

HAN VAN RULER*

OF DOGS AND MEN

THE «PSYCHOLOGICAL» AND THE «ETHICAL» IN DESCARTES AND SPINOZA

Descartes' correspondence with Princess Elisabeth at times reads like a programme for what would later become known as Spinoza's theory of ethics. Crucial elements in Spinoza, however, such as the notion of beatitude and the idea of internal emotions, link up with Descartes' *Passions de l'âme*, rather than with the correspondence – and yet it is on these very subjects that Descartes and Spinoza part ways. Studying in some detail the example of the hunting dog and the accounts of mental change occurring in both authors, this article will argue that Spinoza was able to side-step Descartes' explanation of mental transformation for the reason that he devoted himself to a completely different issue. Descartes' focus in *Les Passions de l'âme* is on negative emotions and behavioral training, whereas Spinoza's attention in the *Ethics* is on a remedy of the affects that may yield a naturalistic counterpart to the notion of religious salvation – a difference in philosophical motivation between the two authors that should give us reason to adjust commonplace interpretations of the Descartes-Spinoza controversy.

Keywords: Elisabeth, *acquiescentia*, Animal Training, Mental Change, Therapy vs. Salvation

1. Introduction

Princess Elisabeth of Bohemia clearly saw the novelty and unique quality of René Descartes' treatment of the passions. Having read the first draft of *Les Passions de l'âme*, she roundly declared that one would have to be totally «impassive»

not to understand that your [i.e., Descartes'] way of ordering, defining and distinguishing the passions, and all the part on morals besides, surpasses everything that has ever been said on this topic¹.

* Erasmus University Rotterdam. Email: vanruler@esphil.eur.nl
Received: 16.10.2019; Approved: 22.11.2019.

¹ *Elisabeth to Descartes*, 25 April 1646, in *Id.*, *Œuvres*, publiées par C. Adam & P. Tannery, 11 vols., Vrin-CNRS, Paris 1964-1974 (hereafter AT, followed by the number of volume in Roman and by the number of page in Arabic), vol. IV, p. 404.

It was an elegant form of praise Descartes gladly accepted. Indeed, in the final text of *Les Passions de l'âme*, he more or less took over Elisabeth's assessment of the work, telling the reader in the opening section that he had had to write on the subject of the emotions «as if I was considering a topic that no one had dealt with before me»².

Part of what Descartes meant here, may have been that he approached the passions from a different angle than usual. As he had already stated in the last of the letters that serve as a Preface to the *Passions de l'âme*:

My intention was to explain the passions only as a natural philosopher (*en Physicien*) and not as a rhetorician or a moral philosopher³.

In this sense, the declaration of exceptionality was later to be handed down further, when, in the Preface to Part III of the *Ethics*, Benedictus de Spinoza would join Descartes in arguing that he was to treat what he – Spinoza – now calls «the shortcomings and follies» of men «in geometrical fashion (*more Geometrico*)» and, a few lines down, that he would henceforth consider «human actions and appetites just as if it were a question of lines, planes and bodies»⁴.

In what follows, it shall be my aim, first, to make an inventory of some further aspects of Descartes' theory of the passions that both appear in Descartes' correspondence with Elisabeth and announce later themes and expressions in Spinoza. In second instance, I shall try to indicate how two theories so similar in words – Descartes', namely, and Spinoza's – can yet be so dissimilar in their effect. Finally, I shall want to draw some more general conclusions regarding the discrepancies between Descartes and Spinoza that may urge us to re-evaluate present-day philosophical and neuroscientific representations of the Descartes-Spinoza controversy. First, however, let us return to Descartes and Elisabeth.

2. *Quasi-Spinozistic Themes in Descartes and Elisabeth*

Possibly as a result of the kind of issues Descartes was invited to address in his exchange of letters with Elisabeth, possibly as a result of their more colloquial style, the link between Descartes and Spinoza with respect to the subject of the

² R. DESCARTES, *Les Passions de l'âme*, I, 1 (AT XI, 328) (hereafter *Passions*); Engl. transl. in *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, 3 vols., ed. by J. Cottingham, R. Stoothoff, D. Murdoch and A. Kenny, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1985-1991 (hereafter CSMK), vol. I, p. 328.

³ *Passions*, Préface (AT XI, 326); CSMK I, p. 327.

⁴ B. SPINOZA, *Ethica ordine geometrico demonstrata* (hereafter *Eth*), III, Preface, in *Spinoza opera*, im Auftrag der Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften, hrsg. von C. Gebhardt, 5 Bde., Bd. 1-4, Carl Winter Verlag, Heidelberg 1925, 1972², Bd. 5, *Supplementa*, 1987 (hereafter G, followed by the number of volume in Roman and by the number of page in Arabic), Bd. II, p. 138. English quotation from ID., *A Spinoza Reader*, ed. by E. Curley, Princeton University Press, Princeton 1994 (hereafter 'ed. Curley'), p. 153.

passions may seem more obvious from the correspondence than from the later text of *Les Passions de l'âme*. It was in any case immediately upon having entered the field of what we would now call «psychology» in the wake of Elisabeth's expressions of a persistent sadness, that Descartes, primarily in the late spring, summer and autumn of 1645 (when Spinoza was still a young teenager of thirteen-and-a-half) was to communicate to the ailing Princess almost all of the later ingredients of Spinozistic ethics – from some of its primary concepts to some of its most significant themes.

Thus, on 18 May 1645, presenting Elisabeth with a short summary of the classic viewpoint on the passions, Descartes argues that it is *sub specie aeternitatis* – though here in French: *au regard de l'Éternité* – that wise people attach so little value to their own happiness that they almost consider their own emotional life in the form of a stage play⁵. On 4 August, he articulates the classic link between virtue and reason in a new way (claiming, here as well, that «I do not know that anyone has ever so described it») by defining virtue in terms of the mental attitude of «sticking firmly» to one's resolutions, that is to say, to the «firm and constant resolution to carry out whatever reason recommends»⁶. The novelty here is relevant to Spinoza's later way of seeing things in that Descartes in a way subjectifies the essence of virtue: virtue is not a set of rules, but rather a power of the mind. On 1 September 1645, Descartes adds to this philosophical innovation the idea that the characteristic aspect of being virtuous actually applies to all such «actions» of the soul that «enable us to acquire some perfection» – another confirmation of the notion that virtue and the mental «contentment» that is its immediate result, are intrinsically linked to the strength and vigour of the mind in its capacity to command our actions in such a way as to contribute to our «perfection»⁷.

