

# The Passions of the Soul

René Descartes

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[Brackets] enclose editorial explanations. Small ·dots· enclose material that has been added, but can be read as though it were part of the original text. Occasional •bullets, and also indenting of passages that are not quotations, are meant as aids to grasping the structure of a sentence or a thought. Every four-point ellipsis . . . . indicates the omission of a brief passage that seems to present more difficulty than it is worth. Longer omissions are reported between brackets in normal-sized type.—The division of the work into 212 articles, and their headings, are Descartes's. When an article starts with 'This. . .' or 'Therefore. . .' or the like, it follows on not from its heading but from the end of the preceding article; see for example articles 138–9 and 165–6.—Many articles start with 'It must be observed' or 'Next we should take notice' or the like; these throat-clearings are dropped from the present version.—Part 2 starts on page 17, Part 3 on page 44. The full table of contents is at the end.

First launched: October 2010

## Glossary

**animal spirits:** This stuff was supposed to be even more finely divided than air, able to move extremely fast, seep into tiny crevices, and affect the environment *within* the nerves (article 12). Apparently some people thought of spirits as so rarefied as to be almost mind-like(!), and thus suitable to mediate between mind and body; but Descartes is innocent of this absurdity. Its most famous occurrence is in Donne's superb lines: 'As our blood labours to beget / Spirits as like souls as it can, / Because such fingers need to knit / The subtle knot that makes us man. . . .'

**beast:** This translates Descartes's *bête* which always means 'nonhuman animal' or 'lower animal'. His word *animal* doesn't necessarily exclude humans.

**bitter:** Descartes thinks that a passion of yours will be especially bitter if you are the whole cause of it (articles 63, 197, 191). This is odd; but there seems to be no alternative to the translation of *amère* as 'bitter'.

**brings it about that:** This work uses two basic forms for speaking of things' making other things happen:

(a) x makes y do A

(b) x brings it about that y does A.

On dozens of occasions Descartes uses (b) instead of (a), and may sometimes be sheering away from explicitly crediting x with *making* y do something, *acting causally* on y, especially where x or y is the soul—see for example articles 41–44. This version uses the (b) form whenever there's a chance that it has that significance.

**contemn:** This is a standard English verb meaning 'have contempt for'. It translates Descartes's verb *mépriser*.

**contempt:** This translates Descartes's noun *mépris*. It and

the related verb must be understood in a weaker sense than 'contempt' now has: to have 'contempt' for something was to write it off as negligible—e.g. a hero could be said to have 'contempt for the pain of his wounds'. See articles 54, 149 and 207.

**de volonté:** In articles 79–81, 84, 107 and 121 Descartes speaks of joining oneself *de volonté* with something else. This could mean joining oneself voluntarily, by volition, but it seems clear that Descartes is reserving this odd phrase for a special purpose. You join yourself *de volonté* with the person you love if you *will yourself into a state in which you feel as though* you and that person are the two parts of a whole. See especially article 80.

**evil:** This means merely 'something bad'. In French the adjectives for 'good' and 'bad' can also be used as nouns; in English we can do this with 'good' ('friendship is a good'), but not with bad ('pain is a bad'), and it is customary in English to use 'evil' for this purpose (e.g. 'pain is an evil', and 'the problem of evil' meaning 'the problem posed by the existence of bad states of affairs'). Don't load the word with all the force it has in English when used as an adjective. For the cognate adjective, this version always uses 'bad'.

**fortune:** It seems inevitable that this word be used to translate the French *fortune*; but almost every occurrence of it will read better if you silently replace it by 'luck'.

**hatred:** The inevitable translation of *haine*, though you'll notice that Descartes seems to use it more widely, because often less fiercely, than we do.

**idea:** In this version 'idea' always translates Descartes's *idée*. Throughout most of his works *idées* are mental, but in this

one they are always images in the brain. Articles 75, 103, 106, 120, 136, 149.

**jealousy:** This rendering of *jalousie* involves a sense that the English word used to have but now mostly doesn't, a sense in which, for example, a man might be said to be 'jealous of his reputation'. This is clear in article 167.

**our, we:** When this version has Descartes speaking of what 'we do', that is sometimes strictly correct, but often it slightly mistranslates something that literally speaks of what 'one does'. It is normal idiomatic French to use *on* = 'one' much oftener than we can use 'one' in English without sounding stilted (Fats Waller: 'One never knows, do one?'). This version doesn't mark the difference between places where 'we' translates *nous* and ones where it mistranslates *on*.

**rarefied:** In early modern times, 'rare' and the French *rare* meant the opposite of 'dense', and was usually understood to mean 'very finely divided'. In articles 9 and 10, Descartes is evidently assuming that when heat makes blood or animal spirits expand it does this by rarefying them.

**regret:** As used in articles 67 and 209, this translation of the French *regret* carries a French rather than an English meaning. In French, to regret something can be to miss it, look back with longing at the time when you had it, perhaps to mourn it. *Je regrette ma jeunesse* doesn't mean I am sorry about things that I did when young; it means that I am sad about the loss of my youth.

**remorse:** The inevitable translation of *remords*, though the meanings are slightly different. Articles 60 and 177 both show that for Descartes *remords* essentially involves

uncertainty about whether one has acted wrongly, which our 'remorse' doesn't.

**shrinking reluctance:** The topic here is a state of shrinking reluctance to risk something or, near the end of article 187, to endure something. The clumsy phrase is adopted, without enthusiasm, as the best translation of Descartes's *lâcheté*, the conventional meaning of which—namely 'cowardice'—seems never to be right in the present work.

**thought:** This translates Descartes's *pensée*, but remember that he uses this word to cover mental events of all kinds, not merely ones that you and I would call 'thoughtful'.

**vice:** This translates Descartes's noun *vice* which simply means 'bad behaviour (of whatever kind)'. Don't load it with the extra meaning it tends to carry today. The cognate adjective *vicieux* is translated throughout by 'unvirtuous'; our sense of that word may a bit weak for what Descartes means, but not by as much as our sense of 'vicious' would be too strong.

**will:** When this occurs as a verb, it translates *vouloir*, which ordinarily means 'want'. This version speaks of our 'willing' something in contexts where Descartes is clearly thinking of this as something we *do*, as an *act* of the will, a *volition*. You'll get the idea if you try replacing 'will' by 'want' in articles 18 and 19.

**wonder:** This may be a slightly too weak translation for Descartes's *admiration*, but it's hard to know what else to use. You'll see from article 53, and from the opening of article 56, that 'admiration' is a flatly wrong translation.

**Some of the material in this Glossary is taken from the Lexicon in Stephen Voss's wonderfully full and informative edition of this work (Hackett Publishing Co., 1989).**

## **Part I: The Passions in General and incidentally the whole nature of man**

### **1. Anything that is a passion with regard to one subject is an action with regard to something else**

The most glaring defect in the sciences we have from the ancients is what they wrote about the passions. This topic has been strenuously explored, and doesn't seem to be especially hard to investigate because we all feel passions in ourselves and so don't need to look elsewhere for observations to establish their nature; and yet the teachings of the ancients about the passions are so skimpy and mostly so implausible that I can't hope to approach the truth except by leaving the paths they have followed. So I'll have to write as though I were considering a topic that no-one had dealt with before me.

To start with, I note that anything that happens is generally labelled by philosophers as a 'passion' with regard to the subject to which it happens and an 'action' with regard to whatever brings it about that it happens. Thus, although the agent and patient—the maker and the undergoer—are often quite different, an action and passion are always a single thing that has these two names because of the two different subjects to which it may be related.

### **2. To understand the soul's passions we must distinguish its functions from the body's**

Next point: We are not aware of any subject that acts more immediately on our soul than the body to which it is joined; so we should recognize that passions in the soul are usually actions in the body. To come to know about our passions, therefore, there's no better approach than to examine the

difference between the soul and the body, so as to learn which of the two is responsible for each of the things we do.

### **3. The rule to be followed in doing this**

We won't find this very hard to do if we bear this in mind: anything we experience as being in us, and which we see can also exist in wholly inanimate bodies, can be attributed only to our body; and anything in us that we can't conceive of as being somehow had by a body must be attributed to our soul.

### **4. The heat and movement of our body-parts come from the body; thoughts come from the soul**

Thus, because we have no conception of the body as somehow thinking, we have reason to believe that all our thoughts, of whatever kind, belong to the soul. And because we're sure that some inanimate bodies can move in as many ways as our bodies, if not more, and have as much heat as our body-parts, if not more. . . ., we ought to believe that all the heat and all the movements present in us, not being dependent on thought, belong solely to the body.

### **5. It is an error to believe that the soul gives movement and heat to the body**

This will enable us to avoid a very serious error that many have fallen into—I reckon that it's the primary cause of our failure to give a good account of the passions or of anything else belonging to the soul. The error goes like this:

‘Since dead bodies don’t have any heat or motion, it is the absence of the soul that causes them to be cold and motionless.’

Thus it has been wrongly believed that our natural heat and all our bodily movements depend on the soul; whereas we ought to hold that the dependence goes the other way—the soul leaves our body when we die only because this heat ceases and the organs that move the body decay.

### 6. How a living body differs from a dead one

To avoid this error, let us note that death is never due to •the absence of the soul but only to •the decay of some principal part of the body. And let us recognize that

the body of a living man

differs from

the body of a dead man

in just the same way that

a watch or other automaton (i.e. self-moving machine) when it is wound up and contains within itself the physical source of the movements for which it is designed, together with everything else needed for its operation

differs from

the same watch or machine when it is broken and the source of its movement has stopped working.

### 7. A brief account of the parts of the body and some of its functions

To make this more intelligible I shall explain in a few words the over-all structure of our body’s machine. Everyone knows that we contain a heart, brain, stomach, muscles, nerves, arteries, veins, and the like. We know too that the

food we eat goes down to the stomach and bowels, from where its juices flow into the liver and all the veins, mixing with the blood in the veins and thus increasing its quantity. Those who have heard *anything* about medicine also know •how the heart is constructed and •how the blood in the veins can flow easily from the *vena cava* into its right-hand side, from there into the lungs through the arterial vein, then back to the heart through the venous artery running to its left-hand side, and finally from there into the great artery, whose branches spread through the whole body. Likewise anyone who hasn’t been completely blinded by the authority of the ancients, and has been willing to open his eyes to examine Harvey’s view about the circulation of the blood, will be sure that the body’s veins and arteries are like streams through which the blood constantly rushes. [Descartes now repeats what he said above about blood-flow to and from the heart. Then:] The two cavities of the heart are thus like sluices through which all the blood passes upon each circuit through the body. It is also •generally• known that every movement of the limbs depends on the muscles, which are organised into opposing pairs: when a muscle x becomes shorter, it pulls on the part of the body to which it is attached, and that lengthens the other member of the pair y. Then, if later on y happens to shorten, it makes x lengthen again. . . . Finally, it is •generally• known that all these movements of the muscles, and likewise all sensations, depend on the nerves, which are like little threads or tubes coming from the brain and containing a certain very fine air or wind that is called the ‘animal spirits’. [see Glossary] The brain contains animal spirits too.

### 8. The root source of all these functions

But it is *not* commonly known how these animal spirits and nerves help to produce movements and sensations, or what physical cause makes them act. So although I have already touched on this in other writings, I'll say something about it here. Just this: while we are alive there is a continual heat in our hearts, a kind of fire maintained there by the blood from the veins. This fire is the physical cause of all the movements of our limbs.

### 9. How the heart moves

The fire's first effect is to make the blood in the heart's cavities expand. So the blood, needing more space, rushes from the right-hand cavity into **(a)** the arterial vein and from the left-hand cavity into **(b)** the great artery. Then, when this expansion has stopped, new blood rushes into the right-hand cavity of the heart from **(c)** the vena cava, and into the left-hand cavity from **(d)** the venous artery. (For there are tiny membranes at the entrances to these four vessels that are so arranged that the blood can enter the heart only through **(c)** and **(d)**, and leave it only through **(a)** and **(b)**.) When the new blood has entered the heart it is immediately rarefied [see Glossary] in the same way as before. This and this alone is what the pulse—the beating of the heart and arteries—consists in, with a new beat every time new blood enters the heart. It is also the sole cause of the movement of the blood, making it constantly rush through all the arteries and veins, carrying with it the heat it acquires in the heart; in taking this heat to all the other parts of the body, it provides them with nourishment.

### 10. How the animal spirits are produced in the brain

Something that matters more here is the fact that all the most lively and finest parts of the blood, which have been rarefied by the heat in the heart, constantly pour into the cavities of the brain. Why do they go there rather than elsewhere? It's because all the blood leaving the heart through **(b)** the great artery follows a straight line towards the brain; but not all this blood can enter the brain because the passages are too narrow; only the most active and finest parts can go in there, while the rest of the blood spreads out into the other regions of the body. Now these very fine parts of the blood constitute the animal spirits. All that is needed for them to be animal spirits is being sifted out from the less fine parts of the blood. There's nothing intrinsically special about these 'spirits', as I call them; they are merely bodies, like any other bodies except for being extremely small and moving very fast, like flames shooting out from a bonfire. They never stop anywhere; as some of them enter the brain's cavities, others leave the brain through the pores in its substance. These pores steer them into the nerves, and from there to the muscles, which is how the animal spirits move the body in all the different ways it is capable of.

### 11. How the muscles' movements occur

For, as already mentioned in article 7, the sole cause of all the movements of the parts of the body is the shortening of certain muscles and the lengthening of the opposed muscles. What brings it about that one muscle *x* becomes shorter rather than its opposite muscle *y* is simply that fractionally more spirits from the brain come to *x* than to *y*. The spirits that come immediately from the brain aren't enough by themselves to move the muscles; but they cause the other spirits that are already in muscle *x* to leave it very suddenly

and pass into y. In this way x becomes longer and more relaxed, and y, being suddenly swollen by sudden influx of spirits from x, becomes shorter and pulls the limb to which it is attached. You'll find this easy to grasp provided you know that the continuous flow of animal spirits from the brain to any muscle is very small, and that every muscle always contains a good store of its own spirits. These move fast, sometimes •whirling around without going anywhere (when they find no passages open for them to leave through), and sometimes •flowing into the opposed muscle. Each muscle has small openings through which the spirits can flow between that muscle and its opposite number; and these are so arranged that when •the spirits from the brain to one muscle x are ever so slightly more forceful than those going to the other muscle y, •they open all the passages through which the spirits in x can pass into y, while closing all the passages through which the spirits in y could pass into x. In this way all the spirits previously contained in the two muscles are gathered very rapidly in y, thus making it swell and become shorter, while x lengthens and relaxes.

## 12. How external objects act on the sense organs

The spirits don't flow uniformly from the brain to the muscles—they sometimes more flow to some muscles than to others—and we still have to know what causes this. In the case of humans, one of these causes is the soul's activity (I'll explain this later); but there are two other notable causes that depend only on the body. I'll deal with one right away; the other will be the topic of article 14. (i) The first consists in differences in the movements that external objects arouse in the sense organs. I have already explained this quite fully in my *Optics*; but I'll go through it again here so that the reading of the present work can be self-contained. There are

three things to consider in the nerves:

- The marrow, or interior substance, extends in the form of tiny fibres from their origin in the brain to the extremities of the other parts of the body to which they are attached.

- The membranes surrounding the fibres form little tubes in which the fibres are enclosed; these are continuous with the membranes in which the brain is wrapped.

- The animal spirits that are carried by these tubes from the brain to the muscles provide the fibres with a low-resistance medium to float in, and so they cause the fibres to remain so completely free and extended that any tiny movement at one end of a fibre sends a movement along the fibre to the relevant part of the brain; just as we make one end of a cord move by pulling the other end.

## 13. This action of external objects can direct the spirits into the muscles in various ways

I explained in my *Optics* how the objects of sight get through to us solely by producing . . . motions in the fibres of the optic nerves at the back of our eyes, thus producing motions in the regions of the brain where these nerves originate. I explained too that •all the qualitative variety that we see in things comes from the corresponding variety in those motions in the nervous system, and that •what immediately represent these objects to the soul are not motions in the eye but motions in the brain. This account of eyesight makes it easy to conceive how sounds, smells, tastes, heat, pain, hunger, thirst—and quite generally all the objects of our external senses and of our internal appetites—also produce in our nerves some movement that passes through them to the brain. Besides causing our soul to have various different sensations, these various movements in the brain can also act without the soul, causing the spirits to make their way to

certain muscles rather than others, and so causing them to move our limbs. I shall prove this here by one example only. If someone suddenly thrusts his hand in front of our eyes as if to strike us, then even if we know that he is our friend, that he is doing this only in fun, and that he will take care not to harm us, we still find it difficult to prevent ourselves from closing our eyes. This shows that it is not through the mediation of our soul that they close, since this action is contrary to our volition, which is the soul's only activity, or at least its main one. They close rather because the mechanism of our body is so composed that the movement of the hand towards our eyes produces another movement in our brain, which directs the animal spirits into the muscles that make our eyelids drop.

**14. Differences among the spirits may also cause them to take various different courses**

(ii) The other cause of variety in the flow of the animal spirits to the muscles is the variety in how fast the spirits are moving and how small their parts are. When some of their parts are coarser and more agitated than others, they penetrate more deeply in a straight line into the brain's cavities and pores, and in this way they are directed to muscles that they wouldn't have gone to if they'd had less force.

**15. The causes of the differences among the spirits**

This inequality can arise from differences in the materials of which the spirits are composed. We see this in people who have drunk a lot of wine: the wine's vapours get quickly into the blood and rise from the heart to the brain, where they turn into spirits which, being stronger and more abundant than the spirits that are usually there, can move the body in many strange ways. Such differences among the spirits can also come from differences in the conditions of the heart,

liver, stomach, spleen and all the other organs that help to produce them. [Descartes adds two rather wordy details about how this can happen: •nerves that control the widths of openings to the heart; and •differences in the strength of thrust of spirits from different parts of the body.]

**16. How all parts of the body can be moved by outer objects and by the spirits without the soul's help**

Our body's machine is so constructed that changes in the movements of the spirits can affect which pores in the brain are more open and which less. Conversely, when an •action of the sensory nerves opens one of those pores a tiny bit more or less than usual, this affects how the spirits move and directs them into the muscles that control how the body is usually moved when such an •action occurs. Thus every movement we make without any input from our will—as often happens when we breathe, walk, eat and indeed when do anything that the beasts [see Glossary] also do—depends solely on the lay-out of the parts of our body and on the route that the spirits, aroused by the heat of the heart, follow naturally in the brain, nerves and muscles. It's just as a watch's movement is produced solely by the strength of its spring and the configuration of its wheels.

