaude, *Liberté et raison,* pp. 240-247 and F. Bonicalzi, *Passioni della Scienza: Descartes e la nascita della psicologia*, Jaca Book, Milano 1990, pp. 44-49.

on "Cartesian" fear. Like all passions, this feeling also affects the body and mind simultaneously, manifesting itself in a series of physical symptoms, always accompanied by the formulation of thoughts relating to the circumstances. There are two forms in which fear can be specified: apprehension and real fear. Both are particular forms of desire. Any desirous drive, perceived in the background of an environmental condition which is either dangerous or simply does not correspond to our expectations, can give rise to apprehension or fear. When we feel a sense of imminent danger we feel fear; when we are worried about something that is still separated from us by a little time, then, we feel apprehension. The consideration of these passions as forms of desire is the most relevant innovation of the Cartesian model, and the solutions identified to overcome this suffering all take up the idea of a possible *instrumental use* of reason, a fairly frequent feature in contemporary treatises on passions. Mastering the passions by resorting to reason and will does not seem to be particularly original compared to the views expressed by authors such as Lipsio and Charron on the same subject[67]. Thanks to reason and will, the soul, truly distinct from the body, is able to rise above its own emotional disorder and to control, if not fear as such, the implementation of dysfunctional behaviours that may derive from it. While it is true that will and rationality are presented as transcendent principles entrusted with the task of governing passions, Descartes is also aware that not all men are able to use the knowledge of truth to achieve a correct use of the passions. It will thus be necessary to establish a series of bodily and mental habits aimed at creating those conditions of physical and emotional health and strength which are indispensable if we are to rise above the turmoil of passions.

67 On the subject of self-discipline in Charron, see P. Schiera, *Specchi della politica: disciplina, melancolia, socialità nell'Occidente moderno* (Bologna: il Mulino, 1999). On the similarities between Descartes and neo-Stoicism regarding the capacity of reason to carry out effective emotional control, cf. G. Canziani, *Filosofia e scienza nella morale di Descartes* (Firenze: La Nuova Italia Editrice, 1980), pp. 53-54; and pp. 89-92.

9. *Towards liberation*

Comparing Spinoza's model of governing passions with the Cartesian model means, first of all, understanding whether and how, also for Spinoza, it is possible to free oneself from fear through a correct use of rationality. In *Ethics*, tenacy of mind (*animositas*) is the emotional disposition identified as a possible barrier to fear. Unlike fear, steadfastness is not a passion, and consists of a shrewd and strategic use of reason. "For by Tenacity – Spinoza writes in scholium of proposition LIX of the third part – I understand the Desire by which each one strives, solely from the dictate of reason, to preserve his being."[68] Having self-preservation as its goal, steadfastness can lead to a rational behaviour capable of governing fear. "I relate to Tenacity" "Those actions, therefore, which aim only at the agent's advantage", which means for Spinoza to be temperate, sober, and to have "presence of mind in danger".[69]

Similarly to what was stated on the subject of the regulation of passions in *Les Passions de l'âme*, to practice Spinozian steadfastness it is necessary to implement, through the repetition of virtuous behaviours, a balanced combination of reason and *attention*. To remain *impassive* and be prey to emotional disturbances, it is essential to develop an adequate vision of the relationship between oneself (one's behaviour, one's experiences and one's expectations) and the reality external to us. This means, however, in the first place stripping the vision of reality of any *subjective dross*, overcoming the passions through the knowledge of common notions and, secondly, *desiring only what is possible*. The essence of every man is the ability, more or less developed and conscious, to regulate desire by resorting

68 *E* III, prop. LIX, schol., in *CW*, I, p. 749. Original Latin edition: "Nam per Animositatem intelligo Cupiditatem, qua unusquisque conatur suum esse ex solo." *G*, II, p. 188-189.

69 *E* III, prop. LIX, schol., in *CW*, I, p. 749. Original Latin edition: "Eas itaque actiones, quæ solum agentis utile intendunt, ad Animositatem, et quæ alterius etiam utile intendunt, ad Generositatem refero. Temperantia igitur, Sobrietas, et animi in periculis præsentia, et Animositatis sunt species; Modestia autem, Clementia &c. spe|cies Generositatis sunt. " *G*, II, p. 188-189.

to rationality, understood as a realistic knowledge of the causal links within which each individual is, from time to time, engaged. This regulation, unlike the Cartesian model, is not constituted as an act of will but, rather, as an enlargement of consciousness, made possible by the knowledge of truth. For Spinoza, reality always has a necessary structure. Nothing happens by chance. Each event arises from a rigid chain of causes and effects.

Man, however, can not always know the necessity of the relationships in which he is forced to live. In particular, since man is finite, it is difficult to know the declinations that his essence will assume, if involved in uncertain relationships. As highlighted at the beginning of the chapter, whenever reality is perceived as a product of the will, one can only experience the idea of the future with sadness and anguish. On the contrary, only a realistic awareness of the concrete possibilities at our disposal can facilitate a slow and progressive control of fear.