If all such ideas may already evoke the image of a transformation of the classical themes of moral philosophy in the direction of a Spinozistic interpretation of the «power of the intellect», the correspondence with Elisabeth adds to this a whole complex of quasi-Spinozistic themes in Descartes' letter of 15 September 1645, which refers, first, to the idea of a mental submission to the divine that may function as the ultimate source of happiness; then to the notion of liberating oneself from the fear of death; puts these, thirdly, in the more specifically Cartesian context of a reminder given to Elisabeth of the immeasurableness of the universe (a topic Descartes explicitly relates to his own novel system of the world); only finally to consider the success of one's actions (and the contentment one may derive from them) in the context of collectivist social aims, the

⁵ *Descartes to Elisabeth*, 18 May 1645 (AT IV, 202-203). References to the theatre also occur at AT IV, 219 and 309 in the correspondence, as well as in *Passions*, II 147 (AT XI, 441).

⁶ *Descartes to Elisabeth*, 4 August 1645 (AT IV, 265); CSMK III, pp. 257-258.

⁷ *Descartes to Elisabeth*, 1 September 1645 (AT IV, 283-284); CSMK III, p. 263.

accomplishment of which, according to Descartes, would make the individual himself stand stronger still⁸.

All these themes suggest a Cartesio-Spinozistic turn in moral philosophy that adds to the standard Renaissance philosophical and theological repertoire surrounding the concept of virtue a new notion of enlightened self-interest in Descartes and Spinoza⁹. The letters of the late autumn and spring of 1646 evoke even more specific proto-Spinozistic interests popping up in Descartes' communications with Elisabeth. Thus, addressing the typically Spinozistic theme of a contrast between reasonable and unreasonable parties in society, both Descartes and Elisabeth voice their pessimism with respect to having to deal with social conflict, with Descartes in particular developing the image of the man living in accordance with reason, contrasting this image in his letter of 3 November 1645 with the image of those standing «much lower»¹⁰. The latter topic Elisabeth takes up again in her letter of 25 April 1646, in which she complains of a dependency on people with such a low capacity for reason that she herself has had to revert solely to «experience» in dealing with them¹¹. It is a theme that implicitly returns in the discussion on Machiavelli of September 1646, where Descartes criticises the Florentine thinker, stating that, in contrast to what Machiavelli claims, a decent man (*l'homme de bien*) will stick to «all that true reason tells him» in every circumstance¹².

Of course, the use of reason and its assumed relation to human freedom had been central themes in Western moral philosophy from its earliest phases onwards¹³, but it is in his way of phrasing and conceptualising such themes that Descartes in his letters to Elisabeth evokes Spinoza's later position. The same is true for other age-old issues, such as the question of suicide, which not only occurs both in the letters exchanged by Descartes and Elisabeth and in Spinoza's mature philosophy¹⁴, but also links Descartes' text to Spinoza's by the manner in which

⁸ *Descartes to Elisabeth*, 15 September 1645 (AT IV, 291-295); CSMK III, 265-267.

⁹ This «Socratic» element in Cartesian moral theory has also been marked out by others. Studying the moral aspects of Cartesian philosophy in Geulincx and Spinoza, for instance, the moral philosopher J.D. McCracken highlighted that it was a «conviction of the unity of worth and fact» that defined the typically Cartesian aspect of their work. Cf. D.J. McCracken, *Thinking and Valuing. An Introduction, Partly Historical, to the Study of the Philosophy of Value*, MacMillan, London 1950, p. 138. In the end, however, Descartes' own moral philosophical standpoint seems to have had far less intellectualist implications than the systems later provided by Geulincx and Spinoza. For an assessment of Descartes' own theory of morality, see T. VERBEEK, *Generosity*, in S. EBBERSMEYER (ed.), *Emotional Minds*, De Gruyter, Berlin and Boston 2012, pp. 19-30.

¹⁰ *Descartes to Elisabeth*, 3 November 1645 (AT IV, 334); CSMK III, p. 278.

¹¹ *Elisabeth to Descartes*, 25 April 1646 (AT IV, 406).

¹² *Descartes to Elisabeth*, September 1646 (AT IV, 409); CSMK III, p. 294.

¹³ For an assessment of some of the key correlations between classical themes of ethics and early modern moral philosophy, see H. VAN RULER, *The Philosophia Christi, its Echoes and its Repercussions on Virtue and Nobility*, in A.A. MACDONALD - Z.R.W.M. VON MARTELS - J.R. VEENSTRA (eds.), *Christian Humanism: Essays in Honour of Arjo Vanderjagt*, Brill, Leiden 2009, pp. 235-263.

¹⁴ *Descartes to Elisabeth*, January 1646 (AT IV, 355-356); CSMK III, p. 283. Cf. *Eth* II, Proposition 49, Scholium, *Eth* IV, Proposition 18, Scholium and *Eth* IV, Proposition 20, Scholium

suicide is related to the survival of mental powers. In the letter of 1 September 1645 that already combines so many themes of relevance to Spinoza, Descartes argues that «nothing can completely take away our power of making ourselves happy provided it does not [confuse] our reason»¹⁵, linking this to a notion of mental self-governance that implies «we cannot altogether [be accountable for ourselves except] while we are in our own power»¹⁶.

Finally, already in the earlier phases of their correspondence, Descartes' involvement with establishing new criteria for the good life for Elisabeth in the wake of their reading of Seneca's *On the Happy Life*, we find the earliest sources of what would become the Cartesian (and, later, Spinozistic) notion of *acquiescentia* or «self-satisfaction»¹⁷. In this case, however, we also encounter the first limitations of trying to offer a Spinozistic reading of the Descartes-Elisabeth correspondence. The reason is that, even if Spinoza may somehow have been inspired by these letters to formulate his own concept of mental contentment, it cannot have been from these same letters that he borrowed the term *acquiescentia*.

3. Complex Relations

The Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben has argued that Spinoza's adaptation of the idea of mental satisfaction in the form of what Spinoza called *acquiescentia* in E5P27, reveals a Jewish background to Spinoza's interpretation of the idea of self-contentment, on account of the presumed Ladino grammatical form of the expression¹⁸. The neologism *acquiescentia*, however, is not of Spinozistic origin, but is part of the Cartesian idiom. It is the Latin translation of *la satisfaction de soi-même* as it occurs in § 190 of Descartes' *Passions de l'âme*, the passage on «Self-Satisfaction».