**17. The soul's functions**

Now that we have looked at all the things the body can do unaided, it's easy for us to see that there is nothing in us that we *must* attribute to our soul except our thoughts [see Glossary]. There are two main kinds of thoughts—actions of the soul and passions of the soul. The ones I call 'actions' are all our volitions, ·i.e. acts of the will·, because we experience them as coming directly from our soul with, apparently, no input from anything else. On the other hand, our various



perceptions or items of knowledge can be called the soul's 'passions'—taking this word in a very general sense—because they are often not actively **made** by our soul but rather passively **received** by the soul from the things that they represent.

### 18. The will

Our volitions in their turn divide into two sorts: •actions of the soul that aim only at something in the soul itself, as when we will [see Glossary] to **love God** or in any way to apply our mind to some object that isn't material; and •actions of the soul that aim at some event in our body, as when we will to **walk** . . .

### 19. Perception

Our perceptions (•or items of knowledge•) are also of two sorts, one sort caused by the soul and the other sort by the body. The ones caused by the soul are our perceptions of our volitions and of all the •imaginings or other thoughts that depend on •them. We can't will anything without *thereby* perceiving that we are willing it—that's for sure. And although our soul is active in willing, it is passive in its perception of that action. But because this perception is really one and the same thing as the volition, and names are always based on whatever sounds better, we usually don't call it a 'passion' but an 'action'.

### 20. Imaginings and other thoughts that are formed by the soul

When our soul applies itself to imagining something non-existent—an enchanted palace, for example, or a chimera—and also when it applies itself to thinking about something

that is purely intelligible and not imaginable—for example, in thinking about its own nature—the perceptions it has of these things depend mainly on the volition that makes it perceive them. That is why we usually regard these perceptions as actions rather than passions.

### 21. Imaginings that are caused solely by the body

Most of the perceptions caused by the body depend on the nerves, but some don't, and they are called 'imaginings'. Unlike the imaginings described in article 20, however, these don't arise from the will and therefore don't count as 'actions' of the soul. Their cause is this: variously agitated spirits

**how Descartes finished the sentence:** . . .rencontrant les traces de diverses impressions qui ont précédé dans le cerveau, ils y prennent leur cours fortuitement par certains pores plutôt que par d'autres.

**what that means:** . . . come upon the traces of various impressions that have preceded them in the brain, and there make their way by chance through certain pores rather than others.

**what Descartes may have had in mind:** . . . come by chance upon the traces of various impressions that have preceded them in the brain, and are steered by them through certain pores rather than others.

The illusions of our dreams are cases of that, and so are the day-dreams we often have when we're awake and our mind wanders idly without deliberately applying itself to anything. All these imaginings are 'passions' of the soul if that word is understood in its general sense, •i.e. they are events in respect of which the soul is passive•. But when 'passion' is taken in its more proper and exact sense, some of them are passions •and others are not•. [If Descartes ever

tells us what this more proper and exact sense is, he does so in articles 27–29.] Their cause isn't as conspicuous and determinate as that of the perceptions the soul receives by means of the nerves; and they seem to be mere shadows and pictures of those other more normal perceptions. We should hold off from characterising these imaginings, however, until we get further in sorting out the other ones.

### **22. How these other perceptions differ from one another**

All the perceptions that I haven't yet explained—i.e. all but article 21's imaginings—come to the soul by means of the nerves. They differ amongst themselves in that we take some to be perceptions of external objects that strike our senses, others to be perceptions of our body or some of its parts, and still others to be perceptions of our soul.

### **23. The perceptions that we relate to objects outside us**

The perceptions we take to be perceptions of things outside us, namely of the objects of our senses, are caused by these objects, at least when we aren't wrong about them: the objects arouse movements in the sense-organs and, through the nerves, arouse other movements in the brain—which make the soul sense the objects. Thus, when we see the light of a torch and hear the sound of a bell, the sound and the light are two different actions which, simply by arousing two different movements •in some of our nerves and through them •in our brain, give the soul two different sensations. And we relate these sensations to the subjects we think caused them in such a way that we think we see the torch itself and hear the bell, and not that we merely sense movements coming from these objects.

### **24. The perceptions we relate to our body**

The perceptions we relate to our body or to certain parts of it—i.e. take to be perceptions *of* our body or some part of it—are those of hunger, thirst and other natural appetites, as well as pain, heat and other states that we feel as being in our body-parts and in external objects. Thus, at the same time and by means of the same nerves we can feel

the cold of our hand and the heat of a flame coming close to it,

or the other way around:

the heat of our hand and the cold of the air to which it is exposed.

The causes of the cold/hot sensations in one case and the hot/cold sensations in the other are exactly the same, except that the temporal order of hot and cold is different in the two cases, and we judge that the one that comes first is already in us, while its successor hasn't yet reached us from the object that causes it.

### **25. The perceptions we relate to our soul**

The perceptions that we relate only to the soul are those whose effects we feel as being in the soul itself, and for which we usually don't know any more immediate cause to which we can relate them. These include the feelings of joy, anger and the like, which are aroused in us sometimes by the objects that stimulate our nerves and sometimes also by other causes. Now all our perceptions—those that we relate to objects outside us and those we relate to the various states of our body—are indeed passions with respect to our soul, taking 'passion' in its most general sense •which means merely that the soul is passive with respect to them.; but we usually restrict the term 'passion' to signify only perceptions that relate to the soul itself. And the latter perceptions are

the only ones that I have undertaken to explain here under the title ‘passions of the soul’.

**26. Imaginings that depend solely on chance movements of the spirits may be *passions* just as truly as the perceptions that depend on the nerves**

Everything the soul perceives by means of the nerves can also be represented to it through chance movements of the spirits. The only difference is that •impressions entering the brain through the nerves are usually livelier and more clearly detailed than •the ones produced there by the spirits—which is why I said in article 21 that the latter are like ‘shadows and pictures’ of the former. Sometimes a ‘picture’ of this kind is so similar to the thing it represents that it may mislead us regarding the perceptions related to objects outside us, or even ones related to certain parts of our body. But we can’t be misled in that way with regard to the *passions*, because they are so close, so internal to our soul, that it can’t possibly feel them unless they are truly as it feels them to be. Thus often when asleep, and sometimes even when awake, we imagine certain things so vividly that we think we see them before us or feel them in our body although they aren’t there at all; but even when asleep and dreaming we can’t feel sad or moved by any other passion unless the soul truly has this passion within it.

**27. Definition of the passions of the soul**

Having considered how the passions of the soul differ from all its other thoughts, it seems to me that we can define them generally as

- perceptions, sensations or commotions of the soul which
- we relate particularly to the soul, and are caused, maintained and strengthened by some movement of the spirits.

**28. Explanation of the first part of this definition**

We can call them ‘**perceptions**’ if we’re using this term generally to signify all the thoughts that aren’t actions of the soul, i.e. volitions, but not if we are using it to signify only evident items of knowledge. For experience shows •that the people who are the most strongly stirred by their passions aren’t the ones who know them best, and •that the passions are among the perceptions that are made confused and obscure by the soul’s close alliance with the body. We can also call them ‘**sensations**’ because they are received into the soul in the same way as the objects of the external senses, and they are not known by the soul any differently. But it is even better to call them ‘**commotions**’ of the soul, not only because this term is applicable to *all* the changes that occur in the soul—i.e. to all the various thoughts that come to it—but more particularly because the passions agitate and disturb the soul more forcefully than any other kinds of thought the soul may have.

**29. Explanation of the remainder of the definition**

I add that they **relate particularly to the soul** so as to distinguish them from sensations that relate to external objects (e.g. smells, sounds and colours) or to our body (e.g. hunger, thirst and pain). I also add that they are **caused, maintained and strengthened by some movement of the spirits** so as to •distinguish them from our volitions (which can also be called ‘commotions of the soul that relate to it’,

but are caused by the soul itself), and so as to •explain their last and most immediate cause—the last link in the causal chain leading to them—which again distinguishes them from other sensations.

### 30. The soul is united to all the body's parts together

For a perfect grasp of all this we need to recognize that the soul is really joined to the whole body, and can't properly be said to exist in any one part of the body rather than in others. Why? •Because the body is a unity that is in a way *indivisible*—its organs are so arranged that the removal of any one of them makes the whole body defective. And •because the nature of the soul won't let it have any relation to extension, or to the dimensions or other properties of the matter the body is made of; all it can be related to is the whole assemblage of the body's organs. You can see this in the inconceivability of *half a soul* or *a third of a soul*, or of a soul's *size*. And in the fact that the soul doesn't shrink if we amputate some part of the body, and that if the assemblage of the body's organs is broken up the soul completely separates from the body.

### 31. There's a little gland in the brain where the soul does its work more particularly than elsewhere in the body

Although the soul is joined to the whole body, there's a certain part of the body where it exercises its functions more particularly than in all the others. [The French is *plus particulièrement*; Descartes doesn't explain this, and his uses of the adverb elsewhere, e.g. in articles 27 and 29, don't help with this one. Judging by the next few pages we can take him to be saying that this gland is where the soul does most of its work or the most important part of it.] It's commonly thought that this part is •the brain,

because of its relation to the sense-organs, or •the heart, because it feels to us as though that's where our passions are. But on looking into this very carefully I think I can clearly see that the part of the body in which the soul directly [*immédiatement*] does its work is. . . .a certain very small gland deep inside the brain, in a position such that. . . .the slightest movements by it can greatly alter the course of the nearby spirits passing through the brain, and conversely any little change in the course of those spirits can greatly alter the movements of the gland.

### 32. How we know that this gland is the principal seat of the soul

What convinces me that this gland is the only place in the body where the soul *can* directly exercise its functions is my conviction that all the other parts of our brain are double, as are all the organs of our external senses—eyes, hands, ears and so on. •The fact that sense-organs come in pairs is central to my argument. We often have one simple thought about one object at one time; so there *must* be some place where two sense-impressions coming through a matched pair of sense-organs can be brought together in a single impression before reaching the soul, so that they don't present it with two objects instead of one. It makes sense to think of these impressions as being unified in this gland by means of the spirits that brush by it going into the brain. There's nowhere else in the body where they could exist in the unified form except as a result of the unifying activities of this gland.

### 33. The seat of the passions is not in the heart

As for the view that the soul receives its passions in the heart: this is negligible because it is based solely on the fact

that the passions make us feel some change in the heart; and it's easy to see that the only reason for this feeling is that there's a small nerve running down from the brain to the heart. In the same way, pain is felt *as* in the foot by means of the nerves in the foot, and the stars are perceived *as* in the sky by means of their light and the optic nerves. The soul doesn't have to do its work in the heart in order to feel its passions there, any more than it has to be in the sky in order to see the stars there!

#### **34. How the soul interacts with the body**

Let us take it, then, that the soul's principal seat is in the small gland located in the middle of the brain. From there it radiates out through the rest of the body by means of the animal spirits, the nerves, and even the blood, which can take on the impressions of the spirits and carry them through the arteries to all parts of the body. Remember what I said about our body's machine:

The nerve-fibres are distributed through the body in such a way that when the objects of the senses stir up various movements in different parts of the body, the fibres open the brain's pores in various ways; which brings it about that the animal spirits contained in those cavities enter the muscles in various ways. That is how the spirits can move the parts of the body in all the different ways they can be moved. . . .

To this we can now add:

The little gland that is the principal seat of the soul is suspended within the cavities containing these spirits, so that it can be moved by them in as many different ways as there are perceptible differences in the objects. But it can also be moved in various different ways by the soul, whose nature is such that

it receives as many different impressions—i.e. has as many different perceptions—as there occur different movements in this gland. And, the other way around, the body's machine is so constructed that just by this gland's being moved in any way by the soul or by any other cause, it drives the surrounding spirits towards the pores of the brain, which direct them through the nerves to the muscles—which is how the gland makes them move the limbs ['them' could refer to the nerves or to the muscles; the French leaves that open].

#### **35. Example of how the impressions of objects are united in the gland in the middle of the brain**

If we see an animal approaching us, the light reflected from its body forms two images, one in each of our eyes; and these images form two others, by means of the optic nerves, on a surface in the brain facing in on its cavities. Then, by means of the spirits that fill these cavities, the images radiate towards the little gland that is surrounded by the spirits; the movement belonging to each point of one of the images tends towards the same point on the gland as the movement belonging to the corresponding point of the other image. . . . In this way, the two images in the brain create only one image on the gland, which acts directly on the soul and makes it see the shape of the animal.

#### **36. Example of how passions are aroused in the soul**

If this shape is very strange and terrifying—i.e. if it is closely related to things that have previously been harmful to the body—this arouses in the soul the passion of •anxiety, followed by that of •bold defiance or •fear and terror, depending on the state of the body or the strength of the soul, and on

whether we have had past experience of coping with such things by fight or flight. In some people this ·frightening image· puts the brain into a state where the spirits reflected from the image formed on the gland proceed from there

(1) partly to the nerves that serve to turn the back and move the legs in order to flee, and partly

(2a) to the nerves that expand or constrict the openings to the heart, or else

(2b) to nerves that agitate other parts of the body from which blood is sent to the heart,

with (2) (whether a or b) happening in such a way that the blood is rarefied in an unusual way that makes it send to the brain spirits that are adapted for maintaining and strengthening the passion of fear—that is, for holding open or re-opening the pores of the brain that direct the spirits into these same nerves. For merely by entering into these pores they produce in the gland a particular movement that nature has set up so as to make the soul feel this passion. And because these pores are related mainly to the little nerves that serve to contract or expand the openings to the heart, this brings it about that the soul feels the passion chiefly as if it were in the heart. [Descartes famously had a problem explaining what could be going on in causal interactions between souls and bodies. In this paragraph he doesn't speak of the soul's acting on the body, and regarding the body's acting on the soul he says only that a certain movement is *institué de la nature pour faire sentir à l'âme cette passion*—set up by nature to make the soul feel fear.]

### **37. How it becomes apparent that the passions are all caused by some movement of the spirits**

Something similar happens with all the other passions: they are caused chiefly when spirits contained in the brain's cavities make their way to nerves that •expand or constrict

the orifices of the heart, or •drive blood towards the heart in a distinctive way from other parts of the body, or •maintain the passion in some other way. So you can see why I included in my definition of the passions [article 27] that they are caused by some particular movement of the spirits.

### **38. Example of bodily movements that accompany the passions and don't depend on the soul**

Just as the course that the spirits take to the nerves of the heart suffices to make the gland move in a way that sends fear into the soul, so also the simultaneous movement of some spirits to the nerves that move the legs in flight causes that same gland to move in another way by means of which the soul feels and perceives this action. In this way, then, the body can be moved to take flight by the mere lay-out of its organs with no input from the soul.

### **39. How a single cause can arouse different passions in different people**

The same impression that the presence of a terrifying object makes on the gland and that causes fear in some people may arouse courage and boldness in others. That is because brains are not all constituted in the same way: the very same movement of the gland that arouses fear in some people makes the spirits in others enter the pores of the brain that direct them partly •into nerves that move the hands in self-defence and partly •into those that stir up the blood and drive it towards the heart in the way that is needed to produce spirits appropriate for continuing this defence and for maintaining the will to do so.

**40. The main effect of the passions**

The main effect of every human passion is to arouse the soul and make it will the body to move in the way the passion prepares the body for. Thus the feeling of fear moves the soul to will to flee, that of courage to will to fight, and similarly with the others.

**41. The soul's power with respect to the body**

But the will is by its nature so free that it can't ever be constrained. Of the two kinds of thought I distinguished in the soul ·in article 17·—

- its actions, i.e. its volitions, and
- its passions, taking this word in its broadest sense to include every kind of perception

—the actions are absolutely within the soul's power and can't be changed by the body except indirectly, whereas the passions are absolutely dependent on the ·bodily· events that produce them, and can't be changed by the soul except indirectly, with the exception of cases where the soul is itself their cause. All that the soul actively *does* is this: it wills to do something x, and that brings it about that [see Glossary] the little gland to which it is closely joined moves in the way needed to produce the doing of x.

**42. How we find in our memory the things we will to remember**

When the soul wills to remember something, this volition brings it about that the gland leans in various directions, driving the spirits towards various regions of the brain until they come to the one containing traces of the object the soul wants to remember. To say that the brain contains a 'trace' of an object x is just to say:

The pores of the brain through which the spirits have in the past made their way because of the presence of x have been made by this more apt than other pores to be opened in the same way when the spirits again flow towards them.

And so the spirits enter into these pores more easily when they come upon them, thereby producing in the gland that special movement that represents x to the soul, and makes it recognize x as the thing it wanted to remember.

**43. How the soul can •imagine, •be attentive, and •move the body**

When we will [see Glossary] to •imagine something that we have never seen, this volition has the power to bring it about that the gland moves in the way needed to drive the spirits towards the pores of the brain the opening of which enables the thing to be represented. When we will to •fix our attention for some time on some particular object, this volition keeps the gland leaning in one particular direction during that time. When we will to •walk or move our body in some other way, this volition brings it about that the gland drives the spirits to the muscles that bring about this effect.

**44. Each volition is naturally joined to a certain movement of the gland, but through effort or habit it can be joined to others ·as well·**

What makes us produce some movement or other effect in ourselves isn't always a volition to do just that, because nature or habit has established a variety of different links between thoughts and movements of the gland. **(A)** An example ·involving **nature**·: if we will to adjust our eyes to look at a far-distant object, this volition brings it about

that the pupils grow larger; and if we will to adjust them to look at a very near object, this volition brings it about that the pupils contract. But if we want to get our pupil enlarged, it's no use our *willing to enlarge them*—we won't get them enlarged in that way! That is because nature has joined

- the movement of the gland by which spirits are driven to the optic nerve in the way needed for enlarging or contracting the pupils

not to

- the volition to enlarge or contract the pupils

but rather to

- the volition to look at distant or nearby objects.

**(B)** Another example, ·this one involving **habit**·: while we are speaking we're thinking only of the meaning of what we want to say, and this brings it about that we make a much better job of moving our tongue and lips than if we aimed to move them in all the ways needed for uttering those same words. That is because the habits acquired in learning to speak have brought it about that we have joined

- the action of the soul (which, by means of the gland, can move the tongue and lips)

not with

- those movements themselves

but rather with

- the meaning of the words that ensue from those movements.

[Of those two examples, only **(B)** illustrates the thesis announced in the heading of article 44. But they jointly illustrate the two parts of the first sentence of the article. In moving from the heading to the article Descartes seems to have drifted a little. The effort (*industrie*) mentioned in the heading is heard from again only in articles 47 and 211.]

