**Images of the Union:**

**The *Passions de l’âme***

What is Descartes’ position concerning the union?

* As we have seen, in the *Meditations* (the 6th) as well as in the *Principles of Philosophy*, there are evident tensions
* Elisabeth stresses out such tensions, that can be resumed as it follows: what is the relation between the sensitive part of the soul (the sensitive faculties) and the mind?

after our “detour” on the Thomistic conception

of soul, we are back to correspondence D-E

* Question: how does the study of the passions of the soul help us out conceive of the union of soul and body (the third primitive notion, if you remember)?

**I. *Passions*, Book I: the Definitory Part**

**1. To know what a passion of the soul is, it is important to distinguish its functions with those of the body:** Next, I note that we are not aware of any subject which acts more directly upon our soul than the body to which it is joined. Consequently, we should recognize that **what is a passion in the soul is usually an action in the body**. Hence there is no better way of coming to know about our passions than by examining the difference between the soul and the body, in order to learn to which of the two we should attribute each of the functions present in us. (R. Descartes, *PA*, I, §2, tr. Cottingham)

**2. Two different experience in us:** We shall not find this very difficult if we bear in mind that anything **we experience as being in us**, and which we see can also exist **in wholly inanimate bodies**, must be attributed only to our body. On the other hand, anything **in us** which **we cannot conceive in any way as capable of belonging to a body** must be attributed to our soul. (*PA*, I, §3)

* **§4-5**: On heat proceeding from the body and maintaining “alive”.

Does it ring any bells?

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| Thomas Aquinas, *Contra Gentiles*, Book II, c. 71 | Descartes, *PA*, I, §5 |
| It can be inferred from the foregoing that **the soul is united to the body immediately,** no medium being required to unite the soul to the body, whether it be the phantasms, as Averroes holds, or the body’s powers, as some say, or the corporeal spirit, as others have asserted. For we have shown that the soul is united to the body as its form. Now, a form is united to matter without any medium at all, since to be the act of such and such a body belongs to a form by its very essence, and not by anything else. That is why, as Aristotle proves in *Metaphysics* VIII [6] there is nothing that makes a unitary thing out of matter and form except the agent which reduces the potentiality to act, for matter and form are related as potentiality and act. | *It is an error to believe that the soul gives movement and heat to the body.*  In this way we shall avoid a very serious error which many have fallen into, and which I regard as the primary cause of our failure up to now to give a satisfactory explanation of the passions and of everything else belonging to the soul. The error consists in supposing that since dead bodies are devoid of heat and movement, it is the absence of the soul which causes this cessation of movement and heat. Thus it has been believed, without justification, that our natural heat and all the movement of our bodies depend on the soul; whereas we ought to hold, on the contrary, that **the soul takes its leave when we die only because this heat ceases and the organs which bring about bodily movement decay**. |

* The body is directly informed by the soul, according to Thomas Aquinas
* That which entails, that primary matter always needs a form to shape it into something
* **Such conception has been criticized by everybody after Aquinas (John Duns Scotus, Ockham, but to confine us to 13-14th c. only)**
* Medieval philosophers like Scotus and Ockham, thought that the body has already a form, different than the soul, which confers to it a certain stability (we go back to the corpse example…)
* Descartes says something which goes in the same direction: the heat is already in the body, as an accident is in a substance, because **the body has an independent status from the soul**
* **It is a “*res*”, a “thing”, coexisting with the soul**

**§7-9:** on the body’s functioning and on the central role of heat

**§10:** the animal spirits, namely the most subtle parts of the blood, connect all the bodily parts (they go from the brain to the heart and “travel” at great velocity in the body, thereby vehiculating information throughout it)

**§12:** how the external objects touch the sense organs: movement nerves, animal spirits,

muscles

**3. The body acts according to “what it knows” (example of bodily reflexes):** I explained in the *Optics* how the objects of sight make themselves known to us simply by producing, through the medium of the intervening transparent bodies, local motions in the optic nerve-fibres at the back of our eyes, and then in the regions of the brain where these nerves originate. I explained too that the objects produce as much variety in these motions as they cause us to see in the things, and that it is not the motions occurring in the eye, but those occurring in the brain, which directly represent these objects to the soul. By this example, it is easy to conceive how sounds, smells, tastes, heat, pain, hunger, thirst and, in general, all the objects both of our external senses and of our internal appetites, also produce some movement in our nerves, which passes through them into the brain. (*PA*, I, §13)

**§14-16:** on the movement of the animal spirits (movement on the body)

**4. The functions of the soul (only): actions *and* passions.** Having considered all the functions belonging solely to the body, it is easy to recognize that there is nothing is us which we must attribute to our soul except our **thoughts**. These are of two principal kinds, some being **actions** **of the soul** and others its **passions**. Those I call its actions are all our **volitions**, for we experience them as proceeding directly from our soul and as seeming to depend on it alone. On the other hand, the various perceptions or modes of knowledge present in us may be called its **passions**, in a general sense, **for it is often not our soul which makes them such as they are, and the soul always receives them from the things that are represented by them**. (*PA*, I, §17)

Soul has:

actions: voluntary acts (will) passions: what the soul “receives” from the body

* What is the position of the soul, with respect to its passions?

**§18-19**: on will and perception

**§20**: on the attempt at isolating thoughts, that do not concern the body (e.g. the nature of our soul!)

**§21-26**: perceptions of the body, perceptions of the soul

**§27-29**: the definition of passions of the soul, plus *addenda*

*Perceptions, sensations or emotions of the soul which refer particularly to it, and which are caused, maintained and strengthened by some movement of the spirits.*

**§30-34**: on the union. **The pineal gland as the point of junction**: Cf. **§31**: The part of the body in which the soul directly exercises its functions is not the heart at all, or the whole of the brain. It is rather the innermost part of the brain, which is a certain very small gland situated in the middle of the brain’s substance and suspended above the passage through which the spirits in the brain’s anterior cavities communicate with those in its posterior cavities. The slightest movements on the part of this gland may alter very greatly the course of these spirits, and conversely any change, however slight, taking place in the course of the spirits may do much to change the movements of the gland.

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