In fact, the expression *acquiescentia in se ipso* derives from a Latin translation of Descartes' *satisfaction de soi-même* – but it does not occur as such in the 1668 *Epistolae*, which speak only of an *animi tranquillitas sive voluptas*¹⁹. The term *acquiescentia* itself originates from the 1650 Latin Elsevier edition by Henricus Maresius, or Henri Desmarts (1629-1725), of Descartes' *Passions*

(G II, 135, 222, 224); ed. Curley, pp. 151, 209 and 210-211.

¹⁵ *Descartes to Elisabeth*, 1 September 1645 (AT IV, 283); CSMK III, p. 263.

¹⁶ *Descartes to Elisabeth*, 1 September 1645 (AT IV, 282); CSMK III, p. 263.

¹⁷ *Descartes to Elisabeth*, 18 August 1646 (AT IV, p. 275); CSMK III, p. 261.

¹⁸ G. AGAMBEN, *Potentialities: Collected Essays in Philosophy*, ed. and transl. by D. Heller-Roazen, Stanford University Press, Stanford 1999, pp. 137-138.

¹⁹ What, in the letter to Elisabeth of 18 August 1645, is named *le contentement ou la satisfaction de l'esprit*, would become *animi tranquillitas sive voluptas*; and, again, *animi tranquillitas for contentement de l'esprit* in the translation included in the 1668 Elsevier edition of Descartes' *Epistolae*: R. DESCARTES, *Epistolae, Partim ab Auctore Latino sermone conscriptae, partim ex Gallico translatae, Pars prima*, apud Danielum Elzevirium, Amstelodami 1668, pp. 10-11.

*de l'âme*²⁰. And not only did Spinoza copy Descartes' term; he also took over Descartes' explanation, arguing, like Descartes in *Les Passions de l'âme* III, 190, that self-contentedness or *acquiescentia in se ipso* may also occur in untruthful and negative ways, for instance when someone has too high an esteem of himself, or when such contentedness is fed only by a quest for popularity – still, in its positive form, *acquiescentia*, both in Descartes and in Spinoza, is the pinnacle of blessedness and philosophy's highest goal²¹.

Thus, for all the philosophical similarities one may draw between the topics of Spinoza's *Ethics* and the issues addressed in the Descartes-Elisabeth correspondence, they do not provide rock-solid philological links between Spinoza and the correspondence, a Latin edition of which appeared only in 1668. There is, on the other hand, an obvious Cartesian background to Spinoza's way of defining beatitude in terms of mental satisfaction on the basis of the exceptional combination of terminology and subject-matter presented in the Latin translation of Descartes' *Passions*, which was already on the market in 1650 as *Renati Descartes Passiones Animae*.

Nor was Spinoza the only one to derive the notion of *acquiescentia* from *Les Passions de l'âme*. His Cartesian contemporary Cornelis Bontekoe, for instance, obtained the notion of *laetitia intellectualis* straight from Descartes; the idea, that is, of an intellectual joy, which, like Spinoza, Bontekoe linked to the idea of self-satisfaction, and therefore also describes as an *acquiescentia in bono, quod ad solam mentem spectat*, a «satisfaction in a good that pertains to the mind alone»²². The further similarity here, is that Bontekoe's idea of a «good that pertains to the mind alone» refers back to the topic of paragraph 147 of Descartes' *Passions*, which had dealt with «The internal emotions of the soul» – a topic that, again, has a perfect equivalent in Spinoza, who, in the scholium to Proposition 20 of *Ethics* V, tells his readers he will now revert to things that pertain to the mind alone, and proceeds to discuss «those matters that concern the duration of the mind without respect to the body»²³.

²⁰ ID., *Passiones Animae*, apud Lodovicum Elzivirium, Amstelodami 1656, p. 88: «*De Satisfactione sive Aquiescentia in se ipso. Satisfactio sive Acquiescentia in se ipsis, quam semper illi consequuntur qui constanter insistunt virtuti, est habitus in eorum anima qui vocatur Tranquillitas & Quies Conscientiae*». The French original reads: «De la Satisfaction de soy mesme. La Satisfaction, qu'ont tousjours ceux qui suivent constamment la vertu, est une habitude en leur ame, qui se nomme tranquillité & repos de conscience» (cf. AT XI, 471). *Acquiescentia* was also used in later Latin translations of the same work. See also H. VAN RULER, *Calvinisme, cartesianisme, spinozisme*, in G. COPPENS (ed.), *Spinoza en het Nederlands Cartesianisme*, Acco, Leuven 2004, pp. 23-37, esp. p. 25, and p. 35, fn. 12.

²¹ *Passions* III, 190 (AT XI, 471-472); CSMK I, 396; *Eth* IV, Proposition 52; *Eth* III, Def. Aff. 28 Expl., *Eth* IV, Proposition 58 Scholium (G II, 248-249, 197-198 and 253-254); ed. Curley, pp. 227, 192-193 and 230-231, respectively.

²² C. BONTEKOE, *Tractatus Ethico-Physicus de Animi & Corporis Passionibus, Earundemque Certissimis Remediis*, ed. J. Flenderus, J. Waesbergen, Amstelodami 1669, p. 14.

²³ *Eth* V, Proposition 20 Scholium (G II, 294); ed. Curley, p. 255.

It is with respect to this twist of attention in Spinoza, however, that drawing comparisons between Descartes and Spinoza becomes even more difficult, and leads to a series of further complexities of interpretation. In 1986, the French Descartes-scholar Jean-Marie Beyssade drew attention to the historical and thematic links between Descartes' notion of internal emotions (*émotions intérieures*) and Spinoza's idea of active affects (*affects actifs*). Addressing the «logical paradox» of the «transformation (*la transformation effective*)» of passionate affects into active affects through the use of reason, Beyssade referred to the necessary function of the «love of God» in Spinoza, even in those cases in which we are dealing only with the practice of life. In other words, even before Spinoza comes to discuss the things that pertain to the mind alone, an active mental stance is needed if, on the basis of Spinoza's second degree of knowledge, the possibility of adopting a reasonable stance is to overcome passionate forms of mental reactivity²⁴.