From this perspective, there emerges an idea of *wisdom* understood as a particular understanding of the necessary order of nature that makes the individual *capable of desiring* only what is *realistically* possible. To achieve this condition, defined in the *Ethics* as one of *adequacy*, it will be necessary to accept the existence of a margin of inevitable *uncertainty*, always persisting between the natural expectation of realizing one's desires and the impossibility of fully controlling the development of reality.[70] The transformation of passions into affects is a difficult path that requires constant application. Only a few men are able to achieve the rational control of their emotions and an adequate knowledge of the relationship with nature, such as to produce, even in the most difficult conditions, an increase in desire.

To do this, in other words not to surrender self-satisfaction even in the most adverse circumstances, it is necessary to develop a rational knowledge of the surrounding environment, to know the laws of nature and the causes that determine our condition. Only this kind of knowledge can induce man to transform his passions into affects,

70 On this topic see: P. M de Cuzzani,"Une anthropologie de l'homme décentré", *Philosophiques*, XXIX, 2002, 1, pp. 7-21.

that is, to change his intellectual, emotional and even physical structure, from passive to active. This reformulation of the individual passionate order is not carried out as control or sublimation, but will rather consist in a real *remodulation* of the individual identity through the ability to produce common notions, that is, intuitions of natural necessity. To *understand oneself as a part*, it will be necessary to recognize the elements of equality shared with the rest of nature.

A few more words, to conclude, on the comparison between Descartes and Spinoza. We saw some significant differences between *Ethics* and *The Passions* regarding the description of the properties of fear and apprehension. In particular, Spinoza, more than Descartes, attributes these affects with the capacity to pervade every area of experience, and to explain this greater relevance, Chapter XII of *Leviathan* was referred to as the source. Spinoza derives from the comparison with Hobbes's concept of anxiety, the need to include in the clarification of what is to be understood by fear and apprehension, not only the reference to the function of desire, but also the modalities of reception and metabolization of the past and of the future, proper to the sentient subject. It is precisely this relationship with non-present time that makes passions such as hope, fear or fear relevant, because they are extremely frequent[71].

Fear and apprehension are constant emotions, since the Spinozian man, although he tries to meditate on life and not death, is nevertheless continually induced by his imaginative capacity to conceive the present in relation to what he has experienced in the past and to what he hopes for the future. On this aspect, Spinoza's position coincides with that of Hobbes. Precisely this expansion on the time to come is undoubtedly the relevant difference to Descartes, for whom, all in all, fear and fear remain episodic passions and not constantly present.

As regards, however, the possibility of rationally governing fear, we may conclude that Spinoza does not arrive at a corrective model

71 On the theme of temporality in Spinoza, with particular reference, however, to the philosophical-political theme of the temporality of the multitude, see: V. Morfino, *Plural temporality: Transindividuality and the Aleatory between Spinoza and Althusser* (Leiden: Brill, 2014), pp. 132-173.

of these feelings that is substantially different from that of Descartes. Rather, in the *Ethics*, and in particular thanks to his elaboration of the notion of fear, Spinoza problematizes the difficulty of adopting Descartes's model of the rational government of fear.

For Descartes, fear is contained by integrating a correct use of reason with a certain steadfastness of the will, capable of inhibiting impulsive actions. The soul has the ability to rein in fear, provided it is able to know the environment and the conditions by virtue of which our desire is transformed into fear or apprehension, and if – through the exercise of the will – it manages to avoid acting impulsively. Precisely in the modification of these assumptions, implemented through the call to a voluntary effort, Descartes identifies the solution, the only possible one, to overcome the impasse into which one is thrown when one experiences this feeling.

Even Spinoza recognizes the existence of a rational way of governing fear, called *steadfastness of mind*, whose characteristics are not very different from those posited by Descartes. It is a strategic use of reason, aimed at grasping natural necessity[72]. *Spinozian steadfastness* is an adaptation of desire, of the conative instinct, to natural necessity. It is the ability to resist the physical impulses that tend, instead, to place the subject at the mercy of their desires, but also of their fears. Unlike Descartes, however, Spinoza completes the ideal of steadfastness, comparing it with the reference to usually typical behaviour produced by fear, that is, acting fearfully. Apprehension leads us to choose what we really do not want. Acting apprehensively means adapting to the lesser evil, or – as often happens in religious communities – adopting a series of behaviours, perhaps right in themselves, but practised only because prescribed by the authority that is feared. This behaviour, which is an immediate consequence of the fear of the future and of God's punishment, remains passionate, and for this reason Spinoza affirms that, regardless of the content of the action undertaken, it can never be called truly virtuous.

72 On this difference in the reason-will-passion relationship between Descartes and Spinoza, see also G. Lloyd, "Rationalizing the passions. Spinoza on reason and the passions", in *The Soft Underbelly of Reason: the Passions in the Seventeenth Century*, edited by S. Gaukroger (London, New York: Routledge, 1998), pp. 34-49.

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