**Is there any order among our passions?**

**Differences and structure of Books I and II of the *PA***

**I. Book I: What is a passion. Manual Instructions**

In the *Passions* Book 1, Descartes sketches the portrait of human being from two perspectives:

1. the physician’s
2. the metaphysician’s

Such double perspective structures the whole treatise. On the one hand, we observe how the body reacts to external things and on the other, how the soul reacts; we find

**1)** a clear statement concerning **the position of the soul within the body** (§10,17, 25, 30-35),

[Let us therefore take it that the soul has its principal seat in the small gland located in the middle of the brain. From there it radiates through the rest of the body by means of animal spirits, the nerves, and event the blood, which can take on the impressions of the spirits and carry them through the arteries to all the limbs. (…) Descartes, *Passions*, I, §34]

**2)** a **definition** of the passions (§27-29) as

…perceptions, sensations or emotions…which we refer particularly to the soul, and which are caused, maintained and strengthened by some movement of the spirits (…) [*Passions*, I, §27]

**3)** but also, and foremost, the **unity of the soul:**

It must be observed that the principal effect of all the human passions is that they move and dispose the soul to want the things for which they prepare the body. Thus, the feeling of fear moves the soul to want to flee, that of courage to want to fight, and similarly with the others. [I, §40]

But the will is by nature so free that it can never be constrained. Of the two kinds o thought I have distinguished in the soul – the first its actions, i.e. its volitions, and the second its passions, taking this word its most general sense to include every kind of perception – the former are absolutely within its power and can be changed only indirectly by the body, whereas the latter are absolutely dependent on the actions which produce them, and can be changed by the soul only indirectly, except when it is itself their cause. And the activity of the soul consists entirely in the fact that simply by willing something it brings it about that the little gland to which t is closely joined moves in the manner required to produce the effect corresponding to this volition. [I, §41]

See also the most important article §47: that there is no conflict between the lower and the superior part of the soul, for there is in us only **one soul**

**Unity of the soul** = the soul (the mind + sensation) and the body are described as interacting on with the other and as affecting each other mutually

* what is the role of the passions? They predispose the body to activity [§40], have a sort of pedagogic role [cf. admiration] and also, have a protective function towards the body [cf. §50]

**Book II: Classification of the passions or: images and example of the union**

**Useful** **Dangerous**

**Admiration**

**Love – hate, Desire, joy – sadness**

* there are only 6 primitive passions: all the others, are nothing but subspecies of them

**Differences with Thomas Aquinas:**

1. the distinction of the passions does not follow from their objects [Aquinas, ST Ia IIae, q. 25 a. 1: “passions’ order depends on the order of their objects”]
2. nor from their degree of proximity or distance from “what is good”;
3. nor are they distinguished according to what is good in its own right (*bonum absolutum*) or relatively good (*bonum contractum*):
4. namely, they do not follow the traditional division of the soul’s parts in irascible and concupiscible (*concupiscibilis* and *irascibilis*: cf. Aquinas, ST Ia IIae q. 23 a. 1)
5. nor is love (goodness) the first passion, around which and from which all the other derive

**1.** So, then, every passion of the concupiscible power that has to do with the good – love, desire, and joy – tends toward the good itself, whereas every passion of the concupiscible power that has to do with the bad – hatred, withdrawal, and sadness – tends away from the bad itself. (…) by contrast, the object of irascible power is not the sensible good or bad absolutely speaking, but rather the sensible good or bad as characterized by difficulty or arduousness. (hope, despair, daring). [Thomas Aquinas, *ST* Ia q. 23 a. 1 Answer]

**2.** The objects of the concupiscible power are the good and the bad. But the good is prior to the bad, since the bad is a privation of the good. Hence, all the passions whose object is the good are naturally prior to the passions whose objects is the bad. More specifically, each passion is prior to its opposite; for the reason why the opposed evil is being rejected is that the good is being sought. (…) now the appetite’s very readiness for or proportion to the good is love, which is nothing other than being pleased with the good. On the other hand, the movement toward the good is desire or sentient desire, whereas rest in the good is joy or pleasure. And so in accord with this ordering, love precedes desire and desire precedes pleasure. [Thomas Aquinas, *ST* Ia IIae q. 25, Answer].