It cannot be our aim here to solve all the puzzles one may encounter in Spinoza's analysis of human mental enlightenment²⁵. Part of the problem, however, of trying to relate Descartes' idea of internal emotions to Spinoza's notion of active affects, is that Spinoza nowhere makes clear how the transformation from passions to reason in the practical, i.e., the moral and political sphere, differs from – or is related to – the special, spiritual kind of transformation he discusses with respect to the mind and its potential for intuitive knowledge from EV21 onwards. At the same time, the tension between the active stance of the practical man of reason and the purely intellectual kind of freedom discussed in the latter half of Part V of the *Ethics*, is a tension that is equally relevant to Spinoza's dealings with Descartes. Indeed, despite the obvious similarities between Descartes' notion of «internal emotions» and Spinoza's notion of «active affects» – and despite all the philosophical affinities between Descartes and Spinoza so far discussed on the basis of Descartes' correspondence and works – any attempt to draw a comparison between Descartes and Spinoza on these points is disqualified by Spinoza himself in the Preface to the fifth part of the *Ethics*, where he famously ridicules Descartes' treatment of the problem of mental transformation. At the same time, despite this criticism, Spinoza nowhere reverts to the possibility of offering a Spinozistic

²⁴ The Spinoza-conference at which Beyssade first presented his ideas on the matter was held in Chicago in September 1986. Cf. J.-M. BEYSSADE, *De l'Émotion intérieure chez Descartes à l'affect actif spinoziste*, in E. CURLEY - P.-F. MOREAU (eds.), *Spinoza: Issues and Directions. The Proceedings of the Chicago Spinoza Conference*, Brill, Leiden 1990, pp. 176-190, esp. p. 188: «Ainsi, sans paradoxe logique, l'amour de Dieu assure une rencontre entre les opposés (passion triste et affect actif) dès le second genre de connaissance et, si l'on peut dire, d'affectivité. Car on ne parle pas ici d'éternité, d'amour intellectuel ni de science intuitive: tout cela viendra ensuite et n'est pas requis pour ce premier niveau de la moralité et de la religion».

²⁵ Note that, despite admiring the subtlety of Beyssade's attempt to solve the paradox of passionate affects changing into active affects in Spinoza, Margaret D. Wilson, in her reply to Beyssade, expressed she was not convinced that «the riddles» had been solved: M.D. WILSON, *Comments on J.-M. Beyssade*, in CURLEY - MOREAU, *Spinoza: Issues and Directions*, pp. 191-195.

alternative to Descartes' reflections on the power of reason. The only thing that is offered in the remainder of the *Ethics* is Spinoza's alternative explanation of mental «freedom» in terms of intuitive knowledge. In this way, it is – again – only the kind of things «that concern the duration of the mind without respect to the body» that Spinoza offers in terms of «active» types of affects.

To see what this implies for the question of similarities and differences between Descartes and Spinoza, let us first turn to Spinoza's unambiguous rejection of Descartes' standpoint in the Preface to Part V – in other words, to his discussion of the hunting dog.

4. *The Hunting Dog*

Dogs appear quite frequently in Spinoza's *Ethics*, but the most significant example with respect to Descartes' *Passions de l'âme*, is the reference to the hunting dog and the house dog in the Preface to Part V; the spaniel and the chihuahua, as it were, which reminds one of the dogs referred to in the closing section of the first part of Descartes' *Passions of the Soul*.

Introducing the idea of «the power of the mind» and its «dominion over the affects», Spinoza criticises the Stoics in this Preface, arguing that «experience cries out» against the Stoic idea that the mind would have an «absolute dominion» over the affects. «If I remember rightly,» Spinoza goes on to argue,

someone tried to show this by the example of two dogs, one a house dog, the other a hunting dog. For by practice he was finally able to bring it about that the house dog was accustomed to hunt, and the hunting dog to refrain from chasing hares²⁶.

It is here that Spinoza says that «Descartes was rather inclined to this opinion» *too*, only to continue criticising Descartes' theory of the pineal gland in the remainder of the Preface.

What are we to make of Spinoza's position here? In his *Moralia*, Plutarch tells the story of the Spartan lawgiver Lycurgus, who was known to have presented to the Spartan assembly the example of two dogs from the same litter, trained in different ways. When set free, one of them would go for the hare and the other for his food bowl. Another version of the story has it that Lycurgus had actually taught a house dog puppy to hunt, whilst spoiling a hunting dog puppy on good food, with exactly the same effect. Both versions of the story were intended to prove not just the value of nurture over nature, but the idea that descent is essentially worthless in the light of the opportunities there are for developing even the most noble characteristics in men²⁷.

²⁶ *Eth* V, Preface (G II, 277-278); ed. Curley, pp. 244-245.

²⁷ Cf. PLUTARCH, *Moralia* IV, under «Lykourgos».

Spinoza indicates he does not clearly remember where he read about the dogs, and seems to take the example as an illustration of the fact that the Stoics did not alter their views on account of their theoretical principles, but because experience forced them to do so. In that case, the example would illustrate that, in fact, «it takes much practice and application» to «restrain and moderate» the affects²⁸. If so, the illustration of dogs needing «much practice and application» at the start of *Ethics*, Part V, would neatly mirror the famous maxim right at the end of the book that «all things excellent are as difficult as they are rare»²⁹.

The contrast with Descartes, however, would then be less obvious, since it had been Descartes himself who had famously argued in *Les Passions de l'âme* that we have no direct influence over our passions³⁰. In fact, it is not at all clear what Spinoza actually intended to convey by referring to the example of the dogs. A natural reading of the passage would suggest that he associated Descartes' position with the position of repenting Stoics, who had learned from experience not to take their own theoretical maxims too seriously, but apart from neglecting the fact that this is exactly what Descartes himself brought up against an overvaluation of human mental capabilities, the more intriguing question is that Spinoza seems to forget, or even unconsciously to repress, that he may have read about his dogs in Descartes.

In *The Passions of the Soul* section 50, the very passage Spinoza here refers to, Descartes had argued that, if people can train animals, they must also be able to train 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. Nevertheless, setters are commonly trained so that the sight of a partridge makes them stop, and the noise they hear afterwards, when someone fires at the bird, makes them run towards it. These things are worth noting in order to encourage each of us to make a point of controlling our passions³¹.

There is no trace in Descartes of trying to understand how this works in detail, other than that redirecting the instincts, according to Descartes, will involve conscious decisions to be made with respect to applying such training – the same point, that is, which brought him to the idea that we cannot *un-will* our emotions.