#### 45. The soul's power with respect to its passions

Our passions can't be aroused or suppressed directly by the action of our will, but only indirectly by our representing to ourselves things that are usually joined with the passion we want to have or opposed to the one we want to fend off. To arouse boldness and suppress fear in ourselves, it's not enough to have a volition to do so. We have to set ourselves to think about the reasons, objects, or precedents which argue that •the danger isn't great, that •there's always more security in defence than in flight, that •we'll gain glory and joy if we conquer, and nothing but regret and shame if we flee—things like that.

#### 46. What prevents the soul from having full control over its passions

There is one special reason why the soul can't readily change or suspend its passions, a reason that led me to say in my definition [article 27] that the passions are not only caused but also 'maintained and strengthened' by some movement of the spirits. The point is that nearly all the passions are accompanied by some commotion that occurs in the heart and consequently also all through the blood and the ·animal· spirits. Until this commotion stops, the passions remain present to our mind in the way that objects of the senses are present to it while they are acting upon our sense organs. By focussing intently on something else, the soul can prevent itself from hearing a slight noise or feeling a slight pain; but it can't in that way prevent itself from hearing thunder or feeling a fire that burns the hand. Well, in the same way it can easily overcome the lesser passions, but not—until the commotion of the blood and spirits has died down—the strongest and most violent ones. The most the will can do while this commotion is at its full strength is •not to go along



with its effects, inhibiting many of the movements to which it disposes the body. If anger makes the hand rise to strike a blow, the will can usually restrain it; if fear moves the legs to flight, the will can stop them; and similarly in other cases.

**47. The conflicts that are commonly thought to occur between the lower and higher parts of the soul—what they really are**

The conflicts that are commonly thought to occur between

(a) the lower and higher parts of the soul, i.e.

(b) the soul's 'sensitive' and its 'rational' parts, i.e.

(c) the natural appetites and the will

consist simply in the opposition between

(d) the movements that the body (by means of its spirits) and the soul (by means of its will) tend to produce at the same time in the gland,

·which is what I was talking about at the end of article 46·. Each of us has only one soul, which (a) doesn't have different parts; it is (b) at once sensitive and rational too, and (c) all its appetites are volitions. How do people come to commit this error of making the soul play different roles that are usually opposed to one another? It comes entirely from their failure to get the soul's functions clearly separate in their minds from the body's. Everything that can be observed in us that contradicts our reason should be attributed to the body. The little gland in the middle of the brain can be pushed by the soul and by the animal spirits (which, I repeat, are nothing but bodies), and these two pushes often happen to be opposed, the stronger cancelling the effect of the weaker; and **that's the only conflict** here. Now, movements produced in the gland by the spirits are of two kinds:

(i) Movements which represent to the soul •the objects that stimulate the senses, or •the impressions occurring in the brain; and these have no influence on the will. They often hinder the soul's actions, or are hindered by them; but they aren't directly opposed to those actions, so we observe no conflict between them.

(ii) Movements that cause the passions or the bodily movements that accompany the passions, and do have an influence on the will. The conflicts we observe ·within ourselves· are between these movements and the volitions that oppose them.

An example of such a conflict: the spirits push the gland one way so as to cause in the soul a desire for something x, and the soul by its volition to avoid x pushes the gland in a contrary direction. The conflict is revealed mainly through the fact that the will, lacking the power to arouse the passions directly (as I said in article 45), is compelled to put in some effort (*industrie*) to consider a series of different things; it can happen that

one of these x has the power to redirect the spirits for a moment while the very next one y lacks this power; y brings the spirits back to the course they had been on ·before x intervened·, doing this before there has been time for any change in the state of the nerves, heart and blood.

This brings it about that the soul feels itself impelled, almost at the very same time, to want and not want one and the same thing; and that's how people come to think that the soul contains two conflicting powers. Still, we can allow a kind of conflict: a single cause that produces a certain passion in the soul often also produces certain movements in the body; the soul doesn't contribute to these, and as soon as it perceives them it stops them, or tries to do so. We

experience this when an object that arouses fear also makes the spirits enter the muscles that serve to move our legs in flight, while our will to be bold stops them from moving.

**48. How we recognize the strength or weakness of souls, and what is wrong with the weakest souls**

Each person can recognize the strength or weakness of his soul by the outcome of these conflicts. For the strongest souls, clearly, belong to people in whom the will can *by nature* most easily conquer the passions and stop the bodily movements that go with them. But some people never get to test the strength of their souls because they never let their will fight with the soul's proper weapons, instead letting it use only the 'weapons' that some passions provide for resisting some other passions. What I call the soul's 'proper' weapons are firm and determinate judgments relating to good and bad, which the soul has resolved to steer by in everything it does. The weakest souls of all are those whose will isn't determined in this way to follow such judgments, but constantly allows itself to be carried away by present passions. These, being often opposed to one another, pull the will first one way and then another, thus making it battle against itself and so putting the soul in the most deplorable state possible. Thus, when •fear represents death as an extreme evil [see Glossary] that can be avoided only by flight, while •ambition 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. It's not enough to have a strong soul if you don't know the truth**

It is true that very few people are so weak and irresolute that they never will anything except what their passion dictates. Most people have *some* determinate judgments that they follow in regulating some of their actions. Often these judgments are false—and even based on passions that have previously conquered or seduced their will—but because the will continues to follow them in the absence of the passion that caused, they can be regarded as their souls' proper weapons; and we can judge those souls to be strong or weak depending on how closely they can follow these judgments and resist the present passions that are opposed to them. But resolutions •that come from some false opinion are vastly different from ones •that depend solely on knowledge of the truth: no-one ever regrets having followed •the latter, whereas following •the former is always a matter for regret when their error is discovered.

**50. Any soul, however weak, can if well-directed acquire absolute power over its passions**

As I have already said, although nature seems to have set up in us at birth specific links between gland-movements and thoughts, we can replace some of those links by others through habit. Experience shows this in the case of language. Words produce gland-movements that nature has ordained to represent to the soul only their sounds (spoken words) or shapes (written words); but because we have acquired the habit of thinking of their *meanings* when we hear or see them, that is what our thoughts go to—the *meanings*, not the sounds or shapes—when we see or hear those words. Another point: although the movements of the gland, the spirits and the brain that represent certain objects to the soul

are naturally linked to ones that produce certain passions in it, it's always possible through habit to break those links and associate those movements with very different passions instead; and indeed this habit can be acquired by a single event, with no need for long practice. For example: when we unexpectedly come upon something disgusting in food that we have been eating and enjoying, our surprise may re-organise our brain in such a way that we can't afterwards look at any such food without revulsion, though until then we ate it with pleasure. The same thing can be seen in beasts: although they lack reason, and perhaps even lack thought, all the movements of the spirits and of the gland that produce passions in us are present in them too, though in them they maintain and strengthen only •the movements

of the nerves and the muscles that usually accompany the passions and not, as in us, •the passions themselves. When a dog sees a partridge, it is naturally disposed to run towards it; and when it hears a gun fired, the noise naturally impels it to run away; but setters are commonly trained so that the sight of a partridge makes them stop, and the subsequent gun-shot makes them run towards the bird. It's useful to know these things as encouragement to each of us to work on controlling our passions. For since we can with a little effort change the movements of the brain in animals devoid of reason, it is evident that we can make an even better job of this in the case of men. Even those who have the weakest souls could acquire absolute mastery over all their passions if they worked hard enough at training and guiding them.

## Part II: The Number and Order of the Passions and explanation of the six basic passions

### 51. The primary causes of the passions

As I have explained in article 29, the **last** and most immediate cause of the passions of the soul—the last link in the causal chain leading to them—is simply the agitation by which the spirits move the little gland in the middle of the brain. But this doesn't enable us to distinguish one passion from another; for that, we must investigate their origins, examine their **first** causes. They can be and sometimes are caused by

- what the soul does in setting itself to conceive some object or other,

or by

- the over-all state of the body or by the impressions that happen to be present in the brain, as when we feel sad or joyful without being able to say why.

But from what I have said it appears that •all those same passions can also be aroused by

- objects that stimulate the senses,

and that •these objects are their principal and most common causes. To discover all the passions, therefore, we need only to consider all the effects of these objects.

### 52. The function of the passions, and how to list them

The passions that are aroused in us by the objects that stimulate the senses aren't different for *every* difference among the objects, but only corresponding to differences in how the objects can harm or benefit us, or more generally have importance for us. What the passions *do* for us consists

solely in this:

- they dispose our soul to want the things that nature decides are useful to us, and to persist in this volition; and
- the agitation of the spirits that normally causes the passions also disposes the body to move in ways that help to bring about those useful things.

That's why a list of the passions requires only an **orderly** examination of all the various ways—ways that are important to us—in which our senses can be stimulated by their objects. Now I shall list all the principal passions according to the **order** in which they can thus be found.

### Orderly List of the Passions

#### 53. Wonder

When our first encounter with some object surprises us and we find it novel—i.e. very different from what we formerly knew or from what we supposed it should be—this brings it about that we wonder [see Glossary] and are astonished at it. All this can happen before we know whether the object is beneficial to us, so I regard wonder as the first of all the passions. It has no opposite, because if the object before us has nothing surprising about it, it doesn't stir us in any way and we consider it without passion.

#### 54. Esteem (with generosity or pride), and contempt (with humility or abjectness)

Wonder is joined to either esteem or contempt, depending on whether we wonder at how (metaphorically speaking) big

the object is or at how small. So we can esteem ourselves, giving rise to the passion of magnanimity or pride, and the corresponding behaviour; or contemn [see Glossary] ourselves, giving rise to the passion of humility or abjectness, and the corresponding behaviour.

### 55. Veneration and scorn

When we esteem or contemn other objects that we regard as free causes capable of doing good and evil, our esteem becomes veneration and our simple contempt becomes scorn.

### 56. Love and hatred

All the preceding passions can be aroused in us without our having any thought about whether the object causing them is good or bad. Now we come to passions of which that is not the case. Firstly: When we think of something as good with regard to us, i.e. as beneficial to us, this makes us have love for it; and when we think of it as bad or harmful, this arouses hatred in us.

### 57. Desire

All the other passions also originate in something involving the thought of good ·for us· or bad ·for us·. I want to take them in an orderly way, and it will contribute to that if I take *time* into account; and because the passions carry our thought to the future more than to the present or the past, I begin with ·the most elemental forward-looking passion, namely· desire. All desire looks forward—not only a desire to acquire some ·future· good or avoid some ·future· threatening evil but also a desire to stay in one's *present* state of having some good or lacking some evil.

### 58. Hope, anxiety, jealousy, confidence and despair

To make us desire to acquire some good or avoid some evil, all that's needed is for us to think of the desired outcome as *possible*. But a more detailed thought about *how likely* the outcome is leads to more specific kinds of passion: the belief that there is a good chance of something that we desire gives us **hope**; the belief that the chances are poor creates **anxiety** (of which **jealousy** [see Glossary] is one variety) in us. When hope is extreme, it changes its nature and is called **confidence** and extreme anxiety becomes **despair**.

### 59. Indecision, courage, boldness, emulation, shrinking reluctance, and terror

We can hope for or fear something that doesn't in any way depend on us. But in cases where we *do* think of it as depending on us we may find it hard **(a)** to decide how to go about getting or avoiding it, or **(b)** to bring ourselves actually to *do* what needs to be done. The **(a)** difficulty gives rise to **indecision**, which disposes us to deliberate and take advice; the **(b)** difficulty is **shrinking reluctance** (·mild·) or **fear** (·severe·). The opposite of shrinking reluctance is **courage**; the opposite of fear (or terror) is **boldness**. (One species of courage is emulation, ·which I shall discuss in article 172·.) [On 'shrinking reluctance', see Glossary.]

### 60. Remorse

If we settle on some course of action without having cleared up our indecision, this gives rise to remorse [see Glossary] of conscience. Unlike the preceding passions, remorse looks not to the future but rather to the present or the past.

**61. Joy and sadness**

The thought of a present good arouses joy in us, and the thought of a present evil arouses sadness, when the good or evil is one we regard as belonging to us.

**62. Derision, envy, pity**

When we think of the good or evil as belonging to •others, we may judge •them worthy or unworthy of it. When we judge them worthy of it, that arouses in us just **one** passion, namely joy, because it is a good *for us* to see things happen as they ought. The joy aroused in the case of a •deserved• good is serious, while the joy aroused in the case of a •deserved• evil is accompanied by laughter and derision—that's the only difference between the two. But if we think that the others *don't* deserve the good or evil that comes to them, there is again **one** passion that is aroused in us, namely sadness; but this has **two** species—envy in the case of undeserved good and pity in the case of undeserved evil. The same passions that relate to present goods or evils can often also be related to future ones, because sometimes our belief that some good or evil *will* happen represents it to us as if it were *present*.

**63. Self-satisfaction and repentance**

We can also think about the cause of a present good or evil as well as of a past one. A good that we have done gives us an internal satisfaction that is the sweetest of all the passions, whereas an evil •that we have done• arouses repentance, which is the most bitter [see Glossary].

**64. Approval and gratitude**

A good done by others causes us to regard them with approval, even if it wasn't a good for us; and if it was for us then our approval is accompanied by gratitude.

**65. Indignation and anger**

Similarly, when others do something bad that doesn't relate to us in any way, that brings it about that we feel **indignation**—nothing else—towards them; and when what they have done is bad for us, that arouses **anger** as well.

**66. Vainglory and shame**

Further, a good or evil that is or has been in us produces vainglory or shame respectively, when we think of it in terms of the opinion that others may have of it.

**67. Distaste, regret and lightheartedness**

Sometimes when a good state of affairs persists we become bored with it or regard it with distaste; when something bad persists, it may in the course of time come to affect us less. A past good gives rise to regret [see Glossary], which is a kind of sadness; and a past evil gives rise to lightheartedness, which is a kind of joy.

**68. Why this list of the passions differs from the usual one**

This seems to me the best ordering for a list of the passions. I'm well aware that I'm parting company the opinion of everyone who up to now who has written about the passions, but I have good reason for this. The others have based their classification on a distinction they draw, within the soul's sensitive part, between the two appetites they call

•‘concupiscible’ and •‘irascible’. As I have said in articles 30 and 47, I don’t know anything implying that the soul has **parts**; so this distinction should amount merely to saying that the soul has two **powers**, the power to •desire and the power to •be annoyed. But the soul has also the powers of wonder, love, hope and anxiety, and thus the power to receive into itself every other passion, and to perform the actions to which the passions impel it, so I don’t see why they have chosen to relate them all to •desire or to •anger. Also, their list doesn’t include all the principal passions, as I think mine does. I’m only talking about the principal passions here; there are ever so many more—indeed an unlimited number of them.

#### 69. There are only six basic passions

But there aren’t many simple and basic passions. Look over my list and you’ll easily see that there are only six:

wonder	(articles 70–73, 75–78)
love	(79–85)
hatred	(79–80, 84–85)
desire	(86–90)
joy	(91, 93–95)
sadness	(92–95)

All the others are either composed from some of these six or they are species of them. So I’ll help you to find your way through the great multitude of passions by •treating the six basic ones separately, and then •showing how all the others stem from them.

#### 70. Wonder: its definition and cause

Wonder is a sudden surprise of the soul that brings it to focus on things that strike it as unusual and extraordinary. It is caused

- (1) by an impression in the brain, which represents the object as unusual and therefore worthy of special consideration; and
- (2) a movement of the spirits, which the impression disposes •to flow strongly to the impression’s place in the brain so as to strengthen and preserve it there, and also •to flow into the muscles controlling the sense organs so as to keep them focussed on the object of the wonder.

#### 71. This passion doesn’t involve any change in the heart or in the blood

Wonder has a special feature: alone among the passions it doesn’t involve any change in the heart or in the blood. The reason for this is that *wondering at x* doesn’t involve any value-judgment on x; it doesn’t prompt one to seek x or to avoid it; all it involves is •curiosity about x, a desire to **know** more about it. Hence it doesn’t involve the heart and blood, on which the whole well-being of our body depends, but only on the brain and the sense-organs which are used in gaining this **knowledge**. [What Descartes wrote means ‘. . . only on the brain, which contains the sense-organs. . .’, but that was presumably a slip. See for example article 23.]

#### 72. What it is to wonder strongly

This doesn’t prevent wonder from having considerable strength because of the element of surprise, i.e. the sudden and unexpected onset of the impression that alters how

the spirits move. This kind of surprise is exclusive to this passion: it normally occurs in most of the others, having a strengthening effect on them, but only because wonder is joined with them. [Descartes has said that this surprise occurs in most of the other passions; so perhaps he thought that wonder is not merely 'joined to' those passions but is a component of them.] Its strength depends on two things: **(a)** the novelty and **(b)** the fact that the movement it causes is at full strength right from the start. [That is: the wonder is strong in proportion as the person gets **(a)** a big surprise and gets it **(b)** suddenly.] How do those factors affect strength? Well: **(b)** A movement that is strong from the start clearly has more effect than one that starts weak and gradually strengthens, because the latter is more easily diverted. **(a)** Novel objects of the senses affect parts of the brain that usually aren't affected; those parts are softer, less firm, than parts that have been hardened through frequent agitation; so the effects produced in them by movements are that much greater. You'll find this credible if you think about a familiar fact: when we walk we have very little feeling of any contact in our feet because our body's weight has accustomed the soles of our feet to a contact that is quite hard; whereas the much lighter and gentler contact of being tickled on the soles of our feet is almost unbearable to us, simply because it's not part of our ordinary experience.

### 73. What astonishment is

This *surprise* has great power to steer the spirits in the brain's cavities towards the place in the brain that contains the impression of the object of wonder—so much power that it sometimes it drives all the spirits to that place, and gets them to be so busy preserving this impression that none of them carry on through to the muscles. . . . The upshot is that the whole body remains as still as a statue. This is what

we commonly call 'being astonished'. Astonishment is an excess of wonder, and it is always bad because the body's immobility means that the person can perceive only one side of the wondered-at object, namely the side first presented to him. If he weren't outright *astonished* he could turn the object over, walk around it, or the like, thus learning more about it.

### 74. How the passions are useful, and how they are harmful

From what I have said in articles 40 and 52 it's easy to see that the passions are useful only because they strengthen and prolong thoughts that it is good for the soul to have and which otherwise might easily be wiped out. And when they do harm, that is only because they strengthen and preserve these thoughts beyond what is required, or strengthen and preserve thoughts that it isn't good to give any time to.

### 75. How wonder, in particular, is useful

The special usefulness of wonder lies in its getting us to learn and retain in our memory things that we previously didn't know. We wonder only at what strikes us as unusual and extraordinary, and something will impress us in that way only if we haven't before known of it or anything like it. . . . But when something that is new to us comes before our intellect or our senses, we won't retain it in our memory unless the idea [see Glossary] of it in our brain is strengthened by some passion, or perhaps by a special state of attention and reflection that we choose to adopt. When something strikes us as •good or bad, there are other passions that can make us focus on it; but when something strikes us merely as •unusual, all we have is wonder. That is why people who aren't naturally inclined to wonder are usually very ignorant.