Regrettably, Descartes articulates his notion of mental training only in very broad terms, arguing that

although nature seems to have joined every movement to the [pineal] gland to certain of our thoughts from the beginning of our life, yet we may join them to others by habit³².

²⁸ *Eth* V, Preface (G II, 277); ed. Curley, p. 244.

²⁹ *Eth* V, Proposition 42 Corollarium (G II, 308); ed. Curley, p. 265.

³⁰ *Passions* I, 41 and 45 (AT XI, 359-360 and 362-363); CSMK I, pp. 343 and 345.

³¹ *Passions* I, 50 (AT XI, 370); CSMK I, p. 348.

³² *Passions* I, 50 (AT XI, 368-369); CSMK I, p. 348.

No further particulars are given, so that it is not made explicit whether this «habit» involves a physiological mechanism of association and dissociation, just like we may associate and disassociate meanings with written characters or vocal signs, for instance³³, or whether it involves a purely mental decision to make new links. The latter would seem to be quite incompatible with everything Descartes has said about the impossibility of directly influencing the emotions, but it would also make problematic the human/dog-comparison as such. Indeed, the further example Descartes offers, is about links being changed by a single anomalous occurrence, like in the case of having tasted poisoned or infected foods and thereby immediately losing one's future appetite³⁴. This type of rerouting one's instincts does not suggest any changes in the soul, or in the connection between mental and physical states. Rather, it suggests a change of links between (1) movements in the brain that represent certain objects and (2) movements by which the mental appreciation of such objects is represented.

The suggestion that we are dealing with a change in physiological links is also confirmed by the fact that this is where Descartes brings up his example of the dogs. These dogs, he argues, have nervous systems very much like ours – which is why the transformation of behaviours that can be brought about in dogs is relevant to our own situation. The example's lesson is that, if dogs can be trained to react in seemingly wholly «unnatural» ways, such as to make a halt upon seeing a partridge, or to stay calm despite hearing gunshots, we might likewise change the effects of passions in ourselves. The fact that the dogs are consciously trained by humans, is only a further premise in the build-up of an argument which, in itself, is utterly clear. What Descartes intends to say, is that, despite the fact that we have no direct influence or power over our emotions, we have an *indirect* power in terms of behavioural therapy – or, to quote Descartes himself:

Since we are able, with a little effort, to change the movements of the brain in animals devoid of reason, it is evident we can do so still more effectively in the case of men³⁵.

Despite occasional mentalistic types of phrasing in Descartes, such as in his talk of managing links between movements and thoughts, or of judging people on the power of their will, it is clear that Descartes' only concern here is with what he calls «movements of the brain».

In the Preface to Part V, Spinoza quotes Descartes' passage on training, but instead of going into any of the questions about how this might work, or trying to understand Descartes' explanations («so subtle», according to Spinoza's cynical comment), he follows up on his own argument from experience against

³³ Cf. *Passions* I, 44 and 50 (AT XI, 362 and 369); CSMK I, pp. 344-345 and 348, respectively.

³⁴ *Passions* I, 50 (AT XI, 369); CSMK I, p. 348.

³⁵ *Passions* I, 50 (AT XI, 370); CSMK I, p. 348.

the Stoics by turning from practical to metaphysical issues in his criticism of Descartes, elaborating on the metaphysical impossibility of the pineal gland being steered by the mind.

What is clear, then, from the Preface to *Ethics V*, is that Spinoza scolds both Stoics and Descartes for having held the apparently erroneous view that we have an «absolute dominion» over the passions without taking into account either Descartes' own criticism of the idea of the mind having any direct influence over the passions, or Descartes' attempt at drawing a parallel between animal training and human behavioural training based on a wholly physiological understanding of emotionally driven types of conduct. Instead, Spinoza goes on to address the supposed metaphysical impossibility of mind working on matter, but in fact this is not the only way in which he sidesteps any serious reflection on Descartes' position in *Les Passions de l'âme*. The more problematic aspect of Spinoza's dealings with Descartes in the famous Preface to *Ethics V* is that, having criticised the Stoics and Descartes as if they represent similar positions, Spinoza also avoids ever coming back to what he himself had just set out to argue, namely to explain «the power of the mind, or of reason» and «how great its dominion over the affects is» – nor exactly to explain what type of dominion he has in mind with respect to the power that offers «remedies for the affects»³⁶.

5. *The Ease and Difficulty of Mental Change*

If, in the remainder of *Ethics V*, Spinoza does indeed offer some further clues on the relative ease or difficulty of mental change in humans, these do not really bring us closer to an appreciation of his apparent differences with Descartes. In the Scholium to *Ethics V*, Proposition 10, for instance, Spinoza argues that there are certain rules or «maxims of life» that may be committed to memory and applied to recurrent situations in such a way as to guard ourselves against inconstancy. A person who carefully observes these rules «will soon be able to direct most of his actions according to the command of reason», since, Spinoza adds, these rules «are not difficult»³⁷.

This might again seem to offer a parallel with the Dutch Cartesian physician and philosopher Cornelis Bontekoe, who claimed that attaining peace of mind is rather more «doable (*ligter te doen*)» than most people believe, and «without much hassle»³⁸. Bontekoe's idea of a «lasting happiness (*gedurige vreugde*)», and

³⁶ *Eth V*, Preface (G II, 277 and 280); ed. Curley, pp. 244 and 246.

³⁷ *Eth V*, Proposition 10, Scholium (G II, 287 and 289); ed. Curley, pp. 251-252.

³⁸ Bontekoe mentions various authors who had held that finding a lasting peace of mind was no easy task. Cf. C. BONTEKOE, *Opbouw der Medicynen*, part 3, in Id., *Alle de Philosophische, Medicinale en Chymische Werken*, J. ten Hoorn, Amsterdam 1689, vol. 2, p. 231: «'t geen ligter te doen is, als de meeste menschen geloven, en sonder so veel omslag, als'er *Petrarcha* in sijn Boek de *Remediis*

his conviction of the relative ease with which such happiness might be brought about, form part of a position on the possibility of mental training that is overtly and intentionally linked to the Cartesian form of analysis³⁹. The possibility, however, of drawing a parallel between Spinoza and Bontekoe on this point, is problematic, if only for the reason that the idea of ease and effortlessness in both Spinoza and Bontekoe does not bring us any closer to understanding Spinoza's difficulties with Descartes. A closer look at the Spinoza-Bontekoe comparison, moreover, will yield that, whereas Bontekoe is closely following Descartes, Bontekoe and Spinoza seem not really to be talking about the same thing.