**76. How wonder can be harmful, and how to fix things if there is too little or too much of it**

Wondering too much—looking in astonishment at things that are near enough to negligible—is much commoner than wondering too little. Excessive wondering can entirely block or pervert the use of reason. It's good to be born with some inclination to wonder, because that increases scientific curiosity; but after we have acquired some scientific knowledge we should try to free ourselves from this inclination to wonder. We can easily make up for the loss of it through a special state of reflection and attention that we can voluntarily impose upon our understanding when we think that the subject-matter is worth the trouble. As for excessive wondering: the only cure for that is to acquire knowledge about many things and to deal with things that seem unusual and strange not by wondering at them but by examining them.

**77. It is not the stupidest or the cleverest people who are most given to wonder**

Although it's only dull and stupid folk who are not naturally disposed to wonder, this doesn't mean that those with the best minds are always the most inclined to it. In fact, most wondering is done by people who are equipped with pretty good common sense but have no high opinion of their competence.

**78. Excessive wonder may become a habit when we fail to correct it**

This passion seems to diminish with use: the oftener we encounter unusual things that we wonder at, the more accustomed we become to *not* wondering at them and to

regarding later candidates for wonder as ordinary. Nevertheless, when it is excessive and makes us fix our attention solely on the first image of the object before us without learning anything more about it, that gives the soul a *habit* of dwelling in the same way on everything it encounters that seems in the least new. This is what makes it hard to cure the 'blind curiosity' disease whose victims seek out rarities simply in order to wonder at them and not in order to know them. They become so full of wonder that things of no importance are as likely to grab their attention as things that it would be actually useful to investigate.

**79. The definitions of love and hatred**

Love is a commotion of the soul caused by a movement of the spirits, a commotion that impels the soul to join itself *de volonté* [see Glossary] to objects that appear to be agreeable to it. And hatred is a spirit-caused commotion impelling the soul to want to be separated from objects that appear to be harmful. In saying that these commotions are caused by the spirits, I am distinguishing love and hatred—which are passions, and depend on the body—from judgments that also bring the soul to join itself *de volonté* to things it deems good and to separate itself from ones that it deems bad, and also from the commotions that these judgments, with no help from the body, produce in the soul.

**80. What it is to be joined or separated *de volonté***

I am not using the phrase *de volonté* to talk about desire, which is a completely different passion relating to the future. I mean rather our consent to considering ourselves from now on as joined with the thing we love in such a way that we imagine a whole of which we are one part and the beloved thing is the other. In the case of hatred, on the other hand,

we think of ourselves alone as a ·self-contained· whole that is separate from the thing for which we have an aversion.

**81. The customary distinction between concupiscent love and benevolent love**

A distinction is commonly made between two sorts of love:

- (i) benevolent love for x, which prompts us to wish for x's well-being, and
- (ii) concupiscent love of x, which makes us want to have x.

But it seems to me that we don't have here two kinds of love but merely two effects that love—considered as just one passion—can have. (i) When we have joined ourselves *de volonté* to x, whatever its nature may be, we feel benevolent towards it—that is, we also join to x willingly the things we think are agreeable to it: this is one of the principal effects of love. (ii) And if we judge that it would be beneficial to possess x, or to be associated with it in some manner other than *de volonté*, then we desire x; and this is another common effect of love.

**82. How some very different passions are alike in involving love**

There's no need to mark off as many kinds of love as there are kinds of thing that can be loved. Consider:

- an ambitious man's passions for glory,
- a miser's for money,
- a drunkard's for wine,
- a brutish man's for a woman he wants to rape,
- an honourable man's for his friend or mistress, and
- a good father's for his children.

Though very different from one another, these are alike in all involving love. But the first four men have love only for the possession of the objects their passion is related to; for the objects themselves—the glory, the money, the wine, the woman—they don't have •love but only •desire mingled with other particular passions. In contrast with that, a good father's love for his children is so pure—so clean and clear-cut and free of impurities—that he doesn't desire to have anything from them, and he doesn't want to possess them otherwise than he does or to be joined to them more closely than he already is. Rather, he regards them as other *himself*s, and seeks their good as he does his own, or even more assiduously. For he represents to himself that he and they together form a whole of which he is not the better part, so he often puts their interests before his own and doesn't shrink from sacrificing himself in order to save them. And an honourable man's affection for his friends is also like that, though it is rarely so perfect; and his affection for his mistress consists largely of love but also has a touch of desire.

**83. How simple affection differs from friendship, and how both differ from devotion**

If we want to distinguish *kinds* of love, I think we can do it more reasonably in terms of how the person's esteem for the loved object compares with his esteem for himself. If he has less esteem for that object than for himself, he has only a simple •affection for it; if he esteems it equally with himself, that is called •'friendship'; and when he has more esteem for it than for himself, his passion for it may be called •'devotion'. Thus, we can have •affection for a flower, a bird, or a horse; but unless our mind is very disordered, we can't have •'friendship for anything but persons. They are the

objects of this passion in such a way that someone with a truly noble and generous soul (for ‘generous’ see articles 154 and 156) could have perfect friendship with another person, however imperfect *he* was, if he believed that the other person loved him. As for •devotion, its principal object is undoubtedly God, and we can’t fail to have devotion for him when we know him as we ought. But we can also have devotion for our sovereign, our country, our town, and even for a particular person whom we esteem much more highly than we esteem ourselves. How these three kinds of love differ shows chiefly in their effects. In all of them we consider ourselves as joined and united to the thing we love; so we are always ready to abandon the lesser part of the whole that we compose with it so as to preserve the other part. In the case of simple affection, this results in our always preferring ourselves to the object of our love. In the case of devotion, on the other hand, we prefer the loved person in such a way that we don’t shrink from dying in order to preserve him. . . .

#### **84. There are fewer kinds of hatred than of love**

Although hatred is directly opposed to love, we don’t distinguish it into as many kinds, because the evils from which we are separated *de volonté* don’t differ so noticeably from one another as do the goods to which we are joined.

#### **85. Attraction and revulsion**

I find only one significant distinction that cuts through both love and hatred. It’s this: the objects of love and the objects of hatred can be represented to the soul either by **(i)** the external sense, or by **(ii)** the internal senses and the soul’s own reason. We commonly call something ‘good’ or ‘bad’ if our internal senses or our reason make us judge it to be agreeable to our nature or contrary to it. But we call

something ‘beautiful’ or ‘ugly’ if it is represented as such (·i.e. as agreeable to our nature or contrary to it·) by our external senses—chiefly by the sense of sight, which we attend to more than we do to all the other senses taken together. Two kinds of love arise from this, namely •our love for good things and •our love for beautiful things. The love of beautiful things can be called ‘attraction’, so as not to confuse it with the love for good things, or to confuse it with desire (which we also often call ‘love’). Two kinds of hatred [see Glossary] arise in the same way, one relating to •bad things and the other to things that are •ugly. The hatred of ugly things can be called ‘revulsion’ or ‘aversion’, so as to set it apart ·from the hatred of bad things·. But what needs to be observed here is that **(a)** these passions of attraction and revulsion are usually more violent than the other kinds of love and hatred, because what enters the soul through the senses affects it more strongly than what is represented to it by its reason, and that **(b)** these passions usually contain less truth than the others. So these are the most deceptive of all the passions, and the ones we must guard ourselves against most carefully.

#### **86. The definition of desire**

The passion of desire is an agitation of the soul caused by spirits that disposes the soul to want to have in the future the things it represents to itself as agreeable. Thus we desire not only the presence of absent goods but also the preservation of present ones—and also the absence of evils, both those that already affect us and those we think might suffer later on.

**87. Desire is a passion that has no opposite**

I am well aware that in the Schools [= ‘the philosophy departments dominated by Aristotle and Aquinas] the passion that leads to the search for good is commonly *contrasted* with the passion that leads to the avoidance of evil; they call the former ‘desire’ and the latter ‘aversion’. But the lack of any good is an evil, and the absence of any evil (considered as a positive thing) is a good: in pursuing riches, for example, we necessarily steer away from poverty; in avoiding illness we pursue health, and so on; so I think it is always the very same movement that gives rise to •the pursuit of a good and at the same time •the avoidance of the opposite evil. The only difference I can see is this:

- 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 that same desire is accompanied by hatred, anxiety and sadness (which causes us to judge the evil inimical to ourselves).

But if we agree to consider the desire when it relates at the same time both to the pursuit of some good and equally to the avoidance of the opposed evil, it becomes quite obvious that a single passion is at work in both of these.

**88. The various kinds of desire**

We could divide up desire into as many different kinds as there are different kinds of objects that we pursue. Curiosity, for example, is nothing but a desire for knowledge, and it differs greatly from a desire for glory, which in turn differs from a desire for vengeance, and so on. But in the present context ·we don’t need all those details·; all we need to know is that there are as many kinds of desire as there are of

love or hatred, and that the strongest and most significant desires are the ones arising from attraction and revulsion.

**89. The desire that arises from revulsion—what is it?**

Although it’s a single desire that leads to the pursuit of a good and to the avoidance of the opposite evil (see the end of article 88), the desire arising from attraction is very different from the desire arising from revulsion. Attraction and revulsion are indeed opposites, but *they* aren’t the good and the evil that serve as objects of these desires. Rather, they’re simply two commotions of the soul that dispose it to pursue two very different things. The story goes like this: Nature has given us revulsion to represent to the soul a sudden and unexpected death. We may be triggered to feel revulsion merely by •the touch of an earthworm, •the sound of a rustling leaf, or •our own shadow, but we immediately feel as much commotion as if we had been confronted by a very plain threat of death. This produces a sudden agitation that leads the soul to employ all its powers to avoid such a looming evil. This is the kind of desire that we commonly call ‘avoidance’ or ‘aversion’.

**90. The desire that arises from attraction**

In contrast with that, nature has given us attraction to represent ·to the soul· the enjoyment of something that •attracts us as the greatest of all the goods mankind can have, and so •makes us ardently desire this enjoyment. It’s true that there are different sorts of attraction, and that the desires they give rise to are not all equally powerful. The beauty of flowers, for example, moves us only to look at them, and that of fruits to eat them. But the principal attraction comes from the perfections that one imagines in a person who one thinks could become a second *oneself*.

Along with establishing a difference of sex in human beings as also in animals lacking reason, nature has implanted certain impressions in the brain that bring it about that at a certain age and season one regards oneself as defective—as forming only one half of a whole whose other half must be a person of the opposite sex—so that the acquisition of this other half is represented by nature, in a confused way, as the greatest of all imaginable goods. We see many persons of that opposite sex, but we don't wish for many of them at any one time, because nature doesn't make us imagine that we need more than one half! But when we see something in one person of the opposite sex that attracts us more than anything we see at that time in anyone else, this makes our soul concentrate onto that one person all the inclination that nature gives it to pursue the good that it represents as the greatest we could possibly possess. The **inclination or desire** that arises in this way from attraction is commonly called 'love'; it is more usual to use that word in this way than to apply it to the **passion** of love described earlier [articles 56 and 79]. It has stranger effects than the passion does, and it is this this inclination or desire that provides poets and writers of romances with their principal subject-matter.

### 91. The definition of joy

Joy is a pleasant commotion in the soul—it is the soul's enjoyment of a good that impressions in the brain represent to it as its own.

I say that this commotion is the soul's enjoyment of a good, for in fact that's the only benefit the soul gets from all the goods it possesses; any good from which it doesn't get joy might as well be one that it doesn't possess. I add that the good is one that *impressions in the brain represent as the soul's own*, so as not to confuse this joy, which is a **passion**,

with the purely intellectual joy that arises in the soul through an **action** of the soul alone. The latter may be said to be a pleasant commotion that the soul arouses in itself whenever it enjoys a good that its understanding represents to it as its own.

While the soul is joined to the body, of course, this intellectual joy can hardly fail to be accompanied by the joy that is a passion. For as soon as our understanding perceives that we possess some good—even one that is so unlike anything pertaining to the body that we can't imagine it—the imagination nevertheless immediately forms in the brain an impression from which there ensues the movement of the spirits that arouses the passion of joy.

### 92. The definition of sadness

Sadness is an unpleasant listlessness that affects the soul when it suffers discomfort from an evil or defect that impressions in the brain represent to it as its own. There is also an intellectual sadness which isn't itself a passion but is almost always accompanied by the passion.

### 93. The causes of these two passions

When intellectual joy or sadness arouses the corresponding passion, their cause is quite obvious. [In that sentence, the misfit between the singular 'joy or sadness' and the plural 'their' is Descartes's, not an artifact of this version.] The definitions show that joy results from the belief that one has some good, and sadness from the belief that one has some evil or defect. But we often feel sad or joyful without being able to get a clear view of the good or evil that causes this feeling. This happens when the good or evil makes its impression in the brain without the soul's coming into it—sometimes because the good or evil involves only the body, and sometimes because, although

it involves the soul, the soul doesn't consider it as good or bad but views it under some other form whose impression is joined in the brain with that of the good or evil.

**94. How these passions are aroused by goods and evils that concern only the body; and what titillation and pain consist in**

Thus, when we are in good health and the weather is more serene than usual, we feel in ourselves a cheerfulness that results not •from anything the understanding does but solely •from impressions made in the brain by the movement of the spirits. And we feel sad in the same way when there's something wrong in our body, even if we don't know this. Thus, titillation of the senses is followed so closely by joy that most people don't distinguish the two; similarly with pain and sadness. But there's a difference in each case; indeed it is so marked that we may sometimes suffer pains with joy, and receive titillating sensations that displease us. But joy ordinarily follows titillation, and here is why:

What we call 'titillation' or 'pleasurable sensation' occurs when the objects of the senses arouse some movement in the nerves, a movement that could harm the nerves if they didn't have enough strength to resist it or if the body wasn't in a healthy condition. This creates in the brain an impression that naturally testifies to the body's healthy condition and strength; and so represents this to the soul as a good that belongs to it in its union with the body; and so this impression produces joy in the soul.

For almost the same reason we naturally take pleasure in feeling ourselves aroused to all sorts of passions—even to sadness and hatred—when these passions are caused merely by the strange episodes we see presented on the stage, or by

other such things that can't harm us in any way and seem to titillate our soul by brushing up against it. And here is why pain usually produces sadness:

The sensation we call 'pain' always results from an action so violent that it injures the nerves. This sensation naturally signifies to the soul the bodily damage suffered from such an action, and the body's feeble inability to withstand it, represents both as evils that are always unpleasant to the soul except when they cause some goods that the soul values more highly.

**95. How they can also be aroused by goods and evils that the soul doesn't notice even though they belong to it, such as the pleasure derived from taking risks or from recollecting past evils**

Young people often take pleasure in undertaking difficult tasks and running great risks, even when they don't look to this as a source of profit or glory. Here is why. The thought that the undertaking is difficult forms in their brain an impression which—when joined with the impression they could form if they thought it a good thing to feel sufficiently courageous, happy, skilful, or strong to run such a risk—causes them to take pleasure in doing so. And old people's satisfaction in recollecting •the evils they have suffered results from their thinking it a good thing to have been able to survive in spite of •them.

**96. The movements of the blood and the spirits that cause the five preceding passions**

The five passions I have begun to explain are joined or opposed to one another to such an extent that it's easier to

•consider them all together than to •treat each one separately as I did wonder. The cause of wonder is wholly located in the brain, but the cause of these other five is located also in the heart, the spleen, the liver and any other parts of the body that contribute to the production of the blood and hence of the spirits. The general background fact that explains how these causal chains might run is this: Although all the veins take blood to the heart, it sometimes happens that the blood in some veins is driven there with greater force than the blood in other veins, and thus that any opening through which blood enters or leaves the heart is larger or smaller at some times than at others.

**97. The main experimental evidence regarding these movements in love**

In considering the various alterations that experience reveals in our body while our soul is agitated by various passions, I observe that when love occurs on its own—i.e. not accompanied by any strong joy, desire, or sadness—the pulse has a regular beat, but is much fuller and stronger than normal; we feel a gentle warmth in the chest; and food is digested very quickly in the stomach, so that love is beneficial to health.

**98. . . . in hatred**

In hatred, on the other hand, I observe that the pulse is irregular, weaker and often quicker; we feel chills in the chest, mingled with a certain kind of sharp, piercing heat; and the stomach stops doing its work and is inclined to vomit and reject the food we have eaten, or at any rate to make it go bad and turn it into bad bodily fluids.

**99. . . . in joy**

In joy I observe that the pulse is regular and faster than normal, but not as strong or full as in love; we feel a pleasant heat not only in the chest but also spreading into all the external parts of the body along with the blood that we see entering them in abundance; yet sometimes there's a loss of appetite because the digestion is less active than usual.

**100. . . . in sadness**

In sadness I observe that the pulse is weak and slow, and we feel as if our heart had tight bonds around it and were frozen by icicles that pass their cold on to the rest of the body. But sometimes we still have a good appetite and feel our stomach doing its duty, provided there's no hatred mixed with the sadness.

**101. . . . in desire**

Finally, I observe this special feature of desire: it agitates the heart more violently than any other passion, and supplies more spirits to the brain. Passing from there into the muscles, these spirits sharpen all the senses and make all the parts of the body more mobile.

**102. The movement of the blood and the spirits in love**

These observations, and many others that would take too long to report, have given me reason to conclude that when the understanding represents to itself some object of love, this thought makes an impression in the brain that directs the animal spirits through the sixth pair of nerves to the muscles surrounding the intestines and stomach, where they act in such a way

that the alimentary juice (which is changing into new blood) flows rapidly to the heart without stopping in the liver;

and that

this new blood that has just been formed from the alimentary juice, being driven to the heart with greater force than the blood from other parts of the body, enters the heart in greater abundance and produces a stronger heat there because it is coarser than the blood that has been rarefied [see Glossary] many times in passing repeatedly through the heart. This makes it [the new blood? the heart?] send to the brain spirits with unusually coarse and agitated parts; and these spirits, by strengthening the impression formed by the first thought of the loved object, compel the soul to dwell on that thought.

This is what the passion of love consists in.