With respect to his easy rules or «maxims of life», Spinoza is discussing practical matters of mental self-care with which anger, for instance, may be «overcome in far less time than if we had not considered things beforehand in this way». Thus, he is talking about the mental effort of «ordering our thoughts and images» in such a way that one may stand firm. «To put aside fear», for instance,

one must think in the same way of tenacity; that is, we must recount and frequently imagine the common dangers of life, and how they can be best avoided and overcome by presence of mind and strength of character⁴⁰.

Someone who would follow these rules for ordering one's thoughts in order to curb one's affects would not meet with a Spinoza more pessimistic than Descartes about changing one's patterns of reaction. At the same time, this is not the type of optimism Bontekoe discusses where he follows Descartes in emphasising the importance of a belief in predestination. Indeed, the kind of «lasting happiness» Bontekoe refers to is related to Descartes' notion of *émotions intérieures*. This is the happiness he elsewhere defines in terms of a *laetitia intellectualis*, the happiness both he and Spinoza had found in Descartes and that both he and Spinoza had linked to the notion of *acquiescentia*, or self-satisfaction. Yet if Bontekoe argues that this is the kind of happiness which a «good and well-enlightened Christian» may derive from being able to «forge pleasure and joy» out of everything that happens with the help of the «hammer of reason»⁴¹, he is articulating an optimism with respect to the spiritual kind of happiness that pertains «to the mind alone»⁴², and which has a parallel only in Spinoza's far less optimistic finale of the *Ethics*, which is related to things «that concern the duration of the mind without respect to the body».

utriusque fortunae, Seneca van de gerustheid des gemoeds, en onder andere selfs ook een van de laatste en beste Schrijvers, P. de Moulin, die van de vrede der ziele geschreven heeft, van maken».

³⁹ Emphasising the importance of reflecting on the idea of a divine providence, Bontekoe neatly follows Descartes' line of argument in *Les Passions de l'âme* II 145.

⁴⁰ *Eth* V, Proposition 10, Scholium (G II, 288); ed. Curley, p. 251.

⁴¹ BONTEKOE, *Opbouw der Medicynne*, in *Id.*, *Alle de Philosophische, Medicinale en Chymische*, vol. 2, p. 231.

⁴² *Id.*, *Tractatus Ethico-Physicus de Animi & Corporis Passionibus*, p. 14.

Nor, then, do a shared interest in the possibility of *acquiescentia* and a comparison between Bontekoe and Spinoza on the relative ease or difficulty of a mastery over the passions bring us any closer to understanding what ultimately distinguishes Spinoza from Descartes with respect to the possibility of psychological transformation⁴³. On the one hand, there cannot be any doubt that, like Bontekoe, Spinoza too, in developing his analysis of mental freedom, was at some point inspired by Descartes' idea of the existence of «internal emotions» that could serve as a «supreme remedy (*souverain remede / summum remedium*)» against the onslaught of negative emotions⁴⁴. This is not to say, however, that Spinoza's spiritual quest for «the remedies for the affects (*affectuum remedia*)»⁴⁵ in any way resembles Descartes' philosophical aims in *Les Passions de l'âme*, nor that the mental transformation Spinoza associated with such remedies in any way reflected Descartes' interpretation of the human capacities for mental change. The differences between the two philosophers are not so much to be seen as different answers to similar problems, but rather to be explained as differences resulting from a dissimilarity of philosophical and scientific interests.

6. *Psychology versus Salvation*

Famously arguing, right at the end of the *Ethics*, that «all things excellent are as difficult as they are rare», Spinoza continued to be evasive and ambiguous with respect to the actual technique or the metaphysical possibility of steering oneself in the direction of knowledge and freedom. Refusing to offer a substitute explanation for what he had ridiculed in Descartes, what we find in the fifth part of the *Ethics* is not so much Spinoza's alternative to Descartes' account of mental training, as a completely different intellectual focus and an interest in wholly different themes.

Despite his opening paragraph on the Stoics, Descartes, and the dominion of the mind, Spinoza, in the remainder of *Ethics* V, never reverts to evaluating the extent of mental freedom in any psychologically relevant sense of the word, nor does he establish an alternative estimate of the mind's dominion over the passions. The reason for this is clearly *not* that Spinoza saw no possibility for postulating that human cognitive capacities might have a role to play in changing human reaction patterns. Indeed, there are «maxims of life» that may help us to change our behaviour in practice.

⁴³ And neither can we derive an easy opposition between Spinoza and Bontekoe on the basis of Bontekoe's medical perspective and Spinoza's rather more metaphysical interests. If, in the Preface to *Ethics* V, Spinoza argues he will disregard both logical and medical aspects related to the power of reason (logic being concerned with the perfection of the mind; medicine with the care for the body; cf. G II, 277; ed. Curley, p. 244), this does not in any way lessen the similarities between Bontekoe's and Spinoza's concern with the spiritual kind of happiness that is the ultimate intellectual goal of Spinoza's «wise man» or Bontekoe's «philosopher».

⁴⁴ Cf. *Passions* II, 148 (AT XI, 441-442); CSMK I, pp. 381-382.

⁴⁵ *Eth* V, Preface (G II, 280); ed. Curley, p. 246.

What freedom we have to apply these, is apparently a question of no immediate concern to Spinoza – at least not in *Ethics* V, where Spinoza develops an ethical objective very different from Descartes' objectives in *Les Passions de l'âme*.

Whereas the *Passions de l'âme* introduced into Western philosophy a notion of psychological transformation related to the idea of behavioural change, *Ethics* V, by contrast, is dedicated not to any such «psychological» subject matter, but to a naturalisation of the theological question of finding mental salvation, which is here fused to the age-old moral philosophical topic of reason's command over the passions. Such a quest for the «remedies of the affects» is a quest that may be linked to other Dutch Cartesio-Calvinistic sources, including Bontekoe⁴⁶ – but it is also a quest one will search for in vain in Descartes.

There is thus only an apparent analogy between the philosophical aims of *Les Passions de l'âme* and the aims of the *Ethics*. Despite the fact that the parallel occurrence of phrases related to the power of the mind suggest a common theme, Descartes' and Spinoza's intellectual intentions are quite dissimilar. In fact, the notion of a «dominion over the passions (*regler ses passions, acquérir un empire tres-absolu sur toutes leurs passions / regere suos Affectus, acquirere imperium absolutissimum in omnes suas Passiones* in Descartes; *imperium in affectus* in Spinoza)» is itself ambiguous, since both Bontekoe's medical approach to happiness and Spinoza's metaphysico-spiritual approach are firmly rooted in the moral philosophical tradition that argued human happiness and redemption might be found in the dominion of a mental state in which the influence of the passions would be overcome. Although it was Descartes' notion of *émotions intérieures* itself that provided Bontekoe and Spinoza with the idea that «the soul always has the means of happiness within itself»⁴⁷, the moral-philosophical objective that linked this idea to the traditional concept of a Stoic liberation from the passions is – again – a theme entirely lacking in Descartes.

It cannot be my aim at present to discuss the differences between Descartes and Spinoza in all detail. Still, a number of topics suggest themselves for further investigation. I shall begin by naming three.

7. Metaphysics, Dualism, and the Descartes-Spinoza Controversy

First, there is the question of the relevance of metaphysics. If, in the preface to *Ethics* III, Spinoza argues he will treat the affects using the same method by which he «treated God and the mind», he seems again to take up an earlier strategy in Descartes, who avowed to treat the passions *en Physicien*⁴⁸. In the end,

⁴⁶ Cf. H. VAN RULER, *Spinoza in Leiden*, in B. POSTHUMA (ed.), *De Kring van Spinoza: Een balans van veertig jaar onderzoek*, Uitgeverij Spinozahuis, Rijnsburg 2019, pp. 33-46.

⁴⁷ *Passions* II, 148 (AT XI, 442); CSMK I, p. 382.

⁴⁸ See footnotes 3 and 4, above.

however, it is already in their incompatible notions of what it is to treat human mental life according to purely natural philosophical standards that Spinoza and Descartes part ways. Descartes was always cautious not to trespass any metaphysical boundaries whilst doing natural philosophy, and thus vigilant against philosophical interpretations of nature that reintroduced the notions of God, nature and mind as active principles. Not even in the *Meditations* are God or the human mind themselves the objects of investigation; much less does the notion of the soul in *Les Passions de l'âme* function as a metaphysical concept. There is, in fact, no reference in *Les Passions de l'âme* to the soul as a substance, even though the term *substance* is used three times in a loosely «chemical» sense⁴⁹. The term *sujet*, on the other hand, occurs quite often, but is similarly used to refer to the soul and to the objects of sense that we experience as being the source of the perceptual impact on our senses. Thus, in *Les Passions de l'âme* I, 23, Descartes argues that we refer certain

sensations to the *subjects* we suppose to be their causes in such a way that we think that we see the torch itself and hear the bell, and not that we have sensory perception merely of movements coming from these objects⁵⁰.

A lot more might be said about the potential metaphysical implications of such a reference to «subjects»⁵¹, but the more important point is that Descartes does not discuss them, and limits himself to treating only the relationships between movements and sensations assumed to obtain between the soul and the objects of sense. Neither, therefore, is the subject of sensation problematized. Indeed, although the *subject* actively working on the physiological processes of the human body and passively receiving their input is referred to as the «soul», this soul only shows itself through the experience of mental activities and passions gathered from introspection. The mind accordingly shows itself through its mental states in an equally empirical way as the objects of sense show themselves through the production of «certain movements in the organs of the external senses»⁵².

Yet if Descartes was disinclined to engage himself in metaphysical disputes about the nature of the mind and its causal role in nature, this is an aspect of his works Spinoza abandoned. In the *Ethics*, by contrast, we find a metaphys-

⁴⁹ *Passions* I, 10, 12 and 31 (AT XI, 335, 337 and 352); CSMK I, pp. 332, 333 and 340.

⁵⁰ *Passions* I, 23 (AT XI, 346); CSMK I, p. 337, my italics.

⁵¹ The longstanding debate on Descartes' position within the history of scepticism is not a question to be dealt with here. It may, on the one hand, be worthwhile to keep in mind John Cottingham's warning that, «to construe Descartes as foregoing any claim to have reached objective truth seems [...] to involve viewing his work from a far too "modern" or relativistic perspective» (J. COTTINGHAM, *Descartes*, Blackwell, Oxford 1986, p. 69). On the other hand, it is equally true that Descartes' use of such terms as «subject» should not be read in post-Kantian terms as expressing a commitment to metaphysical entities.

⁵² *Passions* I, 23 (AT XI, 346); CSMK I, p. 337.

ical superstructure, which, although it does not allow for a mental *substance*, nevertheless makes ontological claims with respect, first, to the human mind's incorporation in the Mind of God; second, to the idea of an «essence» related to this mind; and, finally, to the possibility of this mind developing a form of causal independence. It is, indeed, in the mind's capacity for intuitive knowledge – which, according to the second Scholium to Proposition 40 of the second part of the *Ethics*, is explicitly linked to «the essence of things» as its object – that the notion of grasping an essence becomes of particular importance with respect to the human mind's capability of grasping *itself* as an object of knowledge.

Such differences in their attention to metaphysical forms of analysis no doubt mirror the above mentioned difference between an interest in behavioural transformation in Descartes and an interest in mental salvation in Spinoza. Considering the respective roles played by God and by human beings in the distribution of causal powers and the moral relevance of their mutual relations, Descartes, of course, no less included the idea of providence in *Les Passions de l'âme*. The fact in itself, however, that *Les Passions de l'âme* does not present us with a detailed metaphysical context for addressing the soul's metaphysical status as a cause is significant for the manner in which Descartes' reflections on predestination are of direct relevance only within the context of his moral theory. Primarily addressing the psychosomatic intricacies of mental experience and mental training, *Les Passions de l'âme* as a whole does not share the *Ethics*' overarching interest in a spiritual reunion with God.

Secondly, and in connection to this, there is the question of «monism», «dualism» and the limited applicability of these terms. Descartes' metaphysical non-committance is a point not often touched upon in either continental representations that picture him as a philosopher of the human «subject» or analytical representations that continue to refer to a «Cartesian Dualism», to the idea of a soul that is wholly transparent to itself, as well as to the wholly non-Cartesian metaphor of a «Ghost in the Machine». In point of fact, however, from his early days in Amsterdam and Deventer, but presumably even in the earliest phases of his intellectual engagement with what he called «the sciences», Descartes consciously exchanged the classical explanatory principles of God, nature and the soul for problem-driven forms of scientific explanation that were meant to provide detailed reconstructions for the occurrence of phenomena we experience in the common course of nature.