### **103. . . . in hatred**

In hatred, on the other hand, the first thought of the object arousing aversion steers the spirits in the brain towards the muscles of the stomach and intestines in such a way that they prevent the alimentary juice from mixing with the blood by constricting all the openings through which the juice normally flows. This same first thought also steers the spirits to the little nerves of the spleen and the lower part of the liver (where the bile is collected) in a way that the parts of blood that are normally launched into those places emerge from them and flow, together with the blood that is in the branches of the vena cava, towards the heart. This makes the heart's temperature very erratic, because blood from the spleen is hardly heated or rarefied at all, whereas blood from the lower part of the liver . . . boils up

and expands very rapidly. So the spirits going to the brain also have very unequal parts, and move very in extraordinary ways; which leads to their strengthening the ideas of hatred that are already imprinted there, and disposing the soul to have thoughts that are full of acrimony and bitterness.

### **104. . . . in joy**

In joy, it's not the nerves of the spleen, liver, stomach, or intestines that are active, so much as those throughout the rest of the body, especially the nerve around the entries to the heart—opening and widening these entries it enables the blood that other nerves are driving through the veins to enter and leave the heart in larger quantities than usual. And because the blood entering the heart has . . . has passed through it many times already, it expands very readily and produces spirits whose parts, being uniform and small, are suitable to form and strengthen the impressions in the brain that give cheerful and peaceful thoughts to the soul.

### **105. . . . in sadness**

In sadness, on the other hand, the openings into the heart are tightly contracted by the small nerve surrounding them, and the blood in the veins isn't agitated at all; so very little of that blood goes to the heart. Meanwhile the passages through which alimentary juice flows from the stomach and intestines to the liver remain open; so the appetite doesn't diminish except when hatred, which is often joined to sadness, closes these passages.

### **106. . . . in desire**

Finally, the passion of desire has a feature that it doesn't share with any of the others. The volition to acquire some



good or avoid some evil shoots the spirits from the brain to every part of the body that can contribute to the actions needed for this result, and especially to the heart and the parts that supply most of its blood. Receiving more blood than usual, the heart sends more spirits to the brain, to maintain and strengthen the idea of that •volition there and to move on from there into all the sense organs and all the muscles that can be used for obtaining what is desired.

### 107. The cause of these movements in love

I derive an explanation for all this from what I said earlier [articles 44 and 50], namely:

Our soul and our body are so linked that when we have joined a certain bodily action with a certain thought, from then onwards we'll never have either of these without the other following it. For example, an ill person who disgustedly chokes down some medicine won't from then on •eat or drink anything approaching it in taste without immediately •feeling the same disgust; and he won't •think about how he hates medicines without •having that same taste returning in his thought.

It the soul's first passions when it began to be joined to our body must have happened on some occasion when our heart received some blood or other juice that was an unusually good fuel for maintaining the heat that is the source of life. This caused the soul to join itself *de volonté* [see Glossary] to that fuel, i.e. to love it; and at the same time spirits flowed from the brain to the muscles that could shake up the parts of the body from which the fuel had come to the heart, to make them send more of it. These parts were the stomach and the intestines, whose agitation increases the appetite, or else the liver and the lungs, which the muscles of the

diaphragm can act on. That's why this same movement of the spirits has accompanied the passion of love ever since.

### 108. . . . in hatred

Sometimes, on the other hand, the heart was entered by an alien juice that was not fit for maintaining the heat, or could even have extinguished it; and this caused the spirits rising from the heart to the brain to arouse the passion of hatred in the soul. At the same time •some of• these spirits went from the brain to nerves that could drive blood from the spleen and the minute veins of the liver to the heart so as to prevent •more of• this harmful juice from entering it; and •some• also went to nerves that could drive this juice back to the intestines and stomach or (sometimes) could force the stomach to vomit it up. That is why these same movements [of the spirits?] usually accompany the passion of hatred. You can see with the naked eye that the liver has many veins or ducts that are wide enough to let the alimentary juice pass from the portal vein into the vena cava and on to the heart, without even pausing in the liver. But you can also see countless smaller veins where the juice might stop. These veins always contain a reserve of blood, as does the spleen; and this blood, being coarser than blood from other parts of the body, is better able to serve as a fuel for the fire in the heart when the stomach and intestines fail to supply any.

### 109. . . . in joy

It also sometimes happened when we were new-borns that the blood contained in the veins was quite suitable for nourishing and maintaining the heat of the heart, and was so plentiful that the heart didn't need any other source of nourishment. This aroused the passion of joy in the soul. At the same time it brought it about that the openings into

the heart were wider than usual, and that the spirits flowed abundantly from the brain not only in the nerves that control these openings but also generally in all the other nerves that drive the blood from the veins to the heart, thus preventing any new blood from coming into the heart from the liver, spleen, intestines and stomach. That is why these same movements accompany joy. [This presumably refers to the 'new blood' introduced in article 102.]

### 110. . . . in sadness

Sometimes, on the other hand, it has happened that the body has lacked nourishment, and this lack must have made the soul feel its first sadness (at any rate the first that wasn't joined to hatred). It also brought it about that •the openings into the heart contracted because they weren't receiving much blood, and that •a good part of this blood came from the spleen, because the spleen is as is were the last reservoir of blood for the heart when it isn't getting enough from elsewhere. That is why sadness is always accompanied by movements of the spirits and nerves that serve in this way to narrow the openings to the heart and to direct blood to the heart from the spleen.

### 111. . . . in desire

Finally, when the soul was newly joined to the body, all its first desires must have been to accept things beneficial to it [the body?] and to reject ones that were harmful to it. It was for these same ends that the spirits began then to move all the muscles and sense organs in every way that they could. That is why now •in the adult• when the soul desires something the whole body becomes more agile and alert than it normally is otherwise; and that change in the body makes the soul's desires stronger and keener.

### 112. The external signs of these passions

I have said enough already to explain the causes of differences of pulse and all the other properties I have attributed to these passions; I needn't take up any more of my time or yours in explaining them further. But I have spoken only of what can be observed *in*—and what enables us to recognize the movements of the blood and spirits *behind*—each passion when it occurs alone. I haven't yet dealt with the many external signs that usually accompany the passions and are much better observed when several •passions• are mingled together (the usual case) than when they occur in isolation. The most important such signs •and the articles in which they are discussed• are

expressions of eyes and face	113
changes in colour	114–117
trembling	118
listlessness	119–121
fainting	122–123
laughter	124–127
tears	128–134
groans	132
sighs	135

[Stephen Voss, in his edition and translation of this work (Hackett Publishing Co., 1989), writes concerning the next article: 'A strikingly sophisticated article—from •Descartes's uncharacteristic recognition of another's passions through a nonanalytic awareness of *gestalts* to •his recognition of variation in facial expression of passion. . . .to •his new application of the fact that intentional representation of things (article 45) is valuable in the struggle against imagination (article 111) for control over the passions and their concomitants.']

**113. The actions of the eyes and the face**

There is no passion that some particular action of the eyes does not reveal. For some passions this is so obvious that even the stupidest servants can tell from their master's eye whether he is angry with them. But although it is easy to perceive such expressions of the eyes and to know what they mean, it isn't easy to describe them. That is because each of them consists of many changes in the movement and shape of the eye, and these changes are so special and so slight that we can't perceive each of them separately, though we can easily observe the result of their all occurring together. Pretty much the same can be said about the facial expressions that also accompany passions: although more extensive than those of the eyes, they are still hard to tell apart. They differ so little that some people make almost the same face when weeping as others do when laughing! It's true that some facial expressions are easy enough to spot—e.g. a wrinkled forehead in anger and certain movements of the nose and lips in indignation and mockery; but these seem to be voluntary rather than (or more than) natural. And in general the soul can change the actions of both face and eyes by forcefully imagining a passion contrary to the one it wants to conceal. Thus we can use our face and eyes to hide our passions as well as to reveal them.

**114. Changes in colour**

We can't so easily prevent ourselves from blushing or growing pale when some passion disposes us to do so, because these changes don't depend on the nerves and muscles as the preceding ones do. They come more directly from the heart, which can be called 'the source of the passions' because it prepares the blood and the spirits to produce them. Blood flows continually from the heart through the arteries into

the veins and then back into the heart, and the changes in the face's colour depend solely on how much this blood fills the small veins just under the skin.

**115. How joy makes one flush**

Thus joy makes the colour brighter and rosier because by opening the heart's sluices it makes the blood flow faster in all the veins. As the blood becomes warmer and more fluid it makes all the parts of the face swell a little, thus making it look more smiling and cheerful.

**116. How sadness makes one turn pale**

Sadness, on the other hand, by constricting the openings of the heart, makes the blood •flow more slowly in the veins and •becomes colder and thicker, with the result that it •takes less space and therefore •withdraws into the largest veins, which are the nearest to the heart. So it leaves the more distant veins; facial veins are conspicuous among these, so the face is caused to appear pale and sunken. This happens chiefly when the sadness is great, or when it comes on suddenly, as in terror, when surprise increases the action that grips the heart.

**117. Why we often flush when we are sad**

But it often happens that we don't turn pale when sad—on the contrary we become flushed. This must be due to the other passions that combine with sadness, namely love, desire, and sometimes hatred. These passions, heating or agitating the blood coming from the liver, intestines and other internal parts of the body, drive it to the heart and from there through the great artery to the facial veins; and •the sadness that closes the orifices of the heart on each side

can't stop this blood except when •it is extreme. But this sadness, even when it is only moderate, easily prevents the blood that has entered the facial veins from descending to the heart, so long as love, desire, or hatred is driving other blood there from the internal parts. That's why the blood trapped in the face makes it red—redder indeed than when we are joyful, because the colour of blood is all the more conspicuous when it flows more slowly, and also because more blood can collect in the facial veins when the orifices of the heart are opened less widely. This is most evident in shame, which is a combination of self-love and an urgent desire to avoid present disgrace (which makes the blood come from the internal parts to the heart and then through the arteries to the face), along with a moderate sadness (which prevents this blood from returning to the heart). The same thing is also seen when we weep; because most tears are caused by love combined with sadness (I'll say more about this shortly [article 128]). And this flushing is seen in anger, which often involves a sudden desire for vengeance mingled with love, hatred and sadness.

### 118. Trembling

There are two different causes of trembling. **(i)** Sometimes too few of the spirits in the brain enter into the nerves to be able to close the little passages in the muscles in just the way that, according to the account given in article 11, they must be closed in order to cause the movements of the limbs; and **(ii)** sometimes too many of the spirits enter into the nerves to be able to do this. The first cause is seen in •sadness and •fear, and also when we tremble with cold. For those •two• passions, like the coldness of the air, may cause the blood to thicken so much that it doesn't supply the brain with enough spirits for it to send any to the nerves. The

second cause is often seen in those who passionately •desire something or are strongly moved by •anger, and also in those who are drunk. For those two passions, like wine, sometimes send so many spirits to the brain that they can't be directed from there in an orderly way into the muscles.

### 119. Listlessness

Listlessness [*langueur*] is an inclination, felt throughout the body, to relax and stay still. It results from there being too few spirits entering the nerves, but this happens in a different way from how it does in trembling. For the cause of trembling is that there aren't enough spirits in the brain to obey the gland's direction when it drives them toward some muscle; whereas listlessness results from the gland's not directing the spirits to some muscles rather than to others.

### 120. How listlessness is caused by love and by desire

The passion that most commonly brings about this effect is love, combined with a desire for something whose acquisition is not imagined to be possible at the present time. For love has the soul so occupied with thinking about the loved object that it uses all the spirits in the brain to represent the image of this object, and it stops all the movements of the gland that don't serve this purpose. As for desire: the property of making the body more mobile, which I ascribed to it earlier [article 101], is one that it has only when we think we can make a start right now on the process of coming to acquire it. If on the other hand we think we can't possibly do anything to further that project, all the agitation due to the desire remains in the brain without passing into the nerves; and, being entirely engaged in strengthening the idea of the desired object, this agitation leaves the rest of the body in a listless state.

**121. Listlessness can also be caused by other passions**

It is true that hatred, sadness and even joy may also cause some listlessness when it is very violent, because it makes the soul wholly engrossed in thinking about its object; this happens chiefly when these passions are combined with the desire for something that we can't do anything to acquire at the present time. But listlessness is encountered much more in love than in all the other passions, because •we **stop to think** about objects to which we join ourselves *de volonté* [see Glossary] much more than we do to think about objects from which we separate ourselves, or about any other objects, and because •listlessness doesn't depend on surprise but **requires some time** to develop.

**122. Fainting**

Fainting is not very far from dying: a person dies when the fire in his heart is completely extinguished, and he merely faints when it is smothered in such a way that traces of heat are left that may afterwards rekindle it. Many •bodily indispositions can cause us to faint; but the only •passion that we observe doing this is extreme joy. I think the following is how it does this. Extreme joy opens the orifices of the heart unusually wide, so that the blood from the veins enters the heart so suddenly and so copiously that the heart's heat can't rarefy it quickly enough to raise all the little membranes [see articles 9 and 12] that close the entrances to these veins. In this way the blood smothers the fire that it usually maintains when it enters the heart in moderate amounts.

**123. Why no-one faints from sadness**

You'd think that a great sadness that comes upon us unexpectedly would constrict the orifices of the heart so tightly as to extinguish the fire; yet we never, or hardly ever, see this happen. I think this is because there can hardly ever be insufficient blood in the heart to maintain the heat there when its orifices are almost closed.

**124. Laughter**

This is what happens in laughter: **(1)** Blood coming from the right-side cavity of the heart through the arterial vein suddenly and repeatedly inflates the lungs, forcing the air in them to rush out through the windpipe, where it makes an inarticulate, explosive sound. **(2)** The swelling of the lungs and the rushing out of the air both push against all the muscles of the diaphragm, chest and throat, thus causing movement in the facial muscles that are connected with them. And what we call 'laughter' is merely this facial expression together with the inarticulate and explosive sound that we call 'laughter'.

**125. Why laughter doesn't accompany the greatest joys**

Although laughter might seem to be one of the chief signs of joy, joy can't cause laughter except when it is moderate and mixed with an element of wonder or hatred. We find by experience that when we are unusually joyful, the thing we are joyful about never makes us burst out laughing, and other things don't draw us into laughter •at those times of great joy• as easily as they do when we are sad. The reason for this is that in great joys the lungs are always so full of blood that they can't be swollen any more by renewed surges of it.

**126. The main causes of laughter**

I can see only two things that might make the lungs swell up suddenly in this way. **(i)** The first is the surprise of wonder, which when combined with joy can open the heart's orifices so rapidly that a great quantity of blood •suddenly enters its right side from the vena cava, •becomes rarefied there, and •passes through the arterial vein to swell up the lungs. **(ii)** The other is the mixing in of some liquid that increases the rarefaction of the blood. The only liquid I have found that can do that is •the most fluid part of the blood coming from the spleen. When •this is driven to the heart by some slight commotion of hatred, helped by the surprise of wonder, it mingles with the blood coming from other regions of the body (which joy sends there in abundance) and can make this blood expand much more than it ordinarily does. In the same way many other liquids are seen to swell up suddenly when we throw a little vinegar into a vessel containing them over a fire, because the most fluid part of the blood coming from the spleen is similar in nature to vinegar. Experience also shows that in any situation that can cause this laughter to explode from the lungs there is always some small subject of hatred or at least of wonder. And people whose spleens are not in good health are apt not only to be sadder than others but also intermittently more cheerful and disposed to laughter; that is because the spleen sends two kinds of blood to the heart, a thick and coarse kind that causes sadness, and a fluid and thin kind that causes joy. Often after a bout of laughter we are left feeling sad; this is natural, because the more fluid part of the blood in the spleen has been exhausted and the other, coarser part follows it to the heart.

**127. Why we laugh when we are indignant**

As for the laughter that sometimes goes with indignation, it is usually artificial and feigned. But when it is natural, it seems to result from the joy we get from •seeing that we can't be harmed by the evil that we are indignant about, and from •finding ourselves surprised by the novelty of the evil or by our unexpected encounter with it. So that joy, hatred and wonder all contribute to indignation. But I'm willing to believe that it can also be produced without any joy, purely by the movement of aversion, which sends blood from the spleen to the heart, where the blood is rarefied and then driven on into the lungs, which it easily swells when it finds them almost empty. In general, anything that manages to make the lungs swell up in this manner will cause the external action of laughter, except when sadness turns it into the groans and cries that accompany tears. . . .

**128. The origin of tears**

Just as laughter is never caused by the greatest joys, so also •tears don't result from an extreme sadness, but only from a sadness that is moderate and accompanied or followed by some feeling of love or joy. For a proper understanding of their origin, you need to know •two things•. **(i)** Many vapours are continually given off by all parts of our body, but more from the eyes than from any other part. This is because the optic nerves are so big and there are so many little arteries by which the vapours get there. **(ii)** Just as sweat is composed merely of vapours that are converted into water on the surface of the parts that emit them, so tears are formed from the vapours that our eyes give off.

**129. How vapours are changed into water**

When explaining in my *Meteorology* how the vapours of the air are turned into rain, I wrote that this results from their being less agitated or more abundant than ordinary vapours. Similarly with the vapours emitted by the body. Although not so abundant, they are much less agitated than usual, and that is enough to turn them into water—as with the cold sweats that sometimes result from weakness when we are ill. And I think that the bodily vapours are also turned into water when they are much more abundant, as long as they aren't at the same time more agitated—for example the sweat that breaks out when we take exercise. But the eyes don't weep then, because during physical exercise most of the spirits go to the muscles used in moving the body, leaving less of them to go through the optic nerve to the eyes. It is the very same matter—the same basic *stuff*—that forms

- blood (when in the veins or the arteries),
- the spirits (when in the brain, nerves, or muscles),
- vapours (when it comes out in the form of air), and
- sweat or tears (when it thickens into water on the surfaces of the body or the eyes).

**130. How something that causes pain in the eye makes it weep**

I can find only two causes that make the vapours issuing from the eyes turn into tears. **(i)** It may be a change in the shape of the pores they pass through. Whatever brings it about, this change of shape, by slowing down these vapours and altering their order, can bring it about that they are transformed into water. Thus a speck of dust in the eye is enough to draw forth tears, because in producing pain there the dust changes the eye's pores in such a way that some of them become narrower, and. . . [Descartes continues with

something to this effect: vapours issuing from the eye ordinarily blow away without being noticed; but the narrowing of some pores produces irregularities in vapour-output of such a kind that:] the parts of the vapour come into contact with one another and so are turned into tears.

**131. How we weep from sadness**

The other cause of tears is **(ii)** sadness followed by love or joy, or in general by some cause making the heart drive a lot of blood through the arteries. Sadness is required for this, because in cooling all the blood it constricts the eye's pores, and the more it does this the more it decreases the quantity of vapour that can pass through them. So sadness alone won't produce tears; the quantity of these vapours has to be increased at the same time by some other cause. And nothing increases it more than the blood that is sent to the heart in the passion of love. We see, too, that those who are sad don't shed tears continually, but only intermittently, when their thought turns yet again to the object of their affection.

**132. The groans that accompany tears**

The lungs are also sometimes suddenly swollen by the abundance of the blood that enters them and expels the air they contained. This air goes out through the windpipe producing the groans and cries that customarily go with tears. These cries are usually shriller than the ones that accompany laughter, although they are produced in almost the same way. That's because the nerves that enlarge or constrict the vocal organs, pitching the voice lower or higher, are joined with the nerves that open the orifices of the heart when we are joyful and constrict them when we are sad, and

so they make the vocal organs become wider or narrower at the same time.

### 133. Why children and old people weep easily

Children and old people are more inclined to weep than young adults, but for different reasons. Old people often weep from affection and joy. For these two passions jointly send a lot of blood to the heart, and many vapours from there to the eyes. And •these vapours are chilled so much by the coldness of these people's bodies that •they are easily transformed into tears even without any preceding sadness. And if some old people also weep extremely easily because they are upset, this comes less from the state of their body than from the state of their mind. This happens only to those who are so weak that they let themselves be swamped by trivial matters involving pain, anxiety, or pity. The same thing happens with children, who hardly ever weep from joy but quite often from sadness, even when it isn't accompanied by love. Children always have enough blood to produce a lot of •vapours; and when the movement of •these is slowed down by sadness they turn into tears.

### 134. Why some children turn pale instead of weeping

Some children when they are upset grow pale instead of weeping. This may show extraordinary judgment and courage on their part; because it may result from their handling themselves like adults, estimating how serious the impending trouble is and preparing to resist it strongly. But more often it shows a bad nature because it results from the child's being inclined to •hatred or •fear—passions that decrease the stuff that tears are made of. And on the other hand we see that children who weep very readily are inclined to •love and to •pity.

### 135. Sighs

The cause of sighs is very different from that of tears, even though they are alike in involving sadness: we are moved to weep when our lungs are full of blood, but we are moved to sigh when the lungs are almost empty and some imagined hope or joy widens the orifice of the venous artery that sadness had narrowed. Then the little remnant of blood in the lungs suddenly drops down into the left-hand side of the heart through this artery, having been driven there by the desire to attain this joy. At the same time this desire agitates all the muscles of the diaphragm and chest, so that air comes rapidly through the mouth into the lungs to fill the place vacated by the blood. And it is this that we call 'sighing'.

### 136. It can happen that a passion is had by one person and one only—how this comes about

•That completes the set of explanations, promised in article 112, of the different effects or different causes of the passions. There's more that could be said on this topic, but I shall keep things brief by bringing all the rest under a principle that underlies everything I have written about the passions [it is mentioned in articles 44, 50 and 107], namely:

Our soul and body are so linked that once we have joined some bodily action with a certain thought, neither of them will occur again except accompanied by the other; and which actions are joined with which thoughts varies from person to person.

This principle is all that is needed to explain any passion-related *peculiarity*, whether in yourself or in someone else, that hasn't been explained up to here. Some people, for example, can't bear the smell of roses, the presence of a cat, or the like; it's plausible to think that this comes from



their having been greatly upset by some such object when they were infants—perhaps the smell of roses caused severe headache in a child when he was still in the cradle, or a cat terrified him without anyone noticing and without any memory of it remaining afterwards; and yet the idea of the aversion he then felt for the roses or for the cat will remain imprinted on his brain till the end of his life. Or the present aversion may come from the person's having shared a feeling that his mother had when she was upset by a cat or etc. while pregnant. There certainly is a connection between a mother's movements and those of a child in her womb, so that anything adverse to the one is harmful to the other.

**137. What the five passions explained here are useful for, in their relations with the body**

Having given definitions of **(a)** love, **(b)** hatred, **(c)** desire, **(d)** joy and **(e)** sadness, and dealt with all the bodily movements that cause or accompany them, my remaining task is to consider their use. [Descartes has identified six basic passions (article 69), but the usefulness of one of them, wonder, has already been discussed in article 75.] First, they are all ordained by nature to relate to the body, and to reach the soul only through its link with the body. Hence, their natural use is to incite the soul to consent and contribute to actions that may serve to preserve or in some way improve the body. In this context of usefulness to the body, sadness and joy are the two passions that go to work first. The soul's first direct news about things that harm the body is through a feeling of pain; this produces in the soul first the passion of **(e)** sadness, then **(b)** hatred of what causes the pain, and finally the **(c)** desire to get rid of it. So also the soul is immediately notified of things useful to the body only through some sort of titillation, which first produces **(d)** joy in the soul, giving

rise to **(a)** love of whatever is believed to be its cause, and finally to the **(c)** desire to acquire something that can enable us to continue in this joy or enjoy one like it later on. This shows that these five passions are all very useful with respect to the body—and even that sadness is in some way primary and more necessary than joy, and hatred more necessary than love, because it matters more to reject harmful and potentially destructive things than to acquire things that could add some perfection that we can survive without.

**138. Their faults, and how to correct them**

This function of the passions is the most natural that they can have, because all the animals that lack reason conduct their lives simply through bodily movements like the movements of ours that •follow our passions—movements that our soul consents to, having been prodded by our passions to do so. Still, it isn't always good for the passions to function in this way, because many things that are harmful to the body cause no sadness initially (or even produce joy), while other things that are useful to the body are disagreeable at first. Furthermore, the passions nearly always exaggerate the size and importance of the goods and evils they represent, inciting us to pursue the goods and flee from the evils with more ardour and zeal than is appropriate. Likewise, we see that beasts [see Glossary] are often deceived by lures, and in trying to avoid small evils they throw themselves into worse ones. That is why we must use experience and reason to distinguish good from evil and know their true value, so as not to take the one for the other and not to rush into anything immoderately.

**139. What these passions are useful for, considered as belonging to the soul—starting with love**

This account would be sufficient if we had in us only a body, or if it were the better part of us. But because it is only the lesser part, we should attend mainly to the passions in their relations to the greater part, the soul. In this context, love and hatred result from knowledge and precede joy and sadness, except when joy and sadness take the place of knowledge, of which they are species. [For a helpful discussion of this ‘dark saying’, see Voss’s edition, footnote on pages 93–94.] And when this knowledge is true—i.e. when the things it leads us to love are truly good and those it leads us to hate are truly bad—love is incomparably better than hatred: it can never be too great, and it never fails to produce joy. I say that this love is extremely good because by joining real goods to us it makes us to that extent more perfect. I say also that it can’t be too great because all that the most extreme love can do is to join us so perfectly to these goods that the love we have especially for ourselves doesn’t distinguish ourselves from them; and I don’t think that this can ever be bad. And it is necessarily followed by joy, because it represents something we love as being a good that belongs to us.

**140. Hatred**

Hatred, on the other hand, cannot be so mild as to be harmless, and sadness always comes with it. I say it can’t be too mild because whenever our hatred for some evil drives us to an action we could have been *better* driven to it by love of the contrary good. (At least when the good and evil are well enough known. I add that rider because I admit that hatred of an evil that is manifested solely by pain is necessary where the body is concerned; but my present topic is the hatred that results from a clearer knowledge

than pain provides, in relation only to the soul.) I say also that hatred is never without sadness because

- evil. . . can’t be conceived without some real subject that *has* the evil; and
- everything real has some goodness in it; and therefore
- the hatred that takes us away from some evil likewise takes us away from the good to which it is joined, and
- our being deprived of this good, being represented to our soul as a defect in it, makes it sad.

For example, the hatred that estranges us from someone’s bad behaviour automatically deprives us of his company, in which we might have found some good that we are upset at being deprived of. So too in all other cases of hatred we can see something to be sad about. [The ellipsis in the first indented line replaces the statement that evil is merely a *privation* (French), by which Descartes means that it is a lack, an absence, of something that the thing in question ought to have. This view that nothing can be *positively* bad has been widely accepted in connection with the Christian ‘problem of evil’; but it has no working role in the present work, isn’t needed for the first indented clause to be true, and has therefore, for clarity’s sake, been segregated into this note.]

**141. Desire, joy and sadness**

It’s obvious that when desire comes from true knowledge it can’t be bad, provided that it isn’t excessive and is governed by this knowledge. It’s obvious too that joy can’t fail to be good, or sadness bad, with respect to the soul. That is because the discomfort that the soul receives from evil consists wholly in sadness, and the enjoyment of the good belonging to the soul consists wholly in joy. I would go so far as to say that if we didn’t have a body we couldn’t go too far in abandoning ourselves to love and joy, or in avoiding hatred and sadness. But any of the bodily movements

accompanying these passions can be harmful to health when they are very violent, though they may be good for it when they are only moderate.

#### **142. Joy and love, compared with sadness and hatred**

Since hatred and sadness should be rejected by the soul even when they come from true knowledge, there's all the more reason to reject them when they result from some false opinion. But what about love and joy? Are *they* good when they rest in this way on a bad foundation ·of false belief·? It seems to me that if we consider them in themselves we can say that although such joy is less secure, and such love less beneficial to the soul, than when they have a better foundation, they are still preferable to any sadness or hatred resting on an equally bad foundation. Thus, in everyday life where we can't avoid the risk of being mistaken, it is always much better for us to incline towards passions that tend to the •good than to incline towards ones that are concerned with •evil (even if the concern is only to avoid •it); and often even a false joy is worth more than a sadness whose cause is true. But I wouldn't venture to say the same about love in relation to hatred. For when hatred is justified, what it keeps at a distance from us is only an item containing an evil from which it is good to be separated; whereas love that is unjustified joins us to things that may be harmful, or at least that deserve less consideration than we give them, and this disgraces and debases us.

#### **143. The same passions insofar as they relate to desire**

What I have said ·in articles 139–142· about these four passions holds only when they are considered strictly in themselves, and not as leading us to perform any action. When their influence on desire and thus on behaviour enters

the picture, it is certain that all the ones with a false cause can be harmful, whereas all the ones with a just cause can be useful. And ill-founded joy is usually more harmful than sadness that is equally ill-founded, because the sadness creates restraint and anxiety, and so tends in a way towards prudence, whereas the joy makes those who give in to it rash and imprudent.

#### **144. Desires whose attainment depends only on us**

But because these passions can't lead us to perform any action except through the desire they arouse, this desire is what we should take particular care to control; and that is the main thing that morality is good for. Now, just as desire is (to repeat myself) always good when it comes from true knowledge, so also it can't fail to be bad when based on some error. And it seems to me that the most common error concerning desires is the failure to distinguish adequately the things that do depend wholly on us from the ones that don't. Regarding those that depend only on us—i.e. on our free will—our knowledge of their goodness ensures that there's no such thing as desiring them *too* ardently, because that's what virtue is—doing the good things that depend on us—and there certainly can't be any such thing as desiring virtue *too* ardently. And what we desire in this way can't fail to turn out well for us, because it depends on us alone, and so we always receive from it all the satisfaction we expected from it. When we go wrong in this matter it isn't through desiring too much but through desiring too little. The supreme remedy against this error is to free our mind as much as possible from all kinds of other less useful desires, and then to try to know very clearly and consider attentively the goodness of that which is to be desired.

**145. Desires that depend solely on other causes; and what fortune is**

As for •things that don't depend on us at all, we should never desire them with passion, however good they may be: partly because •they may not happen, and the more strongly we wish for something the more upset we'll be if we don't get it; but mainly because •in occupying our thoughts they divert us from being drawn to other things the acquisition of which *does* depend on us. There are two general remedies for such failed desires. The first is generosity, which I'll discuss later [article 153]. The second is frequent reflection on divine Providence: we should put it to ourselves that nothing can possibly happen other than as Providence has determined from all eternity. Providence is like a fate or immutable necessity, and we should set it against 'fortune' [see Glossary] so as to expose the latter as the fanciful upshot of an error in our thinking. We can't desire anything that we regard as entirely impossible; and the only way we can think of something *x* that doesn't depend on us as possible is by thinking:

'Whether *x* happens depends on fortune'

which means that we are really thinking:

'*x* could happen, and things like *x* have happened in the past.

Now, the only reason we think this is that we don't know all the causes that contribute to each effect. If something that we think 'depends on fortune' doesn't happen, this tells us that •one of the causes needed for it to happen was absent, and consequently that •it was absolutely impossible and that nothing like it has ever happened—meaning 'like it' in not involving the cause that was missing in this case. If it weren't for that gap in our knowledge we would never have regarded *x* as possible and consequently wouldn't ever have desired it.

**146. The desires that depend on us and on other things**

So we should •entirely reject the common view that there is a 'fortune' outside us that makes things happen or not happen, just as it pleases, and should •recognize that everything is directed by divine Providence, whose eternal decree is infallible and immutable. So much so that we must consider everything that affects us as occurring necessarily and as it were by fate, so that it would be an error to desire things to happen in any other way. [Descartes builds into that sentence a qualification. Instead of 'everything', he says 'everything except for matters that this decree has chosen to make dependent on our free will'.] But most of our desires extend to matters that depend partly on us and partly on other things; and within any such desired outcome we should carefully pick out just the part that does depend only on us, so as to limit our desire to that alone. As for the other part, although we should consider its outcome to be entirely fated and immutable (so as to prevent our desire from occupying itself with them), we must nevertheless consider the reasons that make it more or less likely, so as to use these reasons in governing our actions. Example: We have business in a place that we could reach by either of two routes, of which *x* is usually much safer than *y*. Providence may—for all we know to the contrary—have decreed that if we go by *x* we'll certainly be robbed, whereas we can travel by *y* without any danger. That shouldn't make us regard the choice of route as a toss-up. . . . Reason wants us to choose the route that is usually the safer. . . [Descartes continues, in an immensely complex sentence, to say in effect: . . . and if we do take that route, whatever happens to us on it, we have satisfied any reasonable desire that we might have had. If we are robbed on the safe route, we know that this was inevitable from our point of view, and we had no basis for wishing to be exempt from it; it's enough that we

did the best we could given the limitations on our knowledge. He continues:] It is certain that when we apply ourselves to distinguish fate [here = 'Providence'] from fortune in this way, we easily get the habit of regulating our desires so that their fulfillment depends only on us, so that they can always to give us complete satisfaction.

#### **147. Inner commotions of the soul**

I'll add just one more thought here—one that seems to me to help greatly to prevent us from suffering distress from the passions, namely: our well-being depends mainly on inner commotions that the soul produces in itself, unaided—unlike those passions that always depend on some movement of the spirits. Although these commotions of the soul are often joined with the passions that resemble them, they frequently occur with other passions, and they may even come from passions that are their opposites. For example, things like this sometimes happen:

A husband mourns his dead wife, though he would be sorry to see her brought to life again. Perhaps his heart is oppressed by the sadness aroused in him by the funeral display and by the absence of a person to whose company he has been accustomed. And perhaps some remnants of love or of pity occur in his imagination and draw genuine tears from his eyes. And yet despite all this he feels a secret joy in the innermost depths of his soul, and the commotion of this joy is so powerful that the sadness and tears accompanying it can do nothing to lessen its strength.

Another example: When we read of strange adventures in a book or see them acted out on the stage, this sometimes arouses sadness in us, sometimes joy, or love, or hatred, and generally any of the passions, depending on what kinds of objects are presented to our imagination. But we also get pleasure from feeling these passions aroused in us, and this pleasure is an intellectual •joy that can originate in •sadness as much in any of the other passions.

#### **148. The exercise of virtue is a supreme remedy for the passions**

Now these inner commotions affect us more intimately—and consequently have much more power over us—than the passions that occur with them but are distinct from them. So it is certain that provided our soul always has the means of happiness •within itself, it can't be harmed by any of the troubles coming •from elsewhere. Indeed, such troubles will increase the soul's joy because when it sees that it can't be harmed by them, that makes it aware of its own perfection •in which, of course, it rejoices. For our soul to have this means of happiness, all it needs is to pursue virtue diligently. Anyone who lives in such a way that his conscience can't reproach him for ever failing to do something he judges to be the best (that being what I am here calling 'pursuing virtue') will get from this a satisfaction that has such power to make him happy that the most violent assaults of the passions never have enough power to disturb the tranquillity of his soul.

## Part III: Specific Passions

### 149. Esteem and contempt

After having explained the six basic passions—which are, as it were, the genera of which all the others are species—I shall briefly describe the special features of each of the others, keeping to the same order as before. The first two are esteem and contempt [see Glossary]. Usually these terms signify only an opinion about a thing's worth—just an opinion, with no passion involved. Still, such opinions often generate passions for which we have no particular names, and I don't see why these terms shouldn't be applied to these passions. Esteem for *x*, regarded as a passion, is the soul's inclination to represent to itself *x*'s value, this inclination being caused by a special movement of the spirits that are guided into the brain in such a way that they strengthen the impressions relating to *x*'s value. The passion of contempt is the soul's inclination to consider the baseness or insignificance of the object it contemns, and is caused by a movement of the spirits that strengthens the idea of this insignificance.

### 150. These passions are merely two kinds of wonder

So these two passions are merely species of wonder. For when we don't wonder at the greatness or the insignificance of an object, making no more and no less of it than reason tells us to, then our esteem or contempt for it is dispassionate. And although esteem is often aroused in us by love, and contempt by hatred, this isn't universal—it's just the special case where our inclination to consider a thing's greatness or insignificance comes from our having more or less affection for it. [What Descartes wrote here means '... where our having more or less inclination to consider...'; a slip, corrected in the present version.]

### 151. We can esteem or contemn ourselves

These two passions can relate to all sorts of objects; but they are most conspicuous when we relate them to ourselves, i.e. when it is our own merit that we esteem or contemn. The movement of the spirits that causes them in this case makes itself felt so strongly that the person in question shows in his facial expression, his gestures, how he walks, that he has an unusually better or worse opinion of himself.

### 152. What can cause us to esteem ourselves

One of the principal parts of wisdom is to know how and why anyone ought to esteem or contemn himself, so I shall try to give here my view about this. I see only one thing in us that could entitle us to esteem ourselves, namely the exercise of our free will and our command of our volitions. For we can be rightly praised or blamed only for actions that depend on this free will; it makes us *like God* in a way, by making us masters of ourselves, provided we don't lose the rights it gives us through shrinking reluctance [see Glossary].

### 153. What generosity consists in

So I think that true generosity, which brings it about that a person's self-esteem is as great as it legitimately can be, consists only in **(i)** his knowing •that nothing truly belongs to him except this free control of his volitions, and •that his good or bad use of this freedom is the only valid reason for him to be praised or blamed; and **(ii)** his feeling within himself a firm and constant resolution to use his freedom well—i.e. never to lack the will to undertake and carry out

whatever he judges to be best. To do that is to follow virtue perfectly.