Spinoza's metaphysical interest in the notions of God, nature and substance, on the other hand, is not only characteristic for his moral-philosophical perspective; it also gives rise to a number of ontological constraints related to the possibility of offering a philosophy of mind. Thus, the restriction of «freedom» in *Ethics* V to the sole notion of a «virtue of the mind» is no mere side-effect of Spinoza's theory of morals. Rather, it is the ultimate consequence of his attribute *dualism*, which put a metaphysical ban on the idea of mind-body interaction. For Spinoza, the separate life of the mind, in combination with its metaphysical setting in God, opened

up the possibility of giving expression to the distinction between being determined either «externally» (or on the basis of «fortuitous encounters with things; *ex rerum [...] fortuitu occursu*»), and being «internally» determined, i.e., by understanding things according to their «agreements, differences and oppositions»⁵³.

Metaphysical dualism and moral dualism, moreover, are closely aligned. Introducing a metaphysical sanction on the idea of causal relations obtaining between the worlds of body and mind, Spinoza and «Occasionalists» Cartesians similarly ignored Descartes' attempt, in *Les Passions de l'âme*, to develop a psychologically relevant idea of mental and behavioural change. Doing so, they were destined to accept the Stoic maxim of changing one's convictions rather than the events of the world, articulating a classical standpoint of moral philosophy Descartes himself had only provisionally embraced in the *Discours*. It is in this way that classical forms of intellectualism were prone to re-emerge in the works of metaphysicians beyond Descartes – forms of intellectualism that not only failed to benefit from the psychological potential of Descartes' physiologically-inspired project of the 1640s, but also drew philosophy back into the spiritual sphere of cerebral solipsism and moral dualism⁵⁴.

This, in the third place, is also why the historical significance of the *Passions de l'âme* has still to be established – and preferably independently from any Descartes-Spinoza comparisons. If, in books like *Descartes' Error* (1994) and *Looking for Spinoza* (2003), Antonio Damasio mistook his own scientific strategy for a Spinozistic rather than a Cartesian project⁵⁵, similar misinterpretations continue to affect the secondary literature in cognitive science, neuroscience and philosophy, today. Persistent in associating Descartes with Gilbert Ryle's image of Descartes, Daniel Dennett for example equally argues against a presumed «Cartesian» position on the basis of arguments that actually echo those of *Les Passions de l'âme*. In Dennett's analysis, it takes a conscious decision, for instance, to become a tennis player, but it is only by training one's system every day that one will actually be able to develop the ability to hit the ball back in the direction of one's opponent within a millisecond⁵⁶ – an adaptation in terms of sports that completely matches Descartes' notion of psychological training.

⁵³ *Eth* II, Proposition 29, Scholium (G II, 114); ed. Curley, p. 136.

⁵⁴ See H. VAN RULER, *Spinozas doppelter Dualismus*, transl. A. Fliedner, «Deutsche Zeitschrift für Philosophie», 57 (2009), 3, pp. 399-417, which also discusses the question whether the epistemology and the psychology of the *Ethics* in fact match Spinoza's professed allegiance to a parallelism of events obtaining in the mental and the physical spheres. The problem Spinoza faces is that the distinctions he offers between the various degrees of knowledge and the various degrees of emotional reaction that result from these, require some fundamental changes to occur in the way in which the production of ideas may be accounted for.

⁵⁵ Damasio's Cartesian interests would come out even more sharply when he turned his attention to the phenomenon of consciousness in A. DAMASIO, *Self Comes to Mind: Constructing the Conscious Brain*, Heinemann, London 2010.

⁵⁶ D. DENNETT, *Freedom Evolves*, Penguin, New York 2003, pp. 238-239.

8. Conclusion: Descartes and Spinoza

Finally, then, if it is difficult intellectually to disentangle the two great works of 1649 and 1677, it is not very hard to get a feel of their vast methodological, stylistic and strategic differences. In his correspondence with Elisabeth, Descartes had brought up a lot of elements that he drew from the moral-philosophical tradition and presented within a new, Cartesian, framework. This was as much an indication of Descartes' own continued commitment to an age-old intellectualist notion of happiness, as it was an indication of the extent to which, according to him, health and happiness were both primarily a question of *mental* health⁵⁷. Yet despite all philosophy, even in the correspondence, Descartes above all remained a doctor to Elisabeth, and so, even there, Descartes' focus was not so much on the domination of the passions, as it was on the regulation of emotional life – a focus that *Les Passions de l'âme* would expand into a theory of physio-psychological intervention.

If Spinoza, for his part, felt forced to side-step Descartes' entry into the world of psychology and neuroscience in order to stay true to the metaphysical law of attribute dualism, this was a concession he seems easily to have made *not* because he might provide an alternative explanation of mental change on its basis, but rather because he might avoid doing so, since he had set out to achieve an altogether different objective, namely to link the theme of mental slavery and dominion to a secularized interpretation of religious salvation⁵⁸.

Psychologically disheartened, how might Elisabeth have recovered her mental health? If it was *émotions intérieures* that she needed, she could have them on doctor's orders, as far as Descartes was concerned, besides a whole range of other cures and forms of medical advice, such as drinking water from Spa and walking the woods. If, by contrast, Spinoza would have been her mentor, Elisabeth's *émotions intérieures* would have had to be evoked on the basis of the metaphysical type of self-understanding that, according to the *Ethics*, uniquely conditions the possibility of their effectiveness. In that case, her cure would have acquired a rather more spiritual dimension.

⁵⁷ Cf. T. VERBEEK, *Les passions et la fièvre: L'idée de la maladie chez Descartes et quelques cartésiens néerlandais*, «Tractrix», 1 (1989), pp. 45-61.

⁵⁸ For an assessment of the philosophico-theological dialectics of coming to grips with divine grace in sixteenth and seventeenth-century thought, see H. VAN RULER, *Beatitude and the Scope of Grace: Early-Modern Morals and the Paradoxes of Felicity*, in A. FRIGO (ed.), *Inexcusables: Salvation and the Virtues of the Pagans in the Early Modern Period*, Archives internationales d'histoire des idées, vol. 229, Springer, Cham 2020, pp. 107-123.