#### 154. Generosity keeps us from contemning others

Those who have **(i)** this knowledge and **(ii)** this feeling about themselves find it easy to believe that any other person can have the same knowledge and feeling about himself, because there's nothing in this that depends on anyone else. That's why such people never condemn anyone. Although they often see others acting wrongly in ways that show up their weakness, they are more inclined to excuse than to blame them—more inclined to regard these actions as due to lack of knowledge than as due to lack of a virtuous will. Just as they—i.e. generous people—don't rate themselves much below those who have greater wealth or honour, or even those who have more intelligence, knowledge or beauty, or surpass them in some other perfections, they correspondingly don't have much more esteem for themselves than for those whom they surpass, because all these things strike them as very unimportant in comparison with a virtuous will. That is the only thing they esteem themselves for, and they suppose that everyone else does—or at least *could*—have it too.

#### 155. What humility as a virtue consists in

Thus the most generous people are usually also the humblest. We have humility as a virtue when, by reflecting on the infirmity of our nature and on the wrongs we may have done or could yet do (wrongs that are no less serious than other people's), we •don't rate ourselves higher than anyone else and •think that since others have free will just as we do, they may use it just as well as we use ours.

#### 156. The properties of generosity; and how generosity serves as a remedy for all the disorders of the passions

Those who are generous in this way are naturally led to do great things while not undertaking anything that they don't feel capable of doing. And because they don't rate anything higher than •doing good to others and contemning [see Glossary] their own self-interest, they are always perfectly courteous, gracious and obliging to everyone. And along with this they have complete command over their passions, especially

- over desires, jealousy and envy; because the only things they think to be worth pursuing depend solely on themselves;
- over hatred of other people, because they have esteem for everyone;
- over fear, because their confidence in their own virtue reassures them; and finally
- over anger, because **(i)** they don't put much value on anything that depends on others, and so **(ii)** they never give their enemies the advantage of knowing that they are injured by them. [How **(i)** relates to **(ii)** is as obscure in the French as in this translation.]

#### 157. Vanity

Anyone who gets a good opinion of himself for any reason other than the one mentioned in article 152, whatever the reason might be, doesn't have true generosity but only a vanity that is always very far from virtue; and the less justification he has for esteeming himself highly, the greater the distance from virtue. The *least* justified is the person who is vain for no reason at all—i.e. not because he thinks he has some merit for which he should be appreciated. This person doesn't think that merit comes into it at all; he imagines that

glory is something you *grab*, and that those who claim the most glory *have* the most glory. This vice is so unreasonable and absurd that I would have trouble believing that anyone lets himself fall into it, if it weren't for the phenomenon of undeserved praise. In fact, flattery is everywhere so common that no man is such a poor specimen that he never sees himself esteemed for things that aren't praiseworthy or even for things that are blameworthy. This creates an opportunity for the most ignorant and most stupid people fall into this sort of vanity.

#### **158. Vanity's effects are opposite to those of generosity**

The volition we feel within ourselves always to make good use of our free will results, as I have said, in generosity. Self-esteem based on anything else—*anything* else—is a highly blameworthy vanity, which is so different from true generosity that it has quite the opposite effects. For all other goods—such as intelligence, beauty, riches, and honours—are usually esteemed so highly because so few people have them, and most of them are intrinsically incapable of being had by many people; and that brings it about that vain people try to pull everyone else down, and being slaves to their desires they have souls that are constantly agitated by hatred, envy, jealousy, or anger.

#### **159. Unvirtuous humility**

For someone to be abject, or unvirtuously humble, is chiefly for these things to be true of him:

- he has a feeling of weakness or indecision;
- he can't help doing things that he knows he'll be sorry about later on (as though he lacked the full use of his free will);

- he believes that he can't survive unaided or do without many things whose acquisition depends on others.

So this humility is directly opposed to generosity, and it often happens that the most abject people are the most arrogant and haughty, just as the most generous are the most modest and humble. But whereas those who have a strong and generous spirit don't change their mood to suit the prosperity or adversity that comes their way, those with a weak and abject spirit are guided by chance alone, and are puffed up by prosperity as much as they are humbled by adversity. Indeed, we often see them shamefully abase themselves around those from whom they expect some advantage or fear some evil, while *at the same time* they insolently lord it over those from whom they don't hope or fear anything.

#### **160. How the spirits move in these passions**

It's easy to grasp that vanity and abjectness are not only vices but also passions, because their commotion is quite apparent in the demeanour of those who are suddenly elated or depressed by some new happening. But it may be questioned whether generosity and humility, which are virtues, can also be passions: their movements are less apparent, and virtue seems to be less in key with passion than vice is. Still, if a movement of the spirits strengthens a thought that has bad foundations, I don't see what's to stop it from also strengthening one that is well-founded. And because vanity and generosity both consist simply in our good opinion of ourselves—differing only in that this opinion is unjustified in one case and justified in the other—I think we can relate them to a single passion that is

- aroused by a movement composed of the movements of •wonder, •joy, and •love (self-love and the love we have for what is making us think well of ourselves).



And humility, whether virtuous or unvirtuous, is

aroused by a movement composed of the movements of •wonder, •sadness, and •self-love mingled with hatred for the faults that give rise to self-contempt.

The only difference I observe between these two composite-movements comes from their component of wonder. The movement of wonder has two varieties: **(i)** an initial vigorous surge of movement that comes from surprise, followed by variations in the force of the movement from then on; and **(ii)** a continuing uniform movement of the spirits in the brain. Of these varieties, **(i)** is found mostly in vanity and abjectness. That's because vice usually comes from ignorance, and those who know themselves least are the most liable to become vain or excessively humble: they are surprised by anything new that happens to them and, attributing this novelty to themselves, they wonder at themselves, and either esteem or condemn themselves depending on whether they think that what is happening to them is to their advantage or not. But often one thing that makes them vain is followed by another that makes them humble, which is why their passion involves a variable movement of the spirits. On the other hand, variety **(ii)** is more prominent in generosity and virtuous humility than in the unvirtuous pair. That's because there is no incompatibility between generosity and humility of the virtuous kind, nor anything else that might alter them; which brings it about that their movements are firm, constant and always very similar to each other. These movements don't come from surprise, because those who esteem themselves in this way are already thoroughly in touch with the causes of their self-esteem. Still, it can be said that those causes (our power to use our free will, which leads us to value ourselves, and our infirmities, which lead us not to over-rate ourselves) are so marvellous that each time we consider them they are a source of wonder.

### 161. How generosity can be acquired

What are commonly called 'virtues' are habits of the soul that dispose it to have certain thoughts: though they aren't thoughts, these habits can produce thoughts and be produced by them. These thoughts can be produced by the soul alone; but they are often strengthened by some movement of the spirits, in which case they are •actions of virtue *and* •passions of the soul.

[In what follows, Descartes connects the 'gen' in *générosité* with origins (as in the English 'generation', 'genesis', 'genetic' and so on). And the source of the word 'magnanimity' (and the similar corresponding French word) is a Greek word meaning 'greatness of soul'.]

Despite the fact that

there seems to be no other virtue to which good birth contributes as much as it does to the virtue that leads a person to value himself at his true worth, and it's easy to believe that the souls that God puts into our bodies are not all equally noble and strong (which is why I have called this virtue 'generosity', following common usage, rather than 'magnanimity' . . . )

nevertheless

a good upbringing is a great help in correcting birth-defects; and someone who often gives thought to •the nature of free will, and to •the many advantages that come from a firm resolution to use it well, and to •how vain and useless are the cares that trouble ambitious people, can arouse in himself the passion of generosity and then move on to acquire the virtue.

Since this virtue is a kind of key to all the other virtues and a general remedy for every disorder of the passions, it seems to me that this consideration about how to acquire it deserves serious attention.

**162. Veneration**

Veneration or respect is the soul's inclination not only to have esteem for the object that it reveres but also to submit to it, anxiously trying to gain its approval. Thus, we have veneration only for free causes that we think could do us good or evil, without our knowing which they will do. For causes from which we expect only good, we have love and devotion rather than simple veneration; and for ones from which we expect only evil, we have hatred. And if we don't judge the cause of this good or evil to be free, we don't submit to it in an attempt to gain its approval. When the pagans had veneration for woods, springs, or mountains, what they revered, strictly speaking, wasn't these dead things but the divinities that they thought presided over them. The movement of the spirits that produces this passion is composed of the movement that produces wonder and the movement that produces anxiety (about which I shall speak later).

**163. Scorn**

What I call 'scorn' is our soul's inclination to condemn a free cause, thinking that although it is by nature capable of doing good or evil, it is so far beneath us that it can't help or harm us. The movement of the spirits that arouses scorn is composed of the movements that produce wonder and confidence or boldness.

**164. The function of these two passions**

Whether someone's veneration or scorn is used well or badly depends on whether he has generosity or weak-spirited abjectness. The nobler and more generous his soul is, the inclined he is to render to each person his due; thus, he

not only has a very deep humility before God, but he is also 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 the only things he contemns are vices. In contrast with that, abject and weak people are liable to sin by excess, sometimes in revering and fearing things that deserve nothing but contempt, and sometimes in haughtily scorning things that are most deserving of reverence. They often switch quickly from extreme impiety to superstition, and then from superstition back again to impiety, so that there's no vice or disorder of the mind that they aren't capable of.

**165. Hope and anxiety**

Hope is a disposition of the soul to be convinced that what it desires will happen, and it is caused by a particular movement of the spirits, namely the movements of joy and of desire mixed together. And anxiety is a different disposition of the soul, which convinces it that what it desires won't happen. These two passions, although they are opposites, can occur together, namely when we make room in our thoughts for reasons for regarding the fulfilment of the desire as easy, and at the same time reasons that make it seem difficult.

**166. Confidence and despair**

And neither of these passions ever accompanies desire without leaving some room for the other. For when hope is so strong that it entirely drives out anxiety, its nature changes and it is called 'confidence' or 'assurance'. And when we are sure that what we desire will come about, then although we still *want* it to come about we're no longer agitated by the *passion of desire*, which made us await the outcome with concern. Similarly on the other side: when anxiety is

so extreme that it leaves no room for hope, it changes into despair; and this despair by representing the thing desired as impossible entirely extinguishes desire, which applies only to things that are possible.

### 167. Jealousy

Jealousy [see Glossary] is a kind of anxiety having to do with our desire to keep possession of some good. It results less from the strength of the reasons that make us think we may lose the good, as from the high esteem in which we hold it. This causes us to examine the slightest grounds for doubt, and to regard them as very considerable reasons.

### 168. What can make this passion honourable

Because one should be more concerned to preserve goods that are very great than goods that are less so, jealousy can be right and honourable on certain occasions. For example, a captain defending a very important fortress has a right to be jealous of it, i.e. to be suspicious regarding all the ways by which it might be taken by surprise; and a virtuous woman is not blamed for being jealous of her honour, i.e. for taking care not only to behave well but also to avoid even the slightest cause for scandal.

### 169. What can make jealousy blameworthy

But a miser's jealousy concerning his hoard—that is, his devouring it with his eyes, and wanting it always near him for fear of its being stolen—is laughed at, for money isn't worth that sort of trouble. And we condemn a man who is jealous of his wife, because this shows that •he doesn't love her as he should and that •he has a bad opinion of himself or of her. I say that he doesn't love her as he should because

if he truly loved her he would have no inclination to distrust her. Properly speaking, what he loves is not *her* but only the good he imagines to consist in his having sole possession of her. And he wouldn't be scared of losing this good if he didn't think himself to be unworthy of it or his wife to be unfaithful. I should add that this passion involves suspicion and distrust; if someone tries to avoid an evil about which he rightly feels anxious, that is not jealousy.

### 170. Indecision

Indecision is also a kind of anxiety. Keeping the soul balanced. . . .between several actions open to it, indecision causes it not to perform any of them, and thus gives it time to deliberate before committing itself. [Descartes wrote *temps pour choisir* = 'time to choose', but that was presumably a slip.] There is certainly some good in that. But indecision is extremely bad when it goes on for too long, getting us to deliberate when we should be acting. It can happen that someone who has to choose among several things that appear equally good is uncertain and undecided while feeling no anxiety at all; so why do I say that the passion of indecision is 'a kind of anxiety'? Because this latter sort of indecision isn't a passion: it comes from the material that the indecision is about, and not from any commotion of the spirits. It's not a passion unless the uncertainty is increased by the person's anxiety about choosing wrongly. But in some people this anxiety is so common and so strong that often, even when there's nothing for them to *choose* but only a single thing to be taken or left, their anxiety holds them back and makes them pause uselessly to search for other options. [Descartes seems not to notice that if there is one thing to be taken or left then there is need for a choice.] In this case an excess of indecision results from too great a desire to do well, and from a weakness of the

intellect, which contains only a lot of confused notions and none that are lively and clear. That's why the remedy against this kind of excess is •to get the habit of forming certain and determinate judgments about everything that comes before us, and •to believe that whenever we do what we judge to be best we are doing our duty, even if the judgment was a poor one.

### 171. Courage and boldness

Courage, when it is a passion and not a character-trait or natural inclination, is a certain energy or agitation that disposes the soul to apply itself energetically to do what it wants to do, whatever that may be. Boldness is a kind of courage that disposes the soul to carry out the most dangerous tasks.

### 172. Emulation

Emulation is also a kind of courage, but in another sense. Courage can be regarded as a genus that divides into

- (1) as many species as it has different objects, and into
- (2) as many species as it has causes.

Boldness is one of the (1) species, and emulation is one of the (2) species. Emulation is nothing but an energy that disposes the soul to tackle things in which it hopes to be able to succeed because it sees others succeed in them; so it is a species of courage the external cause of which is the example or model that the person is emulating. I specify *external* cause because there must always also be an internal cause, that consists in the body's being so disposed that desire and hope have more power to send a lot of blood to the heart than anxiety or despair have to stop it.

### 173. How boldness depends on hope

The object of boldness is some difficulty that usually results in anxiety or even despair, so that it's in the most dangerous and desperate affairs that boldness and courage mostly come into play. Yet there's a need for us to hope—or even to be sure—that we'll attain the goal, so that we'll tackle vigorously the difficulties we encounter. 'But', you'll say, 'you have spoken of despair and of sureness in a single episode of boldness, but one can't be assured of something *while* being desperate about it.' Indeed, there is despair about the object and sureness about the end, and the end is different from the object. [The Decii, mentioned in the next sentence, were three heroes of ancient Rome—members of the same family—who died in battle in the same way, decades apart.] Thus, when the Decii threw themselves against the enemy and ran to certain death, the •object of their boldness was the difficulty of preserving their lives during this action, and about this they felt only **despair** because they were certain to die. But their •goal was to inspire their soldiers by their example and cause them to win the victory, and they had some **hope** of achieving that; or else they had a further goal of gaining glory after their death, and they were **sure** of this.

### 174. Shrinking reluctance and fear

Shrinking reluctance [see Glossary] is directly opposed to courage. It is a listlessness or coldness that prevents the soul from bringing itself to do the things it would do 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 that takes away its power to resist the evils that it thinks are near.

**175. The function of shrinking reluctance**

Although I can't convince myself that nature has given us any passion that is never virtuous and has no good or praiseworthy function, I still find it hard to guess what purpose these two passions—shrinking reluctance and fear—might serve. So far as I can see, the only good use for shrinking reluctance is when it frees us from making efforts that plausible reasons might have moved us to make if this passion hadn't been aroused by other reasons—more certain ones—making us judge the efforts to be useless. In those cases, besides freeing the soul from such efforts, it is also does the body some service by slowing the movement of the spirits and thereby preventing us from wasting our energy. But shrinking reluctance is usually very harmful because it diverts the will from useful actions. Because it results simply from our having insufficient hope or desire, we need only increase these two passions within us in order to correct it.

**176. The function of fear**

As for fear or terror, I don't see that it can ever be praiseworthy or useful. So it's not a particular passion, but merely an excess of shrinking reluctance, wonder and anxiety—an excess that is always unvirtuous, just as boldness is an excess of courage that is always good (provided the end proposed is good). Because the principal cause of fear is surprise, there's no better way to avoid it than to think ahead and prepare oneself for any eventuality that one might fear.

**177. Remorse**

Remorse [see Glossary] of conscience is a kind of sadness that comes from our doubt about whether something we are doing

or have done is good; and this doubt is an essential feature of it. If we were quite sure that what we are doing is bad we wouldn't be doing it, because the will is carried only to objects that have some semblance of goodness. And if we were certain that what we have already done was bad, we would have repentance over it and not simply remorse. The function of remorse is to make us inquire whether the object of our doubt is good or not, and to prevent us from doing it again as long as we aren't certain that it is good. But because remorse presupposes evil, it would be better never to have had reason to feel it; and we can prevent it in the same way that we can free ourselves from indecision.

**178. Derision**

Ridicule or derision is a kind of joy mixed with hatred [see Glossary], which results from our perceiving some small misfortune in a person who we think deserves it: we hate this misfortune, but enjoy seeing it come to someone who deserves it. When this comes upon us unexpectedly, the surprise of wonder causes us to burst into laughter, in accordance with what I said in article 126 about the nature of laughter. But the misfortune must be small; if it is great, we can't believe that the person who has it deserves it, unless we were born mean or hate him very much.

**179. Why the most imperfect people are usually the most given to derision**

Those who have an obvious defect—e.g. who are lame, blind in one eye, or hunch-backed—or who have received some public insult are especially inclined to derision. Wanting to see everyone else in as much disgrace as they are, they're very pleased by the misfortunes of others and regard them as deserving them.

**180. The function of teasing**

When a person criticizes vices by making them look ridiculous, without laughing at them or showing any hatred for those who have them, that's a gentle teasing that isn't a passion but rather a useful trait of a good man. It shows •the cheerfulness of his temperament and •the tranquillity of his soul, which are both signs of virtue. . . .

**181. The function of laughter in teasing**

It isn't bad-mannered to laugh when we hear someone else's teasing; indeed it may be churlish *not* to laugh. But when someone is teasing, it is more fitting for him to refrain from laughing, so as not to seem surprised by what he is saying or impressed by his wit in thinking it up. His teasing will have more effect on the hearers if he keeps a straight face.

**182. Envy**

What we usually call 'envy' is a vice—a natural perversity that certain people have, making them annoyed when they see good coming to others. But I'm using 'envy' here to signify a passion, and indeed a passion that isn't always unvirtuous. So: the passion of envy is a kind of sadness mingled with hatred, arising from seeing good coming to people one •thinks are unworthy of it. This •thought can be justified only in regard to goods due to fortune. What about the advantages—of the soul or even of the body—that we possess from birth? God gave us those before we were capable of doing any evil, so we are certainly worthy of them!

**183. How envy can be just or unjust**

But sometimes fortune gives advantages to someone who is really unworthy of them, and then envy stirs in us only

because, having a natural love of fairness, we are upset at the unfairness of the distribution of these goods. This envy expresses a zeal that may be excusable, especially when the good we envy in the other person is one that he may convert into an evil—e.g. if it is some duty or office in the exercise of which he may behave badly. When we want that same good for ourselves and are blocked from having it because it belongs to others who are less worthy of it, this makes the passion more violent: but it is still excusable, provided its element of hatred relates solely to the bad distribution of the desired good and not to the people who possess it or distribute it. But few people can rise to that standard. Few people are so just and so generous that they don't hate anyone who gets in ahead of them in the acquisition of a good that can't be shared by many and that they had wanted for themselves, even if the person who acquired the good is as worthy of it as they are, or even more so. What is usually most envied is glory. It's true that x's having glory doesn't prevent y from aspiring to it, but it makes actually getting it harder for y—and more expensive!

**184. Why envious people are apt to have leaden complexions**

No other vice damages human happiness as much as envy does. It's not just that those tainted with envy make themselves unhappy; they also do all they can to spoil the pleasure of others. And they usually have a leaden complexion—that is, one that is pale, a mixture of yellow and black, as though bruised. . . . This agrees very well with what I said in articles 103 and 105 about the movements of the blood in sadness and in hatred. For

- hatred brings it about that bile—both the yellow bile from the lower part of the liver, and the black bile from the spleen—spreads out from the heart through the arteries into all the veins. And
- sadness brings it about that the blood in the veins becomes less hot and flows more slowly than usual—which is enough to make the colour livid.

But we mustn't think that everyone in whom we see this colour is inclined to envy; several different factors can cause the bile (whether yellow or black) to flow in the veins. Nor should we think that every envious person has this colour: •envy doesn't send bile into the veins in a large enough quantity to change the colour of the complexion unless •it is very intense and long-lasting.

#### **185. Pity**

Pity is a kind of sadness mingled with love or with good will towards those whom we see suffering some misfortune that we think they don't deserve. . . .

#### **186. Those who are most given to pity**

Those who feel very weak and very open to the adversities of fortune seem to be more inclined to this passion than others, because they think of others' misfortunes as possibly happening to themselves. Thus they are moved to pity more by their love for themselves than by love for others.

#### **187. How the most generous people are affected by this passion**

Nevertheless, those who are the most generous and who are most strong-minded in •not being anxious about evil coming

to them and •regarding themselves as beyond the power of fortune, are not without compassion when they see the infirmities of other men and hear their complaints. For generosity [see article 154] involves having good will towards everyone. But the sadness of this pity is not bitter [see Glossary]: like the sadness caused by tragic actions represented on the stage, it is more external and sense-related than in the interior of the soul; while the soul has the satisfaction of thinking that it is doing its duty in feeling compassion for the afflicted. And it has another special feature: whereas the man in the street has compassion for those who complain because he thinks their misfortunes are very distressing, the pity of •the greatest men is directed mainly at the weakness of those whom they see complaining. For •they think that nothing that happens could be as great an evil as the shrinking reluctance of those who can't steadily *take* it. And although •they hate vices, they don't on that account hate those who have them; for those people all they have is pity.

#### **188. Those who aren't affected by pity**

What sorts of people don't have pity for anyone? Only •malicious and envious minds that naturally hate everyone, and •ones who are so brutish—and made so blind by good fortune or desperate by bad—that they don't think any more misfortune could befall them.

#### **189. Why this passion moves us to tears**

A final point about pity: we weep very easily in this passion because love in sending a lot of blood to the heart makes many vapours flow from the eyes, and the cold of the sadness makes these vapours move more slowly and so change into tears, in accordance with what I said in article 131.

**190. Self-satisfaction**

The satisfaction of those who steadily pursue virtue is a •disposition of their soul that is called ‘tranquillity’ and ‘peace of mind’. But the renewed satisfaction we gain when we have just done something we think to be good is a •passion—a kind of joy that I regard as the sweetest of all joys, because its cause depends only on ourselves. But when this cause is not just, i.e. when the actions that we are so satisfied with are trivial or even unvirtuous, the satisfaction is absurd and serves only to produce a kind of vanity and absurd arrogance. This is especially noticeable in bigoted and superstitious people who think they are devout. These are people who—under the cover of frequently going to church, reciting many prayers, wearing their hair short, fasting, and giving alms—think they are entirely perfect and imagine they are such close friends of God that they couldn’t do anything to displease him. They suppose that anything their passion tells them to do is commendable zeal, although it sometimes tells them to perform the greatest crimes that men can commit, such as betraying cities, killing rulers, and exterminating whole peoples just because they don’t accept their opinions.

**191. Repentance**

Repentance is directly opposed to self-satisfaction. It is a kind of sadness that comes from our believing that we have done something bad; and it is very bitter because its cause comes from ourselves alone. But this doesn’t prevent repentance from being very useful when the action we repent of is truly bad and we know this for certain, because then our repentance prompts us to do better on another occasion. But it often happens that a weak-minded person repents of something he has done without knowing for sure that it was

bad; he persuades himself that it was bad simply because he is *afraid* that it was; if he had done the opposite, the same fear would kick in and he would repent in the same way. This is an imperfection deserving of pity, and the remedies against this fault are the same as those that serve to get rid of indecision.

**192. Approval**

Approval, properly speaking, is a desire to see good come to someone for whom we have good will; but I am here using ‘approval’ in a narrower sense, to mean this good will when it is aroused in us by some good action of the person in question (we’re naturally inclined to love those who do things we judge to be good even if *we* get no benefit from them). Approval in this sense is a kind of love, not of desire, though it is always accompanied by the desire to see good come to the one of whom we approve. And it is usually combined with pity, because the reverses that we see unfortunate people suffer make us reflect all the more on their merits. [Descartes gives us no help in seeing what that last sentence has to do with the rest of the article.]

**193. Gratitude**

Gratitude is also a kind of love aroused in us by some action of the person to whom we are grateful—an action by which we think he has done us some good or at least intended to do so. So it has the same content as approval, with the extra feature that it is based on an action that affects us and that we desire to reciprocate. That’s why it has much more strength than mere approval, especially in the souls of those who are to any degree noble and generous.



**194. Ingratitude**

Ingratitude isn't a passion, because nature has not placed in us any movement of the spirits that produces it. It is simply the direct opposite of gratitude; and because gratitude is always a virtue and one of the principal bonds of human society, ingratitude is not a passion but a vice. . . . This vice belongs only to

- brutish, foolishly arrogant people who think that all things are their due, or to
- stupid people who never reflect on the benefits they receive, or to
- weak and abject people who sense their infirmity and need, crawl to others for help, and after they have been given it hate their benefactors.

•Why does such a person x hate the person y who has helped him? Because he lacks the will to return the favour or despairs of his ability to do so; and thinks that everyone—including y—is as grasping as he is, and that no-one does good without the hope of recompense; so he thinks he has deceived y (because x knows that y is not going to get any reward for helping x).

**195. Indignation**

Indignation is a kind of hatred or aversion that we naturally have towards those who do some evil, whatever it may be. Although often mingled with envy or pity, it has an object that is wholly different from the objects of those two passions. For we are indignant only towards those who do good or evil to people who don't deserve it, but we envy those who receive this good and we pity those who receive this evil. . . .

**196. Why indignation is sometimes joined to pity, and sometimes to derision**

To do evil is also in some way to receive evil; and therefore some people combine pity to their indignation, and others derision, depending on whether they bear good-will or ill-will towards those whom they see acting wrongly. So the laughter of Democritus and the tears of Heraclitus could have come from the same cause. [It was said in ancient times that Democritus laughed at human folly, which reduced Heraclitus to tears.]

**197. Indignation is often accompanied by wonder and isn't incompatible with joy**

Indignation is also often accompanied by wonder. We usually assume that everything will be done as we think it ought to be, i.e. done in the way we consider good. So when it happens otherwise we are surprised, and we wonder at it. And indignation isn't incompatible with joy, though it is more usually combined with sadness. For when we are indignant over a bad deed that can't harm us, and we take into consideration that we wouldn't be willing to act in such a way, this gives us some pleasure—which is perhaps one of the causes of the laughter that sometimes accompanies this passion.

**198. The function of indignation**

Indignation shows up much more in people who want to *appear* virtuous than in ones who really *are*. Those who love virtue can't see the vices of others without some aversion, but they become impassioned only about the greatest and most extraordinary vices.

- To be highly indignant about trivial matters is to be difficult and peevish;

- To be indignant about matters for which no-one can be blamed is to be unjust;
- To direct one's indignation not only to the actions of human beings but also to the works of God or of nature is impertinent and absurd.

The last of those is what is done by those who—constantly discontented with their condition and their fortune—venture to find fault with how the world is governed and with the secrets of Providence.

### 199. Anger

Anger is also a kind of hatred or aversion that we have towards those who have done (or tried to do) harm not just to *someone* but to *us* in particular. Thus it contains everything that indignation contains as well as an extra feature: anger is based on an action that affects us and for which we have a desire to avenge ourselves. This desire nearly always accompanies anger, which is directly opposed to •gratitude, as •indignation is to •approval. But anger is incomparably more violent than these other three passions, because the desire to ward off harmful things and to avenge oneself is the most compelling of all •desires•. It is desire which in combination with self-love makes anger involve as much agitation of the blood as courage and boldness can cause; and hatred brings it about that this agitation mainly affects the bilious blood coming from the spleen and the small veins of the liver. This blood enters into the heart and there, because of its abundance and the nature of the bile it is mixed with, it arouses a sharper and more burning heat than any that could be aroused by love or joy.

### 200. Why those who are flushed with anger less scary than those who are pale with anger

The external signs of anger differ according to different personal temperaments and the various other passions that compose it or are joined to it. Some people grow pale or tremble when they become angry, others become flushed or even weep. It's usually thought that the anger of those who grow pale is more to be feared than the anger of those who become flushed. The reason for this is that when someone won't or can't avenge himself except through looks and words, he employs all his heat and energy from the moment he is first aroused, and this makes him turn red; and sometimes his regret and self-pity over not being able to avenge himself makes him cry. On the other hand, those who hold back and decide to get a greater vengeance later on become sad at the thought of what the anger-making action has obliged them to do, and sometimes they are also anxious about the evils that may arise from the decision they have made—which immediately makes them pale and cold, and starts them trembling. But when later they come to take vengeance, they warm up all the more because they were cold to begin with, just as we observe that the most severe fevers are ones that began with a chill.

### 201. There are two sorts of anger: kind people are the most prone to the first

This shows us that we can distinguish two kinds of anger. **(a)** One flares up suddenly and is obvious from the outside, but it has little effect and can easily be calmed; **(b)** the other is less obvious at first, but gnaws more at the heart and has effects that are more dangerous. **(a)** Those filled with kindness and love are more prone to the first. It results not from a deep hatred but from an instant aversion that takes

them by surprise. It comes about in this way: these people tend to imagine that everything ought to happen in the way that they think best; so when that doesn't happen they wonder at it and take offence. Quite often they react in this way even though the matter doesn't affect them personally; that is because their great affection makes them concerned for •those they love in the same way as for •themselves. Thus, what others would be merely indignant about is for these people a subject of anger; and because their lovingness fills their heart with much heat and much blood, any intrusion of bile into the heart—however small it is—will cause a great commotion in this blood. (I'm talking about bile that is driven to the heart by the aversion that has suddenly come upon them.) But this commotion doesn't last, because the surprise loses strength, and as soon as they realize that the object of their anger oughtn't to disturb them so much, they repent of their anger.

**202. It's weak and servile souls that let themselves be carried away most by the second sort of anger**

The (b) other kind of anger, in which hatred and sadness predominate, is not so apparent at first except perhaps for the face's pallor. But its strength is gradually increased by the agitation that a burning desire for vengeance stirs up in the blood; and the blood, being mixed with the bile driven to the heart from the lower part of the liver and spleen, produces a very keen and piercing heat there. And just as it's the most generous souls who have the most gratitude, so it is those with the most vanity, the most abject and weak, who are most readily swept up into this kind of anger. The wrongs that arouse someone's anger appear greater in proportion as vanity increases his self-esteem and also in proportion to his valuation of the good things that those wrongs take away;

and that valuation will be high in proportion to how weak and abject the person's soul is. . . .

**203. Generosity serves as a remedy for anger's excesses**

Although anger is useful in energizing us to push back against wrongs, there is no passion whose excesses we should take more care to avoid. Such excesses confuse our judgment and often make us act wrongly in ways we'll later have to repent. Sometimes they even prevent us from pushing back against the wrongs as well as we could if we were calmer. But just as vanity more than anything else makes anger excessive, so I think that generosity is the best remedy for its excesses. Here is why. Generosity makes us •put a low value on all the good things that might be taken away, and to •put a high value on the liberty and absolute control over ourselves that we cease to have when we take offence at something that someone else does. Thus it brings it about that •if we are generous• we limit ourselves to contempt [see Glossary], or at the most to indignation, for the wrongs that others would ordinarily be offended by.

**204. Vainglory**

What I here call 'vainglory' is a kind of joy based on the person's love for himself and resulting from his expectation or hope of being praised others. So it's different from the inner satisfaction that comes from thinking one has done something good, because we are sometimes praised for things we don't think are good, and blamed for things we think are better. But that inner satisfaction and vainglory are both kinds of self-esteem, and also kinds of joy. For seeing that we are esteemed highly by others is a reason for esteeming ourselves.

**205. Shame**

Shame, on the other hand, is a kind of sadness based also on self-love, which comes from expecting to be blamed or being anxiously aware that one may be blamed. And it is also a kind of modesty, or humility and diffidence about oneself. When our self-esteem is so great that we can't imagine anyone contemning us, we can't easily be ashamed!

**206. The function of vainglory and shame**

Vainglory and shame have the same function: they move us to virtue, one through hope and the other through anxiety. For them to do that, all that's needed is to instruct our judgment regarding what truly deserves blame or praise, so that we won't be ashamed of our good actions or vain about our bad ones (as many people are). But it isn't good to rid oneself entirely of these passions, as the Cynics of ancient Greece used to do. The common people are indeed very bad judges; but we can't live without them, and it matters to us to have their good opinion, so we should often follow their opinions rather than our own regarding the external aspect of our actions.

**207. Impudence**

Impudence (or effrontery) is a kind of contempt [see Glossary] for shame and often for pride too; and it isn't a passion because there's no specific movement of our spirits that produces it. Rather, it is a vice that is opposed to whatever is good in shame and vainglory, just as ingratitude is opposed to gratitude and cruelty to pity. Effrontery results chiefly from the person's having often been on the receiving end of grave insults. [In the rest of this article Descartes apparently

means to be explaining how that result comes about. It is an obscure and contorted story, and we can do without it.]

**208. Distaste**

Distaste is a kind of sadness that results from some cause from which there has previously been joy. It's just a fact about our constitution that most of the things we enjoy please us only for a time and then become tiresome. The clearest examples involve drinking and eating, which are beneficial when one has an appetite, and harmful when one doesn't. Because such things then cease to be agreeable to our taste, this passion is called 'distaste'.

**209. Regret**

Regret [see Glossary] is also a kind of sadness. It has a particular bitterness in that it is always joined to some despair and to the memory of the pleasure we have had from some enjoyment. The only things we regret are good things that we once enjoyed and are now so completely lost that we have no hope of recovering them. . . .in the form in which we regret them.

**210. Lightheartedness**

Finally, what I call 'lightheartedness' is a kind of joy that has this peculiarity: its sweetness is increased by the recollection of the evils we have suffered, from which we feel *lightened*, like feeling relieved of some heavy burden that we have carried on our shoulders for a long time.

I can't see anything very special in these three passions, and I have included them here simply in order to follow the order of the enumeration that I made above. I think

this enumeration has been useful in showing that I haven't omitted any passions that deserved special consideration.

### 211. A general remedy for the passions

Now that we have met up with all the passions, we have much less reason for anxiety about them than we had before. We see that they are all intrinsically good, and that all we have to avoid is their misuse or their excess, and the remedies I have presented could be sufficient if everyone took the trouble to apply them. But some of these remedies involve forethought and effort (*industrie*) through which we can correct our natural faults by trying to separate within ourselves •the movements of the blood and spirits from •the thoughts to which they are usually joined; and I admit that few people will have sufficiently prepared themselves in *this* way for all the contingencies of life! •And hard work in advance is certainly needed: the objects of the passions arouse movements in the blood that follow so fast from mere impressions in the brain and the disposition of the organs, without no input from the soul, that no amount of human wisdom could counteract these movements unless preparations have been made in advance. [Descartes follows this with an obscure account of laughter as a response to tickling. Then:] So too, those who are strongly inclined by nature to the commotions of joy, pity, fear and anger can't help fainting, weeping, trembling, or having their blood all in turmoil as though they had a fever, when their imagination is strongly affected by the object of one of these passions. But there's something we can do on any such occasion—and I think I can offer it here as the most general remedy against all excesses of the passions, as well as the easiest to carry out—namely: when we feel our blood agitated in this way, we should be on our guard and bear in mind that everything

presented to the imagination tends to mislead the soul and make the reasons for pursuing the object of its passion appear much stronger than they are, and the reasons for not pursuing it much weaker. When what the passion urges us to do involves some delay, we should •delay making any decision about it and •think about other things until the commotion in our blood has completely calmed down. And when a passion is pushing us towards some course of action that has to be started right away, impelling us to actions that require an immediate decision, the will should devote itself mainly to considering and following the reasons for *not* acting in that way, even if they appear less strong. Suppose for example that someone is unexpectedly attacked by an enemy: the situation doesn't leave him any time for deliberation, but if he is accustomed to reflecting on his actions there's still something he can do in this situation. When he feels himself in the grip of fear he can try to turn his mind from thoughts of •the danger he is in to thoughts about •the reasons why there is much more security and honour in resistance than in flight. And in a different kind of case, when someone feels the desire for vengeance and anger is pushing him to run rashly towards his assailants, he should summon up the thought that it's unwise to lose one's life when it can be saved without dishonour, and that if the contest is very unequal it is better to •make an honourable retreat or •submit and ask for mercy than •to expose oneself stupidly to certain death.

### 212. All the good of this life depends solely on the passions, and so does all the evil

The soul can have pleasures of its own. But the pleasures that it shares with the body depend entirely on the passions, so that persons whom the passions can move most deeply are capable of enjoying the sweetest pleasures of this life.

It's true that they may also experience the most bitterness, when they don't know how to put these passions to good use and when fortune works against them. But the chief use of wisdom lies in its teaching us to master and control so

skillfully that the evils that they cause are quite bearable, and even become a source of joy